

# Incident Prevention and Response Strategies

**Employer initiatives to prevent and respond to domestic and sexual violence and stalking impacting the workplace should generally address three areas:**

1. Safety audits to prevent potential perpetrators' access to the workplace and employees;
2. Threat assessments in collaboration with employees experiencing violence; and
3. Supportive responses in the aftermath of a violent incident.

## **Safety Planning Tips**

- Conduct a **safety training** so employees know how to access assistance for themselves or others.
- **Vet** all employees and contractors.
- **Retain** any threatening emails or voicemail messages, and record all threatening acts or behavior, in case legal action arises in the future.

*Employers can conduct an overall safety audit of the workplace. Law enforcement or security professional can assist in assessing:*

- Can non-employees physically enter the workplace without presenting identification or interacting with security?
- Are employee work schedules, home and work phone numbers and addresses easily accessible?
- Does the parking lot, and/or the path to the nearest public transportation, have adequate lighting?

- Are there areas of the workplace where employees are isolated or alone for long periods of time?
- Are there safety issues particular to workers who have work responsibilities outside the formal workplace?

## **Employee-Centered Threat Assessments**

Upon learning that an employee is facing a potential threat, employers should immediately work to develop a partnership with the threatened employee to develop a safe and effective response guided by the employee's needs.

*To protect against the workplace impacts of domestic and sexual violence and stalking, workplaces can engage in threat assessments, which are a set of strategies or pathways that provide information about individuals that might pose a risk at a particular point in time.*

Threat assessments can discern the:

- Exact nature and context of a threat and/or threatening behavior;
- Identified target (general or specific);
- Apparent motivation behind the threat, and
- A perpetrator's background, including work history, criminal record, mental health history, and past behavior on the job.

Regular threat assessment is necessary because threat level is never fixed and can change over time. For this reason, constant threat assessment is a must.

If an employee knows a potential perpetrator, the employee typically has the greatest insight into the potential perpetrator's behavior and can provide substantial guidance in protecting themselves and the workplace. If an employee does not know a potential perpetrator, employers should develop a similar partnership with the threatened employee to assess the level of danger and take protective action.

Workplaces must tailor responses to the unique circumstances of each situation. In some instances, workplaces need to take only a few precautions beyond those already in place. Other cases require a higher

level of assessment and planning, including, when applicable, the creation of a resource or response team.

*Workplaces should apply the following principles when working with an employee to assess a potential threat:*

- Ask about and assess facts relevant to any workplace threat. To preserve privacy, limit personal questions about the history between the victim and perpetrator to matters that help reveal the potential risk;
- Keep confidential any information provided by the victim whenever possible, only sharing specific facts with those who must receive specific information in order to implement workplace safety measures;
- Do not advise the employee about personal safety issues away from work. If the employee has a relationship with the perpetrator; do not tell the employee what to do about the relationship;
- Refer the employee to qualified local services for victims to ensure that the employee receives appropriate information and assistance, including safety planning;
- Distribute a Safety Card.

***Do not blame or hold a victim responsible for a perpetrator's threats or violent actions.***

An employee who is facing a potential threat may also need workplace accommodations to address their own particular safety issues, such as a [Protective Order, also known as a Restraining Order](#). Depending on the extent in which a potential threat has been directed towards a workplace, an employer may consider consulting with the affected employee and obtaining the order in the employer's name or a no-trespass order covering the work site.

**Other accommodations to consider include:**

- Obtaining the affected employee's permission to provide relevant details about the potential perpetrator (such as a picture, physical description, license plate number, or vehicle make/model) to security personnel and reception staff;

- Relocating the affected employee to another work area or altering their work schedule until the direct threat is over;
- With the affected employee's input and permission, have their screened, transferred to security or designated personnel, and remove the affected employee's contact information from directories and websites.

## **After an Incident**

*If a perpetrator involved in a personal relationship with an employee, or another employee/perpetrator, commits an act of domestic violence, sexual violence, or stalking on a work site:*

**Step 1:** Consult the employee/victim in a safe area and ascertain their immediate needs, which may range from helping them obtain medical attention and providing leave to referring them to community-based service providers.

**Step 2:** Re-assess the threat to ascertain the perpetrator's likelihood to return to the work site, and whether additional precautions such as a protective order and security enhancements are necessary.

If the perpetrator is also an employee, refer the matter to the appropriate disciplinary channels and re-organize the workplace to deny further contact between the parties. Major benefits of a workplace policy specific to domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking include the availability of procedures pertaining to employee/perpetrators, an investigation process, procedures to implement restrictions on the employee/perpetrator's work contacts, disciplinary consequences, and treatment plan requirements. Employee/perpetrators should be afforded proper process, and if the worksite is unionized, the union should fulfill any duties of fair representation towards the employee/perpetrator and the employee/victim.

**Step 3:** Organize and offer access to counseling, information or other services to co-workers and others. Employees that witnessed or otherwise appear to be impacted by the incident should be offered services through Employee Assistance Programs, community-based service providers, or counselors.

**Step 4:** Security personnel or a designated employee should continue to monitor the situation for one to three months (or longer) to determine if the matters has escalated or been resolved.

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Workplaces Respond provides technical assistance to workplace stakeholders seeking to better prevent and respond to domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and harassment impacting the workplace. Scan this QR code to access the Resource Center.



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