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Corporate approaches to reducing intimate partner violence through workplace initiatives

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Intimate partner violence affects many people in all aspects of society. In a report released in July 2000, the US Justice Department and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that nearly 25% of women and about 7% of men say that they have been raped or assaulted by a current or former partner. According to the estimates, every year approximately 1.5 million American women and more than 800,000 men are raped or assaulted by an intimate partner [1]. Whereas women are less likely than men to be victims of violent crimes overall, women are five to eight times more likely than men to be victimized by an intimate partner [2]. Thirty percent of Americans say that they know a woman who has been abused physically by her husband or boyfriend in the past year [3]. A 1998 study found that one of five couples in the United States had experienced domestic violence in the previous year [4].

Intimate partner violence has serious consequences for the workplace, but it rarely is acknowledged as an element of workplace violence. In 1987, the Philadelphia Coalition on Domestic Violence ran a print advertisement that was targeted at the local business community with the headline “Do You Want a Solution to a \$5 Billion Dollar Problem?” The advertisement ran in metro Philadelphia newspapers, suburban newspapers, and local business publications. It emphasized that domestic violence is a social issue and a labor problem that businesses need to address. It offered free assistance and literature to businesses. The Coalition did not receive a single call [5]. The rationale for addressing intimate partner violence at the workplace was not clear to employers in 1987. What currently is known about this type of violence?

At the workplace, intimate partner violence costs US businesses an estimated \$3 to \$5 billion dollars per year [6]. The yearly total healthcare costs of family

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violence are estimated in the hundreds of millions of dollars, much of which is paid for by the employer [7]. Intimate partner violence affects people of all genders, lifestyles, and cultural, educational, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds; however, most information available with regard to the workplace discusses women as victims. Thirty-seven percent of women who experience domestic violence have reported that this abuse had an impact on their work performance in the form of lateness, missed work, keeping a job, and career promotions [8]. Each year, an estimated 13,000 acts of violence against women at work are committed by intimate partners [9].

Perpetrators of intimate partner violence come from all walks of life, and much like victims of intimate partner violence, batterers cannot be identified based on place of residence, salary, or occupation. Employers must understand that because they are likely to have employees who are victims of intimate partner violence, it is also probable to have employees who are batterers. In 2002, Employers Against Domestic Violence released results of four focus groups conducted with convicted male domestic violence offenders. These men were asked about the impact that their behavior had on their workplaces. The investigators found that abusers made costly and dangerous mistakes on the job as a result of perpetrating domestic violence. Most abusers used company phones, e-mail, and vehicles to perpetrate domestic abuse. Most abusers used paid work time to attend court for matters relating to their perpetration of domestic violence. Most employers expressed support for the abuser (but few expressed concern for the victim). Ten percent of employers posted bail for abusers or granted them paid leaves of absence for court dates related to domestic violence [10].

Senior executives and managers know that intimate partner violence has a substantial impact on the workplace. In a survey released in October 2002, Liz Claiborne asked 100 senior executives and managers from Fortune 1000 companies across the United States about their perceptions of intimate partner violence and its effect on the workplace—benchmarking a survey conducted in 1994. In 2002, 66% of corporate leaders said that domestic violence is a major problem in society, whereas only 57% percent agreed with this statement in 1994. Compared with results from 1994, significantly more corporate leaders in 2002 were aware of employees within their organization who were affected by domestic violence (40% versus 56%, respectively), and had indicated that someone close to them had been involved in domestic violence (24% versus 45%). Sixty-eight percent of corporate leaders said that a company's financial performance would benefit if domestic violence were addressed among its employees, and 50% reported that domestic violence has had a harmful effect on their organization's insurance and medical costs. One third (32%) of respondents said that their company's bottom-line performance had been damaged. A total of 91% of respondents believed that domestic violence affects the private and working lives of their employees. Many leaders reported that domestic violence had a harmful effect on their organization's staff, specifically on the staff's psychologic well being (60% of leaders), physical safety (52%), productivity (48%), and attendance (42%). Eighty-five percent of leaders believed that

corporations are responsible for the general well being of their employees, and two thirds (67%) of leaders believed that domestic violence is serious enough to warrant their attention. Only 12% of respondents believed that corporations should have a major role in addressing the issue. Most respondents believed that this factor is the responsibility of the family, social service organizations, and the police [11].

Why should employers get involved?

Intimate partner violence affects thousands of working men and women every day. It impacts the ability of victims to provide and care for themselves and their families, distracts batterers from working effectively and safely, and affects the financial strength and success of the companies for which they work. Abusive situations at home do not stay at home, and like other personal issues (eg, child care, healthcare, elder care), domestic violence takes its toll on the workplace. It adds significant costs to the company, increases the company's legal liability, and can have adverse and disruptive effects on worker morale, customer perceptions of the company, and the company's premises.

Cost benefits

Employers recognize that well-trained employees are a valuable asset and that training new employees is more costly than retaining a productive and knowledgeable existing workforce. As previously indicated, the effects of intimate partner violence in the workplace are associated with direct and indirect costs that are related to victims and batterers. These costs include decreased productivity, increased healthcare costs, absenteeism, employee errors, employee turnover, and time spent away from work to deal with issues associated with the violence [12,13]. In a study that examined the medical records from 1997 to 2002 of several groups of adult female patients of a health maintenance organization in Seattle, investigators found that women who are victims of physical or sexual domestic violence visit their doctors more often than do other women. Annual healthcare costs were significantly higher for the women who experienced domestic violence. Their healthcare costs averaged more than \$5000 per year, compared with about \$3400 for women without any evidence of domestic violence and \$2400 for women in the general population [14].

Domestic violence also affects co-workers. As the perceived danger increases for one employee, the level of distraction and fear for co-workers also increases. Co-workers may have to fill in for absent or nonproductive workers, feel resentful of victims who need time off or receive extra attention, try to protect victims from unwanted phone calls or visits, be unaware of how to intervene, feel helpless and fear for their own safety, and hear or take part in gossip and rumors. Employers

have a unique opportunity to address domestic violence in the workplace by providing tools, assistance, and resources for employees.

Enlightened self-interest

Employers addressing intimate partner violence through workplace programs realize that the benefits for implementing these programs outweigh implementation costs. These employers may be able to lower turnover and absenteeism, increase productivity, decrease healthcare costs, enrich the culture of the workplace, and help create safer communities where their employees work and live and where the employer has a presence. Addressing intimate partner violence as a workplace issue is good business and is good for the community. Employers can take advantage of being viewed as an enlightened and proactive workplace.

Although there are a variety of concrete reasons why a company proactively should address this issue, there are also less tangible reasons, such as public perception. In an environment where corporate behavior is examined scrupulously, the public has come to expect companies to take a stand on social issues that benefit employees, the community, or both. By becoming a corporate and community leaders, businesses can make a difference in the lives of employees, increase employee productivity and morale, implement effective prevention and intervention strategies that save lives, and create a powerful, positive impact in the community.

Implementing an effective, well-researched domestic violence policy can keep an organization out of the news headlines by reducing the risk for catastrophic incidents of violence and out of court by respecting the rights and needs of the workforce. Addressing this issue in the workplace is advantageous for both moral and bottom-line reasons. Employers cannot have a healthy business without a workforce that is healthy within and outside of the office.

Workplace safety

Workplace safety is a concern for all employers. Federal and state occupational health and safety laws require employers to make sure that employees work in safe environments. Under the general duty clause of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, employers must provide a workplace that is free from recognized safety hazards. This clause may be interpreted to mean that employers are responsible to take reasonable steps to protect workers from hazards such as acts of violence in the workplace.

In 1993, the Bureau of Labor Statistics noted that homicide was the leading cause of death among women at the workplace and that 17% percent of these women were murdered by an intimate partner [15]. Many companies that seek to provide a safe workplace recognize the link between potential workplace violence and intimate partner violence. One Midwestern company found that 25% of investigated incidents of workplace violence were related to intimate partner violence, and another company on the East coast found that 50% of their

workplace violence incidents or threats could be tracked to issues of intimate partner violence.

Potential legal and liability issues

In addressing intimate partner violence through workplace policies and programs, there are legal and liability issues to consider. Domestic violence can raise legal issues in various circumstances. A batterer may stalk or assault his partner or other individuals in the workplace. Abuse may occur between two co-workers in a dating or marital relationship. Some states' victim assistance laws prohibit employers from taking adverse job actions against victims who disclose their situation or who take time off from their jobs to attend court. Family and medical leave laws often require employers to grant leave to employees who are coping with domestic violence situations.

The amount of state legislation regarding domestic violence and unemployment insurance is increasing, as are the number of laws that do not allow employers to dismiss victims of domestic violence solely because they are victims or because they were required to take time off of work to obtain a protective order. Some states have enacted laws requiring employers to provide time off for employees to take care of needs related to intimate partner violence (eg, going to court, going to counseling, receiving medical attention) [16]. Typically, employees who are injured at the workplace are limited to recovery benefits under their state's workers compensation system. Many states have established exceptions to the exclusivity rule for conduct that is intentional rather than negligent, such as assault and battery. Another example may be an employer who has previous knowledge of an employee's propensity for domestic violence. This employer could be accused of committing an intentional tort if it does not act to protect the victim of domestic violence who also is employed by the company.

Steps for creating a successful workplace program

Employers who implement an intimate partner violence initiative are not expected to be experts on this issue. They are encouraged to work with professionals in the field to make certain that messages and actions are correct. Although there are many ways to create a successful workplace program, the following steps are suggested starting points that were developed by the Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence (CAEPV), a national nonprofit organization that was developed by the business community to address intimate partner violence through workplace education and awareness programs.

Organize a multidisciplinary team to oversee the process

A multidisciplinary team allows the stakeholders in different areas of the company to plan for program implementation in a way that works best for the orga-

nization. The stakeholder group should establish a realistic action plan and timeline for implementing the program. Areas that should be represented on the team include professionals from the following areas: human resources; health and medical; legal; security; internal communications; public or media relations and consumer affairs; community outreach; employee assistance programs (EAPs); and unions.

A key component to the success of a workplace program is a commitment from the uppermost levels of the organization. To give the team legitimacy, it is optimal to have the chief executive officer (CEO) or president appoint its members. In this first step, employers may want to consider surveying employees regarding issues of workplace safety, including intimate partner violence. This approach allows the multidisciplinary team to have a baseline level regarding employee awareness of all workplace safety issues.

Develop a corporate policy addressing intimate partner violence

The sample policy developed by the CAEPV for its members is in the addendum of this article. The CAEPV sample policy includes the issue of intimate partner violence in a more comprehensive policy on workplace safety. This fact does not mean that a company cannot have a separate policy on domestic violence as a workplace issue. Liz Claiborne has two distinct policies; however, the inclusion of intimate partner violence within a comprehensive policy may streamline the process for many companies.

The multidisciplinary team should review existing policies and procedures to determine which policy covers the issue of intimate partner violence. Examples of such policies include family-friendly benefits, such as flexible leave time that can be used to attend court or go to counseling. The policy should allow supervisors and human resources professionals to offer paid time off, flexible hours, or new shifts to victims so that the victims can avoid or flee their batterers, seek social service assistance, or deal with legal matters. Policies should emphasize that no violence or threats of violence should take place on workplace grounds or while an employee is on duty or acting in the interests of the employer, and they should spell out potential consequences of such actions. This approach holds true whether the person making the threat is to a co-worker, vendor, or intimate partner at home. It allows companies to discipline abusive employees who are violent or who threaten violence, including those who use workplace phones, faxes, or e-mail to harass their intimate partners.

State and county laws vary greatly with reference to intimate partner violence and workplace issues such as unemployment insurance and nondiscrimination laws. Companies should work directly with their legal departments to develop policies and programs. They can access up-to-date information on legislation regarding intimate partner violence and unemployment insurance, leave for victims of domestic violence, nondiscrimination laws, domestic violence policies, and workplace restraining orders at the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund website (<http://www.nowldef.org>). The focus of workplace policies and plans should be safety issues for the victim and for the workplace.

Provide training

A series of departments within each organization should be trained; first and foremost, all members of the interdisciplinary team should receive training. This training includes awareness and general knowledge of intimate partner violence and familiarity with the company's policies and protocols in handling such cases. Specific protocols include determining who brings the team together when a case comes up and how cases are reviewed. This training must take place before any internal publicity about the policy or program.

Members of the security team should be trained to perform threat assessments; help create individual workplace safety plans; and assist victims of intimate partner violence by providing escorts to and from the office, securing parking and work spaces, screening calls, and providing other services. In some states, employers can apply for orders of protection on behalf of victimized employees. Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Georgia, Indiana, Nevada, Rhode Island, and Tennessee have laws regarding workplace restraining orders [16].

The goal is to train managers to be aware of signs of violence for potential victims and perpetrators, and local domestic violence service providers often can assist with this training at little or no cost. Because managers are not in a position to address domestic violence as a separate issue unless the employee self-discloses the problem, managers should understand how to appropriately address changes in behavior that is affecting performance and who to call internally if such a situation arises.

Training should include issues of privacy and confidentiality. In some companies, information regarding a domestic violence situation is kept separately from the regular employee file to protect the confidentiality of the victim. Company representatives should not give personal advice or counseling (unless they are part of an in-house EAP)—this type of help should be left to the experts. Explanations of items, such as protective orders and how to enforce them under local law, are helpful. Training should outline what actions are appropriate and what referrals are available. Policies and protocols are guidelines, however, and there are not always black-and-white correct answers. Many incidents have to be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Employee education should include an understanding of intimate partner violence, possible warning signs, and how to respond sensitively and confidentially when victimized employees are identified. Employees should learn how to communicate with a victim or a perpetrator. As in the case of managers, co-workers are not counselors but are facilitators for helping co-workers.

Build awareness through workplace communications

Employers can use newsletters, payroll stuffers, e-mail, intranet sites, posters, and brochures to provide ongoing information to employees. Many of these materials are available for free or for a nominal fee from local service providers and other organizations such as the CAEPV (<http://www.caepv.org>). Employers should incorporate information about awareness of domestic violence into

employee orientation programs, handbooks, or intranet-based human resources information. For the best effect, educational and awareness programs on domestic violence should be intertwined with other complimentary programs. Employee-wellness fairs, workplace safety programs, and family issues seminars are effective venues for sharing information about intimate partner violence.

Enlist employees help to ensure a violence-free workplace

Employees should know that they will not be penalized for seeking help for themselves, their families, or co-workers. In conjunction with the human resources department and EAP (if applicable), employers should offer resources for victims of intimate partner violence and abusers. Employees should be educated regarding security procedures to keep themselves and others safe in the workplace, including how to avoid inadvertently giving batterers access to victims and where to go to report a potential threat. Employees should receive information on how to recognize the signs of a troublesome or abusive relationship and know where to turn for assistance for themselves or for co-workers. A 2001 study found that perpetrators of deadly domestic violence had several common characteristics, including extreme jealousy and possessiveness, stalking, and hitting victims at least once before the death occurred. All of these abusers had been violent with a previous partner. In this study, everyone who was close to the victims and perpetrators knew that something was wrong in the relationships but did not intervene [17].

Employers must work with victims to develop an individualized workplace safety plan without making assistance contingent on any action by the abused person (eg, leaving the batterer). For additional employee education, employers can invite local resource groups, such as local shelters, counseling groups, or law enforcement agencies, to provide speakers for company programs. Most local groups are happy to provide speakers and information.

Companies should empower employees to take a stand—as caring co-workers and as the company’s ambassadors. Interested employees can form a communications task force that works within the guidelines established by the cross-functional steering committee to implement a communications plan.

Broaden communications to include the community, important stakeholders in the company’s industry, and other organizations

Employers can spread the word and encourage other companies to participate by communicating the message to key external stakeholders, including local and trade media, community and trade organizations, customers, suppliers, shareholders, and government officials. Networking with other employers to share case studies and best practices strengthens the employer’s program and provides a forum to provide assistance to other employers that may be interested in addressing domestic violence as a workplace issue.

Current best practices

One of the most effective ways that companies can address intimate partner violence at the workplace is through collaborative relationships with other employers. This fact is especially true for small companies. In 1995, State Farm Insurance Companies founded the CAEPV and invited other Fortune 500 companies to raise awareness of intimate partner violence as a workplace issue. The CAEPV is the only national nonprofit organization founded by the business community with a mission to educate and aid in the prevention of domestic violence through the influence of the workplace. Since 1995, the CAEPV has brought together dozens of companies that exchange information, collaborate on projects, and use their influence to instigate change. There are more than 80 CAEPV member companies and affiliates in the United States, reaching more than 1 million employees nationwide. Members include Altria Group, American Express, Eastman Kodak, Lifetime Television, Liz Claiborne, Mary Kay, Morgan Stanley, State Farm Insurance Companies, and Verizon Wireless. In Australia, the Office of the Status of Women is a member of the CAEPV. Other members include large and small private employers, units of government, and domestic violence service providers. Over time, these employers have identified and developed key best-practice areas that make workplace programs most effective. These practices are outlined.

Lead from the top

Companies with effective programs for intimate partner violence have a strong commitment from executives and upper-level management. Without this support, managers and supervisors are unsure about the scope of their responsibility and authority to assist victims. Verizon Wireless CEO Denny Strigl is involved personally with many awareness-raising activities for the general public and activities that are targeted to upper-level management through business events. In addition to speaking to the business community in the United States regarding intimate partner violence and the workplace, Liz Claiborne CEO Paul R. Charron visited Australia in February 2003 to present information about intimate partner violence and urge businesses in that country to implement programs.

Set and enforce policies

Companies with sound policies do not allow individuals (whether they are employees, customers, vendors, or guests) to commit threats or acts of violence—including domestic violence—while on working or while using company property. They recognize that responding to intimate partner violence at the workplace is a new issue that requires special attention for programs to be effective. The Altria Group's policy addresses workplace violence but also emphasizes domestic violence that extends to the workplace. The policy includes company facilities and off-site locations where employees are engaged in company business [18]. In

terms of disciplining or terminating employees who are accused or convicted of domestic violence, the focus should be on safety. Employers should use a team of representatives from the security, human resources, and legal departments and from the EAP to determine the safest, most appropriate, and legally responsible way to handle the situation. By treating the batterer with respect (as should be the case with any employee who is disciplined or terminated), companies minimize the risk for violent outbursts or retaliation.

Train, train, train

Employers should find creative ways to train responders, managers, and employees—whether through in-person training courses, Web-based tools, manuals, or other written communications. Repeating the message is important, and employers must continue to draw managers' attention to domestic violence issues as other complementary issues are addressed that are related to employee benefits, absenteeism, or work-life issues.

Offer real-life answers

A promise of support is not enough to truly impact intimate partner violence through workplace programs. Companies must provide real processes and tools for employees to use, such as the ability to use benefits to get help finding a place to live or legal assistance. In addition to providing flexible benefit time, State Farm Insurance Companies offer a variety of benefits to assist employees who are affected by partner violence. These benefits include EAP services, healthcare benefits, workplace security protection, and the possibility of alternative work hours. Staff registered nurses and physicians are trained in occupational health and provide a watchful eye and confidential support to employees in abusive situations. Employees who are former victims of intimate partner violence often act as advocates to counsel co-workers are experiencing such violence [19].

Make safety and security vital issues

Best practices include addressing safety and security issues, such as getting victims securely to and from their vehicles. In cases in which there is an order of protection, companies often are listed on the order, and security personnel should have a photo of the batterer. If the perpetrator comes on workplace property, he or she has violated the order and can be arrested. CIGNA Corporation seeks to obtain restraining orders so that the perpetrator can be asked to leave if an attempt to come on premises is made, or a call can be made to the police to have the perpetrator arrested for trespassing. At American Express, special measures can be taken to ensure the safety of victims includes documenting harassing telephone calls, helping the employee change the travel route to and from work, and changing the work schedule to create a change in patterned behavior. State Farm Insurance

Companies have transferred victimized employees to jobs in other parts of the country and helped them assume new identities [19].

Wrestle with tough issues

There are no easy answers in balancing employee privacy with a desire to assist in cases of domestic violence. Employers who are committed to best practices are not afraid to wrestle with these delicate issues and to keep the dialog going within their stakeholder community (eg, management, human resources, legal, security, communications, medical, EAP)—even when they do not have the answers. Employers should make it clear that their electronic information systems, including e-mail, voicemail, and computers, belong to the company and that there is no expectation of privacy in the use of the equipment by its employees. Privacy interests should be weighed in the balance when determining safety and security measures.

Communicate creatively

Employers who are committed to this issue understand that although some employees have heard the message before, many new employees need to know about domestic violence as a workplace issue. Employers can use many forms of communication—posters, e-mails, intranet sites, newsletters, brochures, videos, and faxes—to share information with employees on a regular basis.

Integrate education

Awareness and educational programs on domestic violence should be intertwined with other programs that are complementary: Employee-wellness fairs, workplace safety programs, and family-issues seminars are effective venues for sharing information on domestic violence. Seminars on topics such as family issues, stress, or workplace safety (where partner violence can be integrated); newsletter articles; and brochures on intimate partner violence are ways that employers can create awareness of the issue. CIGNA held Violence Awareness Days in their Bloomfield, Connecticut, offices in fall 2002. The program highlighted intimate partner violence, general workplace violence, hate crimes, and other violence that may affect the lives of employees. While similar to a health fair, the event had the appearance of an art show, with walk-in cubicles containing large posters of newspaper articles related to domestic, workplace, and other types of violence. Also included were continuous video from CIGNA corporate security on personal security and resource information from CIGNA's Working Well and EAP programs [20].

Create a supportive culture

A workplace policy and program is only as good as the internal culture that supports it. Companies must create a workplace in which victimized employees believe that they will get help and will not be fired or discriminated against for

sharing this information with a supervisor or manager. The same must be true for batterers who voluntarily seek help through workplace resources.

Reach out

Employers who implement best practices are willing to network with other businesses about how to handle tough and delicate issues and challenges. Groups of such employers include the CAEPV on a national level, Safe@Work Coalition (New York), Employers Against Domestic Violence (Boston, Cape Cod, and Worcester, Massachusetts), and Indianapolis Employers Against Domestic Violence. Whether individually or in groups, these employers are committed to reaching out to the community to engage local service providers in training their staff or EAP members. They also engage employees in volunteer activities for service providers. They partner with service agencies for events, such as medical fairs, employee-wellness fairs, and community projects, and conduct drives to collect clothes, toys, furniture, or money for a local domestic violence program or shelter. The Altria Group has given away millions of dollars through its Doors of Hope program. American Express created Project Journey (launched in their Arizona field offices in 2000), a program designed to help unemployed and underemployed women to explore employment options, provide training in basic job skills, and offer hiring opportunities with American Express Travel Services. Mary Kay and the Mary Kay Ash Charitable Foundation underwrote a documentary *Breaking the Silence: Journeys of Hope* that premiered nationwide on PBS stations in 2001. Through its HopeLine program, Verizon Wireless provides preprogrammed 911 phones and voicemail boxes in local shelters, gives monetary donations, and created the Invest in Yourself program in which members of human resources teams partner with local shelters and assist women with programs covering job search, resume writing, and the interview process. American Express, CIGNA, Eastman Kodak, Liz Claiborne, State Farm Insurance Companies, and Verizon Communications provided support for an animated website for girls aged 11 to 14 years called GirlsAllowed, which is designed to help girls develop healthy relationships and avoid abusive ones [21].

Case study: Liz Claiborne's Women's Work program

More than 10 years ago, Liz Claiborne launched Women's Work, a program designed to generate awareness, educate the public, and prevent relationship violence. Liz Claiborne started the program with the belief that the company has a responsibility to give back to people who have made the company a success—their consumers and their employees.

The goal of the Women's Work program is to help create a society that is intolerant of abuse. By partnering with various experts on intimate partner violence, the campaign reaches the public with its antiabuse message through television and radio public service announcements, a series of educational handbooks, fundraising efforts, and other methods, all of which results in

maximum reach within the company and among the public. Each year, the program adopts a new position that focuses on a particular constituency; previous groups include corporate executives, college students, men, women, bystanders, parents, and teenagers. Along with outreach programs to the public on national and local levels, the company seeks to provide an environment of support within the company and to educate, inform, and assist employees with domestic violence issues and concerns.

Liz Claiborne consults with national and local nonprofit partners in establishing internal policies and procedures regarding domestic violence and has offered relationship violence awareness and assistance policy and protocol training programs to its employees in the human resources, security, and legal departments. A comprehensive EAP includes a 24-hour, toll-free number that provides access to trained counselors who handle domestic violence cases and offer counseling and referrals.

As part of its policy, Liz Claiborne, whenever possible, allows for flexible hours and time off for employees who need to seek safety and protection, arrange new housing, attend court appearances, or take care of other such matters. An increased sense of safety in the workplace is supported by providing secure work areas, special parking spaces, escorts to and from transportation, guidance with legal processes and information about available resources. Additional efforts include the ongoing display of educational posters in restrooms throughout company facilities and periodic distribution of e-mails, memos, brochures, and payroll inserts with hotline phone numbers and other information. Informative articles may be included within company newsletters, and educational materials are distributed every October (National Domestic Violence Awareness Month). Employees are encouraged to speak out and help others; providing detailed information on how employees can get involved in domestic violence awareness and education programs is important. The company has trained the human resources, security, and legal departments on policies and protocols so that these departments can assist management in recognizing signs of abuse and provide additional support.

In 1998, the program's focus turned to education, and the first in a series of handbooks was created. *A Parent's Handbook: How to Talk to Your Children About Developing Healthy Relationships* was developed in conjunction with Dr. Richard Gallagher, director of the Parenting Institute at New York University's Child Study Center. The handbook offers parents straightforward advice to help guide their children into positive and fulfilling peer and dating relationships. Over the next several years, Liz Claiborne created three more handbooks in the series. The second handbook, *A Woman's Handbook: A Practical Guide to Discussing Relationship Abuse*, was written in collaboration with the Family Violence Prevention Fund. This booklet helps concerned bystanders reach out to friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers who they suspect may be involved in an abusive relationship. The next guide, *What You Need To Know About Dating Violence: A Teen's Handbook*, follows the story of a teenage couple in a violent relationship. It includes special sections to help teens understand dating violence and provides tools to deal with the issue. As a follow-up to the teen handbook,

Liz Claiborne produced an awareness and education handbook on dating violence that was targeted to parents of teens. *A Parent's Guide to Teen Dating Violence: 10 Questions to Start the Conversation* offers parents and guardians language, conversation starters, and facts to help open channels of communication with their teens.

Liz Claiborne has donated for distribution more than 600,000 domestic violence brochures and handbooks and more than 90,000 posters to community organizations across the United States. Considerable anecdotal evidence has been collected among Liz Claiborne employees and consumers who positively associate the company with domestic violence awareness and education.

In addressing intimate partner violence through workplace initiatives, Liz Claiborne has learned the following lessons:

- Make a genuine commitment to the issue: Liz Claiborne credits the success of the program to the company's genuine passion for and long-term dedication to the issue.
- Get senior level buy-in: It is critical to have the support and commitment of senior management. It is helpful if someone with decision-making authority champions the cause.
- Acknowledge the contributions of all partners: Liz Claiborne makes a concerted effort to recognize contributions of its nonprofit partners and acknowledge the value of such partnerships.
- Enlist experts: Companies should partner with experts in the field when taking on an issue [22].

Current and future challenges

Overcoming perceived barriers

Many employers are hesitant to address intimate partner violence as a workplace issue because of perceived barriers, such as breaching employee privacy. A 2002 briefing paper from Partnership for Prevention noted that employers cited confidentiality and intrusion as major concerns. Employers did not want to become too involved in personal issues of their employees, who may not want to disclose that they are victims of domestic abuse. In this study, most senior managers reported that they avoid the subject. Other barriers suggested by participants included the high cost of services, ignorance of the issue, and cultural and social beliefs [23].

To overcome these perceived barriers, CIGNA placed intimate partner violence initiatives under the umbrella of violence in the workplace. The company found that managers and employees are more comfortable framing the issue in terms of a safe workplace. Detroit Energy's security department found that it is helpful to keep detailed records on assaults at the workplace, vandalism, stalking, and other activities related to domestic violence and to provide this data on an annual basis.

Security personnel also helped supervisors create a supportive environment and provided assistance in changing the employee's work location to provide a safe work environment. There were documented success stories about employees who received help after approaching management about a workplace policy. These stories offered proof that the problem existed and that something could be done about it.

Although some companies have overcome perceived barriers, as noted in the 2002 Liz Claiborne survey mentioned earlier, some senior managers who recognize that intimate partner violence affects a company's financial performance are not certain that companies should have a major role in addressing the issue. When asked about possible reasons why many US companies do not have a domestic violence program, corporate executives did not cite cost as the major reason. About two thirds of respondents cited reasons based on corporate perceptions of the issue: Companies do not realize the impact that domestic violence has on employee and company performance (68% of respondents); companies do not believe having a domestic violence program in place positively will impact the bottom line (68%); companies believe domestic violence is a family problem (67%); and companies believe domestic violence should be addressed by law enforcement agencies (67%). More education and information must be provided to employers to help overcome these perceived barriers.

Employing the batterer and the victim

There are no easy answers when the batterer and the victim work for one organization. If it is clear that company's grounds, property, or time has been used for threats or acts of violence, the company's workplace violence policy comes into effect. What happens if the circumstances are not so evident? A CAEPV member organization had a situation in which both parties worked in the same building. The abused employee contacted the human resources department and was referred to the EAP for counseling and legal resources. After careful assessment of the situation, the company determined no performance or safety risks were involved at the workplace, so they took no immediate action.

If an employee did use the company's phones, fax machines, e-mail, or other resources to threaten or harass and the company has a policy against this practice, discipline can include written warnings, paid or unpaid leave, or required counseling—whatever the workplace policy specifies.

Learning more about batterers

Companies that are committed to preventing intimate partner violence at the workplace are beginning to address perpetrators of intimate partner violence through workplace programs. Historically, victims of partner violence more easily are identified and studied and are more likely to seek help. Although research on victims is varied, research on batterers is more diverse. In the past, psychologists believed that battering was the result of low self-esteem. Research suggests that narcissism is the trait that seems most highly correlated to

aggressive behavior [24]. Some reports suggest that batterers have higher levels of general anger or hostility than nonviolent people [25]. Other studies report that anger and hostility toward a partner is associated with domestic violence, whereas generalized anger and aggression is not [26]. Although batterers often may not seek help, employers should provide access to resources at work. Some companies provide treatment through employee benefit plans—hoping to encourage batterers to self-identify and seek professional help before the abuse becomes worse.

Measuring costs and benefits

Measuring the costs of intimate partner violence to businesses and the benefits of implementing proactive programs has not been studied widely. Because intimate partner violence is considered to be underreported, it is difficult to get a grasp on economic costs beyond the information contained in previous parts of this article. Many companies that implement workplace programs do not measure use because of concerns for the confidentiality of employees who use the programs. They note that anecdotal information from employees regarding the helpfulness of programs has convinced them of the value—regardless of whether program outcomes have been measured. Companies often provide means to access resources without notifying the employer that services were used, so a survivor of intimate partner violence may use information or resources provided through the employer without sharing with their manager or supervisor that the information was used or needed. In the future, it is hoped that tools can be designed to measure the impact of the programs without sacrificing the safety and confidentiality of users. Further research in the area of costs associated with loss of productivity, absenteeism, and employee turnover would be helpful, because there is little available research in this area. It may be meaningful to show employers that domestic violence costs a certain number of dollars per year per employee.

Summary

Although measurement of costs and benefits may be an important consideration, it should not stop employers from recognizing the good they can do for their employees and society by implementing awareness and education programs on intimate partner violence within the workplace. Employers who take on the challenge of addressing intimate partner violence as a workplace issue are true leaders. They are choosing enlightened self-interest in an effort to save lives—and change society. As a survivor of intimate partner violence shared with one of the authors, “Were it not for my company’s program on intimate partner violence, not only would I probably not have a job, I would probably not be alive today.”

Appendix. CAEPV sample policy for workplace threats and violence¹

(Company Name) seeks to provide a work environment free from violence or threats of violence against individuals, groups, or employees, or threats against company property-including partner violence that may occur on our property. This policy requires that all individuals on company premises or while representing the Company conduct themselves in a professional manner consistent with good business practices and in absolute conformity with non-violence principles and standards.

Definition

For purposes of this policy, workplace violence is defined as a single behavior or series of behaviors which constitute actual or potential assault, battery, harassment, intimidation, threats or similar actions, attempted destruction, or threats to Company or personal property; which occur in a Company workplace, at a Company work location, or while an individual is engaged in Company business.

Company Response

(Company Name) strictly prohibits use of violence or threats of violence in the workplace and views such actions very seriously. The possession of weapons in the workplace, threats, threatening or menacing behavior, stalking, or acts of violence against employees, visitors, guests, or other individuals by anyone on (Company Name) property will not be tolerated. Violations of this policy will lead to disciplinary actions up to and including termination of employment and the involvement of appropriate law enforcement authorities as needed.

Any person who makes substantial threats, exhibits threatening behavior, or engages in violent acts on (Company Name) premises shall be removed from the property as quickly as safety permits, and may be asked to remain away from (Company Name) premises pending the outcome of an investigation into the incident. People who commit these acts outside the workplace but which impact the workplace are also violating this policy and will be dealt with appropriately. When threatening behavior is exhibited or acts of violence are committed, (Company Name) will initiate an appropriate response. This response may include, but is not limited to, evaluation by (Company Name) Employee Assistance Professionals or external professionals, suspension or termination of any business relationship, reassignment of job duties, suspension or termination of employment, or criminal prosecution of the person/persons involved. No existing (Company Name) policy, practice, or procedure should be interpreted to prohibit decisions designed to

¹ CAEPV provides this sample policy to its members for the SOLE PURPOSE of guidance in development of their own policies. Any policy developed by a company should always be with the advice of that company's legal counsel.

prevent a threat from being performed, a violent act from occurring, or a life-threatening situation from developing.

Reporting Procedure

(Company Name) personnel are responsible for notifying the designated management representative of any threats which they have witnessed, received, or have been told that another person has witnessed or received—including those related to partner violence. Even without an actual threat, personnel should also report any behavior they have witnessed which they regard as threatening or violent, when that behavior is job related or might be performed on a company controlled site or is connected to company employment. Employees are responsible for making this report regardless of the relationship between the individual who initiated the threat or threatening behavior and the person or persons who were threatened or were the focus of the threatening behavior. If the designated representative is not available, personnel should report the threat to their supervisor or another member of the management team. (Company Name) understands the sensitivity of the information requested and has developed confidentiality procedures, which recognize and respect the privacy of the reporting employee(s). Consistent with the values of (Company Name), people should take action in ways that maintain respect and dignity for individuals while acting in an accountable and swift manner to address the situation.

Protective or Restraining Orders

All individuals who apply for and obtain a protective or restraining order, which lists company locations as being protected areas, must provide to the designated management representative a copy of the petition and order.

Designated Management Representative

Name:

Title:

Department:

Telephone:

Location:

Partner Violence and the Workplace

(Company Name) recognizes impact of partner violence on the workplace. Partner violence is defined by (Company Name) as abusive behavior occurring between two people in an intimate relationship. It may include physical violence, sexual, emotional, and psychological intimidation, verbal abuse, stalking, and economic control.

(Company Name) is committed to heightening awareness of partner violence and providing guidance for employees and management to address the occurrence of partner violence and its effects on the workplace. (Company Name) intends to make assistance available to employees involved in partner violence. This

assistance may include: confidential means for coming forward for help, resource and referral information, special considerations at the workplace for employee safety, work schedule adjustments, or leave necessary to obtain medical, counseling, or legal assistance, and workplace relocation (if available). In responding to partner violence, (Company Name) will maintain appropriate confidentiality and respect for the rights of the employee involved.

(Company Name) intends to publish, maintain, and post in locations of high visibility, a list of resources for survivors and perpetrators of partner violence. (Company Name) will not deny job benefits or other programs to employees based solely on partner violence related problems. When employees confide that a job performance or conduct problem is related to partner violence, in addition to appropriate corrective or disciplinary action consistent with company policy and procedure, a referral for appropriate assistance should be made to the employee.

Leave Options for Employees Experiencing Threats of Violence

(Company Name) will make every effort to assist an employee experiencing threats of violence. If an employee needs to be absent from work due to threats of violence, the length of the absence will be determined by the individual's situation through collaboration with the employee and (fill in appropriate title(s) for your company.) (Examples may include: supervisor/manager, Human Resources representative, union representative, etc.)

Employees, managers, and supervisors (or appropriate titles for your company) are encouraged to first explore paid leave options that can be arranged to help the employee cope with the situation without having to take a formal unpaid leave of absence. Depending on circumstances, this may include:

- Arranging flexible work hours so the employee can seek protection, go to court, look for new housing, enter counseling, arrange child care, etc.
- Considering use of sick time, job sharing, compensatory time, paid leave, informal unpaid leave, etc., particularly if requests are for relatively short periods.

Suggested Procedures for Safety and Protection of Employees Experiencing Threats of Violence

Employee

- Encourage the employee to save any threatening e-mail or voice-mail messages. These can potentially be used for future legal action, or can serve as evidence that an existing restraining order was violated.
- The employee should obtain a restraining order that includes the workplace, and keep a copy on hand at all times. The employee may consider providing a copy to the police, his/her supervisor, security, or human resources (or appropriate individuals/departments within your company).

- The employee should provide a picture of the perpetrator to reception areas or security.
- The employee should identify an emergency contact person should the employer be unable to contact the victim.
- If an absence is deemed appropriate, the employee should be clear about the plan to return to work. While absent, the employee should maintain contact with the appropriate Human Resources personnel

Employer

- Arrange the victim to have priority parking near the building.
- Have calls screened, transferring harassing calls to security-or have the employee's name removed from automated phone directories.
- Limit information about employees disclosed by phone. Information that would help locate a victim or indicates a time of return should not be provided.
- Relocate the employee's workspace to a more secure area or another site.
- The employer should have trained EAP professionals or external professionals assist the employee with development of a safety plan
- Work with local law enforcement personnel, and encourage employees to do so regarding situations outside the workplace.

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