



Women's Health Victoria

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Workplace policy for the prevention of violence against women

Petra Beggell
Policy and Health Promotion Manager

URL: <http://www.whv.org.au> Email: whv@whv.org.au Phone: 9662 3755



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Overview

- Impacts of domestic violence on the workplace
- Benefits of adopting a policy
- Function of our policy template
- The elements of our policy
- What we've learned



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The Impact of Domestic Violence on the Workplace

- Health impact
- Occupational health and safety
- Productivity



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The Health Impact

'It eventually destroyed my career. We'd argue all night. The stress led to physical symptoms, nausea, diarrhoea. In the office I was scatterbrained.'



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Occupational Health and Safety

'I could not keep my mind on what I was doing. Because I operate machinery and others depend on me, I believed I was a danger to the other workers. This also made me feel worse.'



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Productivity

'I always missed Mondays because the worst beatings happened on weekends.'



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Benefits of adopting a policy

- Providing guidance for supervisors and management
- Raising awareness of rights and support options
- Setting workplace benchmarks for others to follow
- Starting the conversation about intimate partner violence with employees



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Our policy has a dual purpose

- To support workers experiencing violence
- To make the workplace a setting where the determinants of violence against women are acted upon – gender equity and attitudes about violence and women



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Core policy statements

- Goal– to increase awareness in an effort to prevent violence against women and respond to victims
- Commitment
- Recognition



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Core policy statements

- Behaviour requirement
- Procedures
- Management commitment



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Procedure - Education and Support

- Visible commitment statement
- Visible list of services for victims and perpetrators
- Referral to support services
- Provide a safe workplace for those experiencing violence
- The employer will not discriminate against victims



Procedure - Flexible leave options

- Making reasonable efforts to help employees who need time off
- Period of leave determined through collaboration of employee and their manager
- Encouraged to first explore paid leave options



Procedure - Performance

- Recognition of performance problems as a result of domestic violence
- Employer commitment to consider the employee's situation and to utilise all options to resolve problem
- Termination discussed if attempts over time not successful



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Procedure - Employees who commit acts

- Employees that harass or abuse at or from the workplace subject to disciplinary action
- Sanctions are a matter for the criminal justice system
- Abuse of the policy is a serious offence



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Safety plan guidelines - Employer

- Victims know their abusers better than anyone else
- Ask if changes can be made to increase safety
- Ask if others could be at risk
- Maintain confidentiality
- Arrange for leave and adjust work schedules or locations
- Get legal advice and inform management if violence has been committed in the workplace



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Safety plan guidelines - Employees experiencing violence

- Consider changing work times or location
- Request a new phone number
- Be clear about plans to return to work
- Consider an emergency contact person
- Consider a restraining order that covers the workplace
- Consider providing a photo
- Save any threatening messages



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Next Steps

- Linfox policy launch with L&D
- Encouraging others to take up the policy