

## **DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE: CORPORATE PRODUCTIVITY, RISK MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEE WELLBEING**

Domestic and sexual violence have far-reaching consequences extending beyond personal and social realms, and into the corporate sector. These issues negatively affect business productivity, employee well-being, workplace safety, and overall corporate operations. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), **intimate partner violence (IPV) costs the U.S. economy an estimated \$3.6 trillion over survivors' lifetimes**, affecting both healthcare and workplace productivity (CDC, 2022).

### **WORKPLACE PRODUCTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE**

Organizations incur substantial healthcare costs due to domestic and sexual violence, as survivors frequently require medical treatment, mental health support, and counseling services. The CDC reports that **the average cost for medical and mental health services per victim of IPV is approximately \$1,200 annually** (CDC, 2022). Additionally, workplace safety becomes a concern when perpetrators target victims at their places of employment. In fact, a study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) found that **27% of workplace violence incidents were related to domestic disputes** (BLS, 2019). Such instances create unsafe work environments for both victims and their colleagues. **At same time, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) reports that 65% of employers do not have a domestic violence plan.**

### **LEGAL AND REPUTATIONAL RISKS**

Businesses face legal liabilities if they fail to protect employees from known threats of domestic violence or sexual abuse. Under the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines, **employers are responsible for ensuring a safe work environment, and failure to do so can result in lawsuits or regulatory penalties.** Furthermore, reputational damage can occur when companies are perceived as unsupportive of affected employees. As Harvard Business Review states, **"A company's response to domestic violence can significantly shape its public image and employee trust"** (HBR, 2021). Additionally, the SHRM emphasizes that "employers who take an active role in addressing domestic violence can reduce workplace disruptions and promote a healthier work environment" (SHRM, 2021).

### **THE ROLE OF CORPORATE INTERVENTION**

Given the economic and social impact of domestic and sexual violence, businesses must take proactive steps to support affected employees. Implementing Employee Assistance Programs, providing paid leave for survivors, and fostering a culture of awareness through training and policy development are essential measures. **The Houston Area Women's Center (HAWC) stands ready to support your company in raising awareness of all of the different types of domestic abuse and violence.**

### **LET'S TRANSFORM LIVES TOGETHER**

The corporate sector cannot afford to ignore the widespread effects of domestic and sexual violence. **This is especially relevant in Houston, home to the second-largest concentration of Fortune 500 company headquarters in the United States.** Employers must recognize their roles in mitigating this critical situation by fostering supportive workplace policies and ensuring a safe and inclusive environment for all. **HAWC's subject matter experts will work with you to educate, inform, and protect your workforce about this public health – and corporate – crisis.**