

Effects of Domestic Violence on the Workplace

A Vermont survey of male offenders enrolled in batterer
intervention programs

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Vermont Council on Domestic Violence
Center for Rural Studies, University of Vermont
Spectrum Youth & Family Services, Violence Intervention & Prevention Programs

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Study Introduction

- ▶ Statewide study on the effects of DV on the workplace by interviewing male participants in batterer intervention programs (BIP)
 - ▶ Study sample of 193 is representative of men enrolled in BIPs in VT
 - ▶ 95% confidence level, +/- 4.5% margin of error
 - ▶ Examined the impact of DV on the perpetrator and victim's workplace
 - ▶ Abusive contact at the workplace
 - ▶ Paid and unpaid time taken off from work
 - ▶ Productivity and safety
 - ▶ Examined the workplace response to DV
 - ▶ Supervisors and co-workers
 - ▶ Policies and procedures
 - ▶ Gathered offenders' perspectives on useful measures employers can implement to improve the workplace response to DV
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Employment Two Years Prior to Present

- ▶ **92% (178) were employed**
 - ▶ 67% (129) worked for an employer only
 - ▶ 16% (31) worked both for an employer and self-employed
 - ▶ 9% (18) self-employed only
- ▶ **63% (101) had a supervisory role**
 - ▶ *“My other co-workers chose not to get involved. I am their boss, and I think they worried that there would be ramifications [if they confronted me], that I would be equally as abusive toward them.”*
- ▶ **73% (117) had never been in trouble at work** for other issues (i.e. drugs, alcohol, or violence at work)

Size of Employer	% (n)
1-5 employees	15% (24)
6-10	16% (26)
11-50	36% (58)
51-100	12% (19)
101-500	16% (25)
500+	5% (8)

Offenders' Lost Work Time - Unpaid

- ▶ Men lost a total of **52,731 unpaid days of work** – equivalent to **27 years** of full time employment – because consequences related to his domestic violence
 - ▶ Average 273 days/person
 - ▶ Estimated lost wages for unpaid time out of work related to domestic violence totaled **\$5.4 million**
 - ▶ Average \$29,876 per person
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Offenders' Lost Work Time - Paid

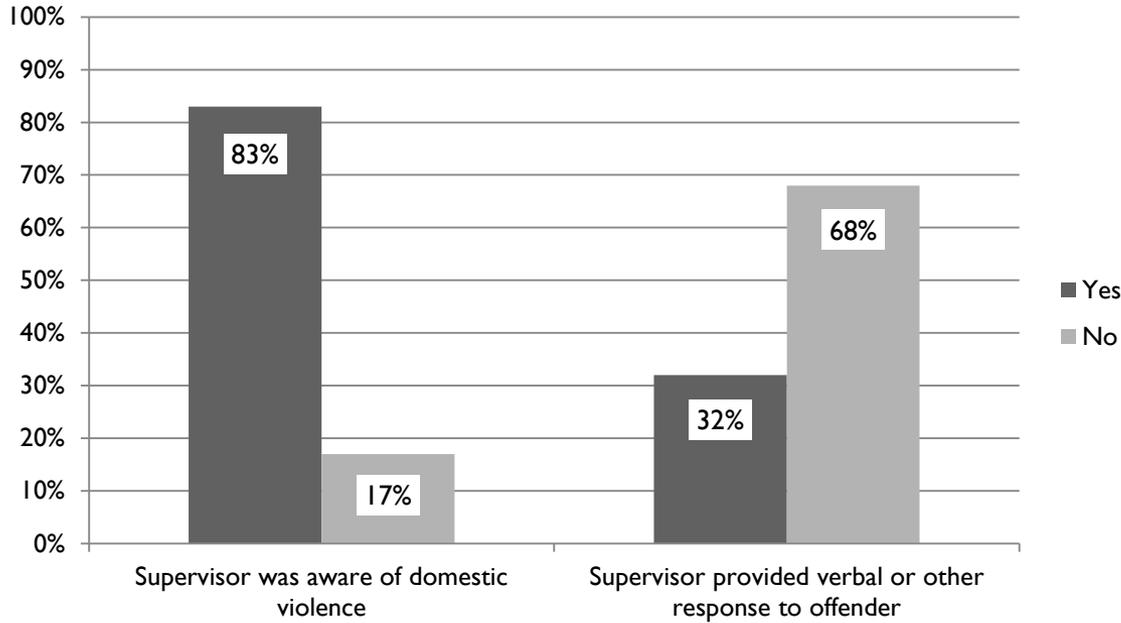
- ▶ Men lost a total of **337 days of work paid by employers** because consequences related to his domestic violence
 - ▶ Average 1.7 paid days/person
 - ▶ Estimated wages paid by employers for time out of work related to domestic violence totaled **\$37,564**
 - ▶ Average \$197 per person
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Abusive Behavior at Work

- ▶ 49% (87) spent time keeping track of where partner was and what she was doing
 - ▶ 29% (50) contacted her to say something that scared or intimidated her
 - ▶ Example: *“If you’re laying on the couch texting when I get home, I’m going to smash it in your face”*
 - ▶ Example: *“If you're not home when I get home there will be consequences”*
 - ▶ 40% of supervisors were aware that employees were contacting their partner in this way while at work
 - ▶ 25% (44) left or were late to work to be abusive
 - ▶ 12 men used a company vehicle when they left
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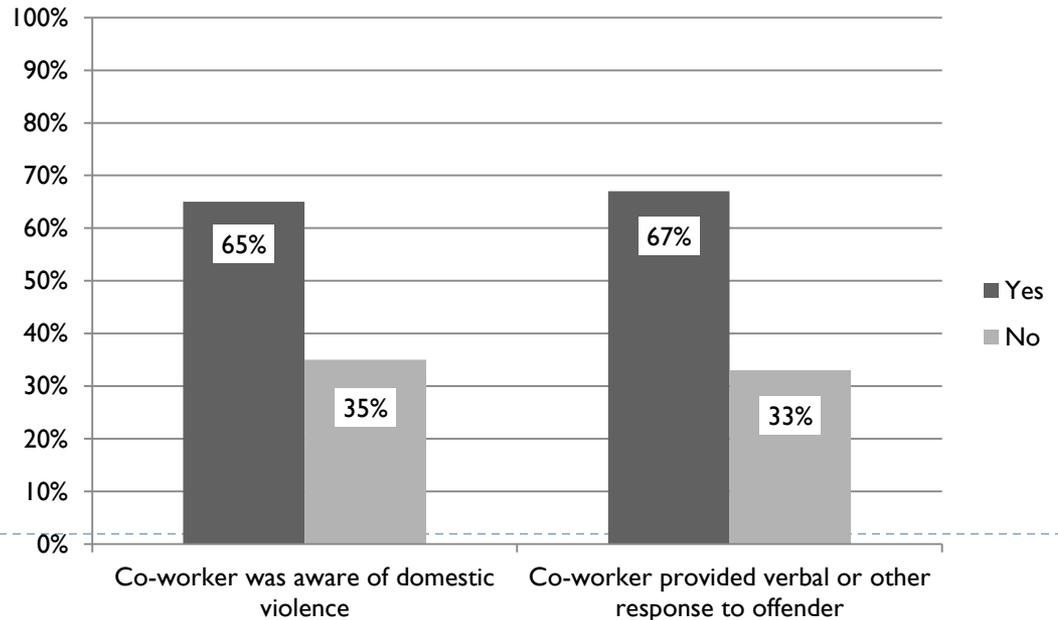
Impact on Safety and Productivity

- ▶ 80% (140) said their job performance was negatively affected because of their abuse
 - ▶ 19% (34) caused or almost caused an accident at work
 - ▶ *“A couple times to where I was thinking about something [else], I cut myself [while] using a meat slicer or slammed my hand in the door.”*
 - ▶ *“One of the guys I was working with got hit by a tree [because] I was pissed off, [which was a] pretty bad feeling because I thought I killed him.”*
 - ▶ *“I got in a petty argument with a friend and pushed his car over with a fork lift”*
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Supervisor awareness and response

Co-worker awareness and response



Response from Supervisors

- ▶ The majority of supervisors' responses were **neutral** – their involvement was limited and comments were not constructive in addressing abuse.
 - ▶ “[My] supervisor said, you have to do, what you have to do.”
 - ▶ “[My supervisor] wishes me well and hopes everything works out for me”
 - ▶ Some responses focused separation between work and home life.
 - ▶ “Nothing specific to the situation, but that I was taking off too much time from work.”
 - ▶ A few responses challenged his abusive behavior.
 - ▶ “My supervisor was very upset. He confronted me about the abuse.”
 - ▶ A few responses colluded with him.
 - ▶ “[My supervisor would ask me, ‘did she bleed?’ [He would tell me] to kick [her] because it hurts them less. We joke about it all day, every day.”
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Response from Co-Workers

- ▶ The overwhelming majority of responses **were not constructive or were colluding**, including disparaging remarks about his partner, blaming her, or taking responsibility for his abuse off of him.
 - ▶ Examples:
 - ▶ “[They would] tell me ways of spying on her, or ways of being vindictive.”
 - ▶ “They tried to tell me to get rid of her- co workers put the ideas in my head that I couldn't or shouldn't trust her.”
 - ▶ “They would say to leave her, that I didn't need [this] sh*t. Others would call her names.”
 - ▶ “Get away from her - she's going to put you in jail”
 - ▶ “They patted me on the back [and said] ‘good job’ [and] ‘that's taking control””
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Other Responses

Response	Supervisor	Co-Worker
Referred to EAP, human resources or a counselor	7% (11)	7% (9)
Warned that they might face disciplinary action or get fired from work	22% (35)	23% (30)
Warned that they might get in trouble with the law because DV is a crime	31% (49)	42% (54)
Made it seem like their personal relationship was not a big deal or none of their business	43% (68)	41% (70)
Blamed or talked badly about their partner	21% (33)	41% (70)
Offered to help him out in any way	N/A	51% (66)

Partners' Lost Work Time

- ▶ Offenders estimated that partners **lost 1,125 days** of work due to his domestic violence.
 - ▶ 147 days (13%) of lost work time **were paid** by her employer, totaling \$19,080 (ave \$350/person)
 - ▶ Lost wages from unpaid days off totaled \$101,367 (ave \$1,810/person)
 - ▶ Partners lost an average of **20 work days** per person

 - ▶ **Reasons for lost work time:**
 - ▶ Address emotional and/or mental issues (26%)
 - ▶ Address physical injuries (26%)
 - ▶ Attend court/legal meetings (24%)
 - ▶ Rest and recover post incident (9%)
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Impact on Partners' Employment

- ▶ 46% (65) said their abusive behavior had a negative affect on **her productivity or career advancement**
 - ▶ Preventing her from going to work or getting a job or promotion
 - ▶ Making it difficult for her to get her work done
 - ▶ Making her look bad in front of co-workers
 - ▶ Creating problems that resulted in her getting disciplined
 - ▶ 17% (22) said that DV created problems for partner that resulted in her **quitting or getting fired**
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Victims Recounted How DV Affected Their Employment

- ▶ *“He told lies about me so that everyone started treating me badly. My job description was changed and diminished. I finally had to leave a job I loved.”*
 - ▶ *“My partner would instant message me and call me incessantly on my work phone. He would try my cell phone and when I did not answer, he immediately called my work phone.”*
 - ▶ *“Living with abuse at home is so terrifying. But when [I] became viewed as a bad employee and [my] job changed, and then [I] had to leave and move away, nothing in [my] life felt safe anymore.”*
 - ▶ *“I had to leave the office unexpectedly to file the Relief from Abuse Order and pick up my children. [My supervisor] was unsympathetic and demonstrated no compassion to my situation.”*
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Offender Rating of Workplace Strategies

Strategies to Prevent DV	Rated Somewhat to Very Effective
Supervisor privately discussed your abusive behaviors with you and informed you about resources available	93%
Company policy requires that people who get in trouble with the law because of domestic abuse must complete a domestic abuse program in order to keep their job	87%
Required that employees attend a meeting to learn about company policies on not tolerating domestic abuse by employees	82%
Written policy stating that the company does not allow use of company resources and work time to harass, intimidate, or abuse a partner in any way	76%
Supervisor made it clear that what happens in the home should stay in the home and is none of anyone's business.	16%

Study Implications

- ▶ Domestic violence is not just a private, family matter. It impacts the workplace of both offender and victim and, therefore, employers must be responsive and proactive.
 - ▶ Workplace responses demonstrate a culture that largely **supports or ignores** domestic violence.
 - ▶ DV causes a significant loss of paid and unpaid **work time**, lost work **productivity**, and **safety hazards** for employees.
 - ▶ Offenders' suggested workplace strategies to prevent and address DV are **opposite** of their experiences.
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Recommendations for Employers

- ▶ **Protocols and Policies** - Adopt a protocol and implement leave, benefit, and referral policies that address domestic violence in the workplace
 - ▶ **Train** - Mandatory domestic violence trainings for managers, supervisors, and human resources staff
 - ▶ **Educate and Inform** - Staff through brown bag lunches, workshops, and newsletters
 - ▶ **Consider Security** - Worksite security measures to protect employees
 - ▶ **Work Environment** - Create a fair and supportive work environment where it is safe to disclose abuse
 - ▶ **Utilize Community Resources** - Connect with community-based efforts
 - ▶ **Know the Law** – Be aware of state laws regarding employees and DV
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Resources Developed from this Study

▶ Full Report

http://www.uvm.edu/crs/reports/2012/VTDV_WorkplaceStudy2012.pdf

Suggested citation: Schmidt, M.C. & Barnett, A. (2012). *Effects of Domestic Violence on the Workplace: A Vermont survey of male offenders enrolled in batterer intervention programs*. Burlington, VT: University of Vermont, Center for Rural Studies.

▶ Executive Summary

http://www.uvm.edu/crs/reports/2012/VTDV_WorkplaceStudy2012_ExecSummary.pdf

▶ Model Policies

http://www.uvm.edu/crs/reports/2012/Model_Policy_2012.pdf

▶ Sample Brochure

<http://women.vermont.gov/sites/women/files/pdf/dvinwkpl2011.pdf>
