DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – DOES YOUR WORKPLACE HAVE A PROACTIVE APPROACH?

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic Violence is a pattern of behavior used by one person to gain power and control over another person with whom he or she has had an intimate relationship. This pattern of behavior may include physical violence, sexual, emotional and psychological intimidation, verbal abuse, stalking or the use of electronic devices to harass and control another person.

Domestic Violence becomes workplace violence or harassment when it occurs or spills over into the workplace.

Based on information published by the Conference Board of Canada in November 2015:
- 71% of organizations surveyed reported situations where it was necessary to protect a victim of domestic abuse;
- 37% reported they have not implemented a domestic violence policy, either stand-alone or as part of a broader workplace policy.

Other research shows:
- 70% of domestic violence victims are also abused at work (Swanberg, J. & Logan, T.K. (2005));
- 54% of domestic violence victims miss 3 or more days of work a month (Zachary, M. (2000)).

Why Do Employers Need to be Proactive?

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), employers must specifically take precautions to protect workers from domestic violence that may occur in the workplace. While a significant number of workplaces have implemented a domestic violence policy, many employers acknowledge that more training and education is required for employees and managers.

Providing a safe environment for employees facing domestic violence and connecting them with the appropriate community resources can contribute to a more productive workplace. Some of the effects and associated costs of domestic violence in the workplace include:
- Reduced employee productivity;
- Increased absenteeism;
- Decreased employee morale – strained relations among co-workers;
- Potential harm to employees, co-workers and/or customers when violent abusers enter the workplace; and
- Increased liability costs if someone at the workplace is harmed.

Protecting Employees Who are Victims of Domestic Violence

Organizations have an important role to play in supporting their employees who are dealing with domestic violence.
Key elements of such a program should include:

- Training for managers and employees;
- Reporting potentially threatening situations based on clear guidelines, for both management and staff, on how to deal with such issues;
- Reviewing leave of absence policies and guidelines;
- Establishing alternative work arrangements protocols;
- Assessing threats and risks;
- Planning safety procedures and programs such as door security, installation of panic buttons, etc.; and
- Providing access to support services, community resources or employee assistance programs.

Is your organization prepared to protect and support an employee who is the victim of domestic violence?

While it may not be an issue yet, taking a proactive approach will ensure you have clear policies and procedures in place that will allow you to act immediately should that be necessary. It will also help increase awareness, manage and prevent the escalation of violence and encourage employees who are victims of domestic violence to reach out for help.

With amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act (Bill 132, Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act,) coming into force on September 8, 2016, this is the perfect time to review your existing policies and procedures to ensure they comply with all the requirements of the OHSA.

What Can Pesce & Associates Do For Your Organization?

We have the experience and expertise in creating customized policies, procedures and codes of conduct that are compliant with legislation and recognize the culture and values of an organization. We can develop and deliver customized training and communications to inform and support managers and employees. Please visit our website at www.pesceassociates.com, contact your Senior Consultant or call Angelo Pesce, Managing Partner, at 416- 491-1501 extension 22.

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July 2016