



City and County of San Francisco

# Department on the Status of Women

*Mayor Gavin Newsom*

*Executive Director Emily M. Murase, PhD*

## Domestic Violence and the Workplace

---

### *A Guide for Assisting Employees who are Survivors*

Presented by the Department on the Status of Women to  
City and County of San Francisco Human Resources Managers, October 27, 2010

#### Contents:

- I. What is Domestic Violence?
- II. Domestic Violence Impacts the Workplace
- III. Creating a Culture of Responsiveness
- IV. Taking Steps toward Safety
  - A. Creating a Safety Plan
  - B. Discussing Domestic Violence with an Employee
- V. Refer, Refer, Refer!

Appendix A: Domestic Violence and the Workplace by the Numbers

Appendix B: "Domestic violence: Your coworker's dark secret,"  
from CNNMoney.com.

## What is Domestic Violence?

---

Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive behavior in which one person attempts to control another person through threats or actual use of physical, emotional, sexual, financial and spiritual abuse.

Domestic violence can include:

- **Physical violence:** Hitting, strangling or pushing
- **Emotional abuse:** Name calling and threats
- **Financial abuse:** Preventing access to bank accounts, credit cards or other financial resources
- **Sexual abuse:** Any forced sexual activity
- **Spiritual abuse:** Keeping someone from going to a place of worship or using scriptures to justify abuse
- **Stalking:** Following, tracking movements, constant phone calls/emails/text messages, sending "gifts," contacting friends or coworkers, other harassing behaviors

## Domestic Violence Impacts the Workplace

---

According to a 2005 national study, 21% of full-time employed adults were victims of domestic violence and 64% of them indicated their work performance was significantly impacted.

It is estimated that 25% of workplace problems such as absenteeism, lower productivity, turnover and excessive use of medical benefits are due to family violence. An estimated 24-30% of abused working women lose their jobs due to their domestic violence situation.

Another study found that 96% of employed domestic violence victims experience problems at work due to their abuse or abuser, with 74% of employed battered women reporting being harassed while at work by their abusive partners in person or by telephone.

## Creating a Culture of Responsiveness

---

A victim of domestic violence will be more likely to disclose that s/he is being abused and that it may impact the workplace if s/he feels that management will be responsive to the situation. Here are some tips:

- Make it safe to talk about domestic violence.
- Offer training to staff about domestic violence.
- Put a poster in the lunchroom or safety cards in restrooms with resource materials staff can access confidentially.

## Taking Steps toward Safety

---

### *Creating a Safety Plan*

When an employee reveals s/he is a victim of domestic violence, what steps can you take to promote safety for the victim and the workplace?

A safety plan is the primary tool victims can use to find safety. Domestic violence service providers in the community are skilled at supporting victims in creating safety plans, and a good first step is to refer the employee to support services.

However, the employee will also need your support to create a plan for safety at the workplace. Below are some questions you can ask as you work with the employee to make the workplace safer.

#### **Getting to and from the Workplace:**

- Is the commute to and from work safe?
- Are the parking arrangements at work safe? Can s/he be given priority parking near the building and a security escort from her/his car?
- Can someone walk with her/him to the car or public transit stop? Are there any car pools in the employee's residential area?

#### **Leave and Schedule Issues:**

- Is there a need for leave time?
- Is the work schedule safe?
- Does the employee need to leave the home for any length of time?

#### **Office Space Safety:**

- Does the employee need a new work phone number or a call screening system at work? Can her/his name and number be removed from automated phone messages or directories?
- Is her/his workstation away from public access, stairs, and elevators? If not, can it be moved? Can barriers be placed between the entrance and the victim's workstation?
- What alternate escape route exists for use if the abuser comes to the workplace?
- Can a code word or other means be established to alert a manager or other personnel about a potentially dangerous situation?

#### **Restraining Orders:**

- Does the employee have or plan to request a restraining order?
- Does the restraining order name the work site as a protected location?
- Can the employee provide a photo of the perpetrator to building security, as well as other identifying information, such as car make and model, etc.?

- Do others in the office need to know that the restraining order exists, such as an office receptionist, manager, etc.? Do those individuals know how to respond if the batterer shows up?

**Emergency Contact Information:**

- What emergency contact information can the employee provide the employer in case a crisis occurs at work?
- What important papers or personal items, including medication, will the employee need? How can they be collected and where can they be stored?
- Can her/his paychecks or other work-related documents be delivered to another location?

Ask what changes could be made to make the employee feel safer. Remember, the victim knows the perpetrator better than anyone else.

## *Discussing Domestic Violence with an Employee*

### 1. Plan the Discussion

- Determine a good time and a comfortable place to talk.
- Stay focused on the problem. Let the victim know that the discussion will remain confidential unless there is a safety risk to other employees.
- Recognize that this may be a difficult conversation for both of you.

### 2. Support the Employee

- Let the employee know that you and the organization believe that verbal, emotional or physical abuse in a relationship is never acceptable.
- Listen without judgment. Give plenty of time to answer. Do not moralize or criticize.
- Offer supportive statements: "I believe what you are telling me."
- Stay focused on safety planning. Do not tell your employee to leave the abusive situation, since you could be placing them in more danger.
- Allow the employee to make decisions. Do not try to solve the problem for the victim.

### 3. Provide Resources

- Provide information about the organization's relevant benefits, policies and support.
- Provide contact information for domestic violence hotlines, local shelters and other resources that may provide immediate assistance.
- Help the victim to safety plan and let her/him know that someone can help.

Victims will often resist talking about their situation and are afraid to reveal information for many reasons. To facilitate communication with a victim of domestic violence, make sure the victim feels safe to talk about the abuse, and knows that s/he will be believed and supported. Also keep in mind:

- The victim knows the situation and its dangers better than anyone.
- Work may be the only place the victim feels safe.
- Regaining self-sufficiency requires keeping a job, receiving a paycheck and maintaining medical benefits for the victim and any children involved.

## Refer, Refer, Refer!

---

### *City Services*

If an employee discloses that s/he is a victim of domestic violence, this should result in an automatic referral to the Employee Assistance Program.

Employee Assistance Program: (800) 795-2351

### *Community-Based Services*

Community-based organizations have significant expertise in supporting survivors of domestic violence with specific and targeted services. Though EAP can also provide these referrals, it could save the employee time and effort to receive more specific guidance directly from you.

The Department on the Status of Women publishes the *Directory of Social Services for Women in San Francisco*, updated annually and posted online at <http://www.sfgov3.org/index.aspx?page=207>. The *Directory* includes hundreds of detailed listings, and can be searched by subject. A quick reference guide for some of the domestic violence related services in San Francisco has been included below.

<b>EMERGENCY SHELTER</b>	
Asian Women’s Shelter (24-hour)	(877) 751-0880
La Casa de las Madres (24-hour)	(877) 503-1850
Riley Center (24-hour)	(415) 255-0165
WOMAN, Inc. ( <i>for referrals to Bay Area shelters</i> ; 24-hour)	(415) 864-4722
<b>CRISIS LINES</b>	
San Francisco Women Against Rape (24-hour)	(415) 861-2024
WOMAN, Inc. (24-hour)	(415) 864-4722
<b>RESTRAINING ORDERS</b>	
Cooperative Restraining Order Clinic	(415) 864-1790
<b>LEGAL SUPPORT</b>	
Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach	(415) 567-6255
Bar Association of San Francisco Volunteer Legal Services	(415) 982-1600
Bay Area Legal Aid	(415) 982-4243
<b>GLBTQ SUPPORT SERVICES</b>	
Community United Against Violence(24-hour)	(415) 333-HELP
<b>LAW ENFORCEMENT</b>	
Police Department Domestic Violence Response Unit	(415) 553-9225
District Attorney’s Office Victim Services Division	(415) 553-9044

## Appendix A: Domestic Violence and the Workplace by the Numbers

### PREVALENCE:

- According to a 2005 national study, 21% of full-time employed adults were victims of domestic violence and 64% of them indicated their work performance was significantly impacted.
- It is estimated that 25% of workplace problems such as absenteeism, lower productivity, turnover and excessive use of medical benefits are due to family violence. An estimated 24-30% of abused working women lose their jobs due to their domestic violence situation.

### THE COST OF ABUSE:

- It is estimated domestic violence costs employers \$3 to \$5 billion a year in lost days of work and reduced productivity.
- The aggregate annual cost to victims of domestic violence is about \$8.8 billion, or \$67 billion when pain, suffering, and lost quality of life are included.

### IMPAIRED JOB PERFORMANCE:

- 96% of employed domestic violence victims experience problems at work due to their abuse or abuser.
- One study found that 74% of employed battered women reported being harassed while at work by their abusive partners in person or by telephone.
- 64% of victims of domestic violence indicated that their ability to work was affected by the violence. Among key causes for their decline in productivity, victims noted:
  - "distraction" (57%)
  - "fear of discovery" (45%)
  - "harassment by intimate partner at work (either by phone or in person)" (40%)
  - "fear of intimate partner's unexpected visits" (34%)
  - "inability to complete assignments on time" (24%)
  - "job loss" (21%)
- The annual cost of lost productivity due to domestic violence is estimated as \$727.8 million with over 7.9 million paid workdays lost per year.

### ABSENTEEISM:

- Studies of battered women have found that 50 - 85% of abused women missed work because of abuse; over 60% reported arriving late due to abuse.
- According to the CDC, intimate partner violence victims lose a total of nearly 8.0 million days of paid work—the equivalent of more than 32,000 full-time jobs—and nearly 5.6 million days of household productivity as a result of the violence.
- 56% of battered women arrive an hour late for work 5 times a month.

- About 1 in 8 employed stalking victims lost time from work because of fear for their safety or because they needed to get a restraining order or testify in court. More than half these victims lost five days or more from work.

#### EMPLOYEES WHO BATTER:

- A study of convicted batterers in Maine found that over 75% of offenders used workplace resources at least once to express remorse or anger, check up on, pressure, or threaten the victim.
- 74% of perpetrators had easy access to their intimate partner's workplace, with 21% of offenders reporting that they contacted her at the workplace in violation of a no contact order.
- 48% of offenders had difficulty concentrating at work, with 19% of offenders reporting a workplace accident or near miss from inattentiveness due to pre-occupation with their relationship.
- 68% of offenders said that domestic abuse posters and brochures in the workplace would help prevent domestic abuse from impacting the business.

#### ATTITUDES AND POLICIES:

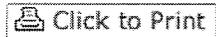
- Of all establishments reporting an incident of workplace violence in the previous 12 months, 21% reported that the incident affected the fear level of their employees and 21% indicated that the incident affected their employees' morale.
- An overwhelming majority (84%) of corporate employees participating in a national study in 2007 believe that corporations should be a part of the solution to addressing domestic violence.
- Of the 30% of workplaces in the US that have some sort of formal workplace violence policy, only 44% have a policy to address domestic violence in the workplace. Only 4% of all establishments train employees on domestic violence and its impact on the workplace.

*Compiled October 2010*

*Find more facts and information at the  
Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence, [www.caepv.com](http://www.caepv.com),  
and the Safe at Work Coalition, [www.safeworkcoalition.org](http://www.safeworkcoalition.org)*



Powered by Clickability

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

## Domestic violence: Your coworker's dark secret

**The topic is taboo in most of corporate America. But the workplace is often central to the struggle - as sanctuary, source of income, and sometimes crime scene.**

By [Betsy Morris](#), senior writer

Last Updated: November 20, 2008: 11:51 AM ET

(Fortune Magazine) -- Cindy Bischof was not the kind of woman who would normally let a boyfriend get in the way of her career.

Driven, persistent, productive, she was everybody's favorite partner at Darwin Realty, a commercial real estate firm on the outskirts of Chicago. She was a role model to the firm's young women, a mentor to junior brokers, a 43-year-old overachiever: in at 5:30 A.M., networking at lunch, so smart about heavy industry that her peers voted her Industrial Broker of the Year.

Cindy was neither submissive nor easily intimidated - which is why what happened to her on March 7 is all the more shocking.

For nearly a year Bischof had been trying to untangle herself from a soured five-year relationship with an out-of-work salesman named Michael Giroux. After their breakup in May of last year, according to friends, family, and police reports, the handsome and charming Giroux suddenly turned strange and dangerous.

The day they broke up, Bischof changed the locks on her house. That night she went to stay with her parents. Giroux smashed the back windows of her house, broke in, and threw paint all over her furniture, rugs, and appliances.

Giroux began calling her incessantly on her cell phone. He stalked her at her house, at her parents' house, even on the golf course.

Bischof's torment became Darwin Realty's nightmare as her co-workers rallied around her. They helped clean up the damage to her house, which cost her \$70,000, according to police reports. The head of Darwin's construction department installed a camouflaged infrared deer-hunting camera in the bushes of her backyard to take pictures

of her deck at night.

In August, it caught Giroux there with a rope, making a noose. Darwin's president, George Cibula, arranged for Bischof to move into a rental property 30 miles away in Plainfield so that Giroux couldn't find her. Cibula hired security guards for the company Christmas party. Sometimes Cindy's partners walked her out to her car at night, just in case.

But Bischof was alone that Friday afternoon in March as she left her office and headed to her car, looking forward to joining her parents at her condo in Estero, Fla. Minutes later, Brian Liston, a Darwin partner working in a corner office, heard four gunshots behind him. He turned and there, outside his office window, lay Bischof, face down on the parking-lot pavement. Giroux, wearing a baseball cap and a fake mustache, had been lying in wait at the tire store next door. He shot and fatally wounded her before shooting himself in the head.

While police spent hours investigating the obvious, employees huddled in the hallways and conference rooms as shock turned to horror and then to unbearable grief. "It's still not over," Cibula said months later, choking up. "All you can do is endure the shock of it."

As the boss, he doesn't know what he could have done differently. He couldn't shield his staff from the trauma. No amount of security would have stopped so determined a killer, he believes. "If everybody brings their problems to work, pretty soon you're a psych hospital," he says. "Cindy knew that, and she tried. But we butted our way in anyway because she was our friend."

#### Employing perpetrators and victims

Domestic violence is still a taboo topic in most of corporate America, and no wonder. Logic won't address it. It carries a great stigma. It raises difficult questions in high-powered workplaces that employ - let's face it - both perpetrators and victims.

Many executives believe the issue has no place at work. What happens at home is supposed to stay at home, especially matters of the heart. In a survey of 200 CEOs sponsored by Liz Claiborne Inc. (LIZ, Fortune 500) last year, most agreed that domestic violence was a serious issue, but 71% said they didn't believe it was a problem at their own companies. Only 13% felt that corporations need to play a major role in addressing domestic abuse.

Soon, though, they may have no choice. Employee attitudes, demographics, and the efforts of some CEOs are converging to drag this issue out of the closet. With so many women in the workforce, and with e-mail, text messaging, and cell phones connecting them to the office around the clock, domestic violence comes to work whether executives like it or not. Employees are well aware of this.

According to the Liz Claiborne survey and another conducted for Verizon Wireless (VZ, Fortune 500) last year, an overwhelming majority of workers wish employers would develop policies to deal with it. To press the point last month in New Canaan, Conn., home to a disproportionate number of top executives, a small army of police officers, volunteers, and high school athletes and coaches showed up at the train station at 5:30 A.M. one morning to hand out domestic violence information to commuters bound for Grand Central Station.

"What is not in sync here is that the average person on the street knows what's going on, but company programs have not kept pace to help employees," says Dede Bartlett, a former senior officer of both Exxon and Altria who is part of the "domestic violence underground railroad" that quietly helps women like those in this story. "This takes top-down leadership," she says. "It's got to be the CEO."

Now a small but growing group of CEOs is saying that it's time for corporate America to confront the issue head-on. Domestic violence affects the bottom line, they say. It threatens workplace safety. As an HR issue, it's much more volatile and potentially dangerous than drug addiction or alcoholism.

"I'd like to see more done about this," says Thomas J. Wilson, CEO of Allstate, one of the CEOs who sees it as a major issue affecting employees, customers, or both. At Verizon Wireless, which handled about 100 abuse cases internally in the past year and roughly 225 more through its employee-assistance programs, "the numbers speak for themselves," says Martha Delehanty, vice president of human resources. "This is an issue we must address."

Although Liz Claiborne made it a corporate cause nearly two decades ago, William J. McComb says he was stunned at what he learned about domestic violence after moving to Liz from Johnson & Johnson two years ago. "We have a responsibility here," the CEO says. "More leaders in the business community need to understand this issue better."

One in ten a victim

Take a look around you. One in ten of your colleagues is probably a victim of domestic abuse, according to recent research by two professors at the Sam M. Walton College of Business at the University of Arkansas.

In a study of three large companies spanning 39 states, 10% of workers who responded to survey questions said, "Right now I am going through this," says Anne O'Leary-Kelly, a management professor who conducted the study. (Though she and co-author Carol Reeves got the same results from both men and women, their research indicates that women are abused much more frequently and severely.) An additional 19% of the men and 30% of the women said they'd been victims at some point in their lives.

"We were startled," says O'Leary-Kelly. "Those numbers suggest a large number of employees are struggling to juggle this personal situation with their jobs."

Contrary to popular opinion, studies show that battered women are more likely to be employed than not. And spousal abuse occurs at work with surprising regularity, O'Leary-Kelly and Reeves found - 19% of current victims said some abuse was occurring at work.

The reasons become clearer when you understand what domestic abuse is and what it's not. It isn't just spillage from an abnormally bad marriage. It can't be chalked up to problems with self-control or alcoholism or anger management, though it can be mixed up with all those. It's not really about love or jealousy; it's about subjugation - an obsessive need to control one's partner.

## Domestic violence (cont.)

By Betsy Morris, senior writer

Last Updated: November 20, 2008: 11:51 AM ET

You get a sense of that in a chilling study of a group of batterers conducted by the state of Maine four years ago to assess the implications for occupational health and safety. Many of the 152 men surveyed described a consuming need to know their wives' whereabouts. They felt compelled to check up on them constantly - by calling or leaving work to see if their wives were where they were supposed to be. The urges were so overwhelming that half said they had trouble on the job, making mistakes or causing accidents, and that the feelings intensified when their wives tried to leave them.

Forget any notions you might have about what makes a person vulnerable. She doesn't have to be weak or somehow masochistic. There is no "type." People we interviewed for this story included an employment lawyer in Kansas City, a Red Cross administrator who worked alongside North Carolina Senator Elizabeth Dole, a Yale MBA who handled a groundbreaking project for GM, a New York University MBA who's chief of staff to the Bronx borough president, even an FBI agent. (She disassembled her gun when she got home every night and left it in the trunk of her car, having made, she says, a conscious decision: "We were not going to have live fire in the house.")

Anybody, even the strongest, smartest, most talented women - your highest producer, your rising star, your daughter, your granddaughter - can fall victim. "I've met Ph.D.s who say, 'Yes, I was in love with the guy. I got doled out just enough money for food for the kids,'" says Allstate's Tom Wilson. "Money is the weapon of choice, often in combination with other things, because it keeps the victims locked up. It's the keys. If you don't have a car, you can't run away. If you don't have credit, you can't get an apartment."

That's what makes the workplace so central to the struggle. "Economic independence is the strongest indicator of whether or not a victim can leave a batterer," says Stacey P. Dougan, chief professional development officer at

the Atlanta law firm Powell Goldstein, who advises companies on how to handle domestic-violence issues.

That means you can count on the abuser to "relentlessly try to interfere with that employment relationship." Work is the one place a stalker can be absolutely sure he'll find his victim. Sometimes it's a target. It's nearly always a flash point. It's the site of a surprising amount of activity in these struggles, as the stories of the women we interviewed demonstrate in chilling detail.

### The dazzling colleague

Nancy Salamone used to dazzle her colleagues in the marketing department at U.S. Life Insurance with her efficiency and can-do spirit - traits that probably helped her keep her domestic abuse private right up until she could no longer endure her marriage. Then, as she walked away, she knew she had to tell her office mates - or one of them might let her enraged and unpredictable husband onto the elevator.

"I was the girl next door who grew up to become the vice president of a company, and I had this dirty little secret I was hiding the entire time," she says of her Wall Street days, first at New York Life and then at U.S. Life, now part of AIG. (She is currently president and co-founder of a Las Vegas-based outsourcing firm.) She marvels that "there's a part of you that can be so competent in the office, and another part of you that's a complete mess emotionally."

As a 19-year-old newlywed, she'd been flattered by her husband's possessiveness. "I thought, 'How wonderful,'" she recalls. "He only wants to be with me." Soon after their wedding in August 1972, though, the criticism began - about things like how she hung the bathroom towels.

Coming from a big Italian family, she thought a certain amount of yelling was normal; growing up Catholic, she believed in the adage "You make your bed, you lie in it." "Work was where people treated me like an adult," she says, and she thrived there.

When others talked about their kids and spouses over lunch in the cafeteria, she was quiet ... until one morning in April 1992, when she stunned her colleagues by baring her soul: She'd been severely beaten up by her husband the night before. She was leaving him, she told them, and she didn't know how he would react.

"I had a picture of my husband that I gave to the company security guards - it was not just me but to protect the people I worked with," she says. "The company had to help me with that."

The tipping point, Salamone told her colleagues, was a frightening fight at the couple's apartment. The brawl - and several other incidents that spring - would become grounds for an uncontested divorce a year later. That night, according to the suit filed in Kings County Supreme Court in Brooklyn, her husband, who'd been gone a month, returned to their co-op and attacked her. He smashed bottles of wine and glasses against the living room wall and assaulted Nancy, slapping her and choking her, the divorce filing said.

"He had his hands around my neck, and I remember thinking, 'This is it. You are going to die.' And then like a miracle, he just let go" and left, she recalls.

### Co-worker support

Salamone rented an apartment in her mother's maiden name and got a phone under another. Her colleagues turned out to be her biggest support system. She warned them they might get calls from her estranged husband, and they did. She was given time off to meet with her attorney. She got promoted.

"I was terribly embarrassed," she says. Yet, "what blew me away the most was the support I got from every co-worker. I don't know if they knew how progressive they were being."

The stigma surrounding domestic violence is still so huge, however, that stories like Karen McGuinness's are much more common. She was scared that if anybody ever found out about her abusive relationship, it would cost her an opportunity, if not a promotion, if not a job.

Her finance career began after her junior year at Fordham University, when she landed a teller job at a Chemical

Bank branch in the Bronx. She was thrilled, but her boyfriend, she believes, was threatened by seeing her in a business suit. When she stopped in to see him at lunchtime during one of her first weeks of work, "he punched me so hard I could see stars, literally," she recalls. "He grabbed me by the hair and dragged me into the room and started to accuse me of all these things. I didn't understand."

At first she was scared, then she panicked as she realized he intended to keep her from returning to work. "Oh my God, I just started this job and I'm going to lose it," she thought.

## Domestic violence (cont.)

By Betsy Morris, senior writer

Last Updated: November 20, 2008: 11:51 AM ET

When she did return to the bank, her face was red and swollen and her teeth had cut the inside of her cheek and her bottom lip was black. Her manager told her "I didn't look so good," she recalls, and asked if she was okay.

"Sure, sure, no problem," she told her, and kept her head down the rest of the day. When she got back to campus that night, her roommate Mary Curry shrieked: "Holy shit, Karen, what happened to your mouth?" She concocted the first of many tales, telling her roommates that she'd been jumped by a mugger on her way home.

A pattern developed: Several months of calm followed by sudden rages, outbreaks that, McGuinness believes, coincided with her successes or her boyfriend's setbacks. Each time she got a promotion, "his insecurity would launch this terrible reaction." Her first boss, she would learn much later, had grown up in an abusive home and discerned her situation right away. Once, when her boyfriend tried to enter the bank, her boss intercepted him and told him he'd have to wait outside.

"You know I don't like him," McGuinness recalls her boss telling her. And: "If you need anything, you can let me know. You can always talk to me."

But McGuinness says she never told anybody, even though her boyfriend would sometimes take her car keys, so she would have to run to get to work on time. When she was on the move, she had to call him from a landline so he'd have a way to verify her location. If she was late getting home, he'd be waiting at the subway to grill her. He would decipher her passwords and check her work messages.

McGuinness became adept at covering up her bruises and her problems. "I never called in sick. When there was something visible on my face, I would do makeup. Or I would lie. Because I always seemed to be moving forward and upward, there was no consistency with the interaction with the same people."

Her first boss didn't let her suspicion about Karen's abusive relationship stand in the way of recommending her for a management training program, and McGuinness's career took off. She became a regional project manager, moving between branches, helping them merge. In 2002 she became a vice president for community relations, working at the bank's Manhattan headquarters. The bank, which had become JPMorgan Chase, put her through the executive MBA program at NYU's Stern School of Business; she got her degree in 2003.

By then she had become a single mother. Her abusive partner was sometimes in, sometimes out of her life, the source of assaults and threats, according to a restraining order she was granted in March 2002 in Superior Court in Hackensack, N.J. The restraining order was granted after the court found "sufficient grounds and exigent circumstances ... that an immediate danger of domestic violence exists" after she filed a complaint saying he'd punched her and made threats. But still she never told anybody at work.

Two years ago Karen McGuinness was recruited away from JPMorgan Chase by Adolfo Carrion Jr., Bronx borough president, to be his chief of staff. Finally she feels able to share her story, which she believes will surprise a lot of people. She says she feels safe from retaliation because her ex-partner has been deported.

"Watch for the signs," she warns young women. "The little things: when somebody is a little too possessive, a little too accusatory - those things do not mean it's because 'he really loves me.'"

## Office as sanctuary

The more dedicated Brooke McMurray was to her job as a market researcher here at Fortune, the more threatening the job was to the man she was married to three decades ago, she says.

"My office was here, and his was there," she says, pointing out a window of the Time & Life Building in Manhattan, across 50th Street to the Exxon Building, where he worked on a floor belonging to Morgan Stanley. They were newlyweds at the time, and sometimes he kept a balloon in his window. Her co-workers thought that was cute. They didn't know it was a signal that he was keeping an eye on her.

Her husband was handsome, charming, successful. She was a Smith grad, Phi Beta Kappa, magna cum laude. Who would have guessed that at home, according to petitions she later filed seeking an order of protection and then a divorce, she was being beaten and berated on a regular basis?

"I was blamed for bad weather, bad traffic, bad food," she recalls. The flare-ups would be followed by remorse and flowers. But the first time you are beaten up, McMurray says, "a little piece of you dies."

McMurray's haven was her office. "Fortune became my refuge," she recalls. Often she was so sleep-deprived from late-night arguments that she'd curl up on the floor of her office at lunchtime and take a nap. Beginning in 1974, "I was sort of living on the lam," she recalls, staying sometimes at the Barbizon Hotel for Women, sometimes at her sister's, sometimes at the Harvard Club, carrying her clothes in paper bags.

At the office she eventually moved her desk away from the window. The more independent she got, the more trouble it caused. "He realized this was my sanctuary," she recalls.

He began showing up at her office. To avoid him, she took the freight elevator, she says, and left at night through the loading dock. The only person she believes she told about her troubles was the freight elevator operator. She was afraid that if her bosses or colleagues found out, "I would get fired. I thought it was my fault."

The more obvious it became that McMurray would leave the marriage, the more her husband saw it as "the influence of Fortune," she recalls. In the petition she filed for an order of protection in January 1978, she alleges that he'd tried to prevent her from "entering her place of employment" and pushed her against the wall of the building.

But one of the most terrifying moments of all, she recalls, was not a physical one. It was the night, she says, when she went home and opened her closet door to find that all her work clothes had been cut in half with a pair of scissors. The bottoms of her dresses were lying in a heap on the floor of the closet. She was divorced in 1979.

Now, as chairman of [Safe Horizon](#), a New York nonprofit that provides services for abuse victims, she's pushing hard for an initiative called SafeWork 2010 to get corporations to commit to doing something about domestic violence.

## Domestic violence (cont.)

By [Betsy Morris](#), senior writer

Last Updated: November 20, 2008: 11:51 AM ET

"Because if there had been a training [program] called SafeWork at Fortune, then I probably wouldn't have felt so alone. I probably would've learned there were things you could do to make yourself safe. People I worked with would have known how to approach me. You could lessen the pain and shorten the experience."

### Domestic violence is costly

Domestic violence hurts business. "I'm amazed at the cost involved," says Mike Nolan, president of a Phoenix-based recruiting and placement agency.

He had no idea how much until he got to his office on a Saturday nine years ago just in time to see one of his employees being punched repeatedly by her husband. Before her eventual divorce, the employee had been "a marginal worker," he recalls. "We'd talked with her about attendance and focus." Now she's a key executive, he says. Often, he says, it's not laziness or irresponsibility that holds an employee back but domestic abuse.

"The victim is at the center of a circle," says Kim Wells, executive director of the Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence, a clearinghouse formed by businesses to address the issue. "You have victims working for you. You have batterers working for you too. They're tracking the victims. The co-worker is trying to be a one-man domestic violence response team. The workplace has the potential to become a crime scene, so you have a concerned boss...."

Sometimes the office becomes not just a psychological refuge but a physical one, as Microsoft (MSFT, Fortune 500) was for Melissa Batten when she tried to flee her violent husband, Joseph Batten, a former Microsoft employee, this past summer.

Melissa, a sweet, well-loved game designer who'd worked on projects like Halo 3 and Gears of War, became afraid of her husband after he threatened her with a gun last June, according to her request for an order of protection, granted in late July. She got an apartment of her own, but it was her office at Microsoft - where there were supportive colleagues and security guards - that became her fortress.

When Joseph Batten tried to get to her at work by tailgating another car through the security gate on July 16, he was caught and thrown out, she told police. When he called Missy's boss and her colleagues to disparage her, they ignored him and blocked her phone.

"She would sleep at the office," says her sister, Ellen Brooks Bloom.

But when Missy Batten was leaving for work at 9 A.M. on July 29, Joseph Batten ambushed her in the parking lot of her apartment building in Redmond, Wash., and shot her eight times at close range before shooting himself in the head. At that tragic point, Microsoft became grief counselor. It flew surviving relatives to Redmond. It helped with logistics. It organized memorials for family and colleagues. "Microsoft has been wonderful," Bloom says.

The company won't talk about any of it, though. After agreeing to provide interviews for this story, it reneged, saying that it doesn't comment about employee matters that are "private." Despite all that it did for the Battens, it doesn't want to come near the topic.

### Legal tangle

Domestic abuse exposes companies to an increasingly complicated thicket of federal, state, and local laws designed to protect victims. (More than 40 states have some kind of legislation designed to give victims some workplace protections.) In New York City, for instance, it's illegal to punish a victim for the actions of her abuser. So you can be damned if you do and if you don't.

Well-intentioned bosses can violate medical-privacy laws or antidiscrimination laws if they aren't careful about how they approach an employee they suspect might be a victim. That, more than anything, is reason to confront domestic violence head-on rather than ignore it, says Stacey Dougan, who became an expert on the issue after winning a landmark case in Florida in 1998.

Liz Claiborne, an early pioneer, developed a three-word call to action: "Recognize. Respond. Refer." "Recognize" means noticing if a colleague wears turtlenecks in summer, shrugs unenthusiastically at the arrival of flowers, is secretive about home, is absent a lot. "Respond" means inquiring and sharing your concerns. "Refer" means acting as a conduit to the resources and agencies that can help.

What bosses shouldn't do is try to solve the problems themselves. Domestic violence is too complex and potentially dangerous. A victim is at greatest risk when she leaves the batterer, studies show. And she can risk losing custody of her children in divorce courts, where abuse allegations can sometimes backfire on a victim.

The FBI agent who took the trouble to put her gun in the trunk of her car remembers being dumbfounded when

she was asked under oath in divorce court, how she could be afraid of her husband when she had a weapon.

"It took me forever to articulate ... you want me to use deadly force against my husband in front of my children? Shoot their father?" she replied. After a three-year fight, she was awarded sole custody last year.

What companies can do

Different companies take different approaches, with the help of programs and policies developed by agencies like Safe Horizon and the Corporate Alliance.

Allstate has instituted financial training to help abuse victims get back on their feet. Verizon Wireless educates new hires, trains its supervisors, and lets employees know that to protect them, it will change e-mail addresses and phone numbers, monitor harassing voice messages, and change schedules. In the past year it relocated 20 employees to keep them safe.

"My No. 1 concern is overall safety. It is a top-tier worry," says Martha Delehanty, VP human resources at Verizon. "No company is protected from this, but if you have an employee who has [someone] stalking them in the workplace, and God forbid, something happens, it has a direct impact. It shuts you down."

Nobody knows that better than the people at Darwin Realty. Last fall and winter Cathy Radek was becoming increasingly worried about her friend and colleague Cindy Bischof.

"She was petrified, and I was petrified for her. Everybody was," Radek recalls. Bischof was doing everything she could to "switch up" her routines. "I made sure she called me ten times a day," says Radek. "Check-ins were required." Radek and Darwin president Cibula attended every court hearing - to give moral support to Cindy and send Giroux a message to leave her alone. "It was an emotional roller coaster for everybody," Radek recalls.

The impact of Cindy Bischof's murder on her colleagues at Darwin Realty has been incalculable, Cibula said last summer, "and it's still not over." It's not just that the firm lost one of its most productive employees, it's also that she was so well loved and had such a high profile in the industry.

When Cibula visited Cindy's clients and had to explain, "it was like reliving it over and over," he says. As new brochures are printed, Cindy's name has to come off. Cibula, who recruited Cindy and was as proud of her as if she'd been a daughter, found it especially hard to take her bio off the company Web site.

"We let it stay there a couple of months, but now it's gone," he said recently. "Now, instead of 'Here are the big deals she's done and she was active in northern Indiana and she was one of the most influential industrial real estate people in Chicago last year' - now it just says 'Our Friend Cindy Bischof, 1964 - 2008.'" It is some consolation, at least, that Darwin Realty did all they could to save her.

*Reporter associate Doris Burke contributed to this article.*

***What do you think? Is domestic violence a problem for employers too? What should do they do to try and stop it? [Join the reader discussion.](#)*** ■

First Published: November 20, 2008: 8:12 AM ET

**Find this article at:**

[http://money.cnn.com/2008/11/18/news/Domestic\\_violence\\_morris.fortune/index.htm](http://money.cnn.com/2008/11/18/news/Domestic_violence_morris.fortune/index.htm)

 [Click to Print](#)

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.