

Warning signs for the workplace



RECOGNIZE that a colleague may be involved in an abusive relationship.

See the indications of abuse. Here are some warning signs to look for:

- Obvious injuries such as bruises, black eyes, broken bones, hearing loss — these are often attributed to “falls,” “being clumsy,” or “accidents.”
- Clothing that is inappropriate for the season, such as long sleeves and turtlenecks — also wearing sunglasses and unusually heavy makeup.
- Uncharacteristic absenteeism or lateness for work.
- Change in job performance: poor concentration and errors, slowness, inconsistent work quality.
- Uncharacteristic signs of anxiety and fear.
- Requests for special accommodations such as requests to leave early.
- Isolation; unusually quiet and keeping away from others.
- Emotional distress or flatness, tearfulness, depression, and suicidal thoughts.
- Minimization and denial of harassment or injuries.
- An unusual number of phone calls, strong reactions to those calls, and reluctance to converse or respond to phone messages. Others in the workplace may take insensitive or insulting messages intended for the colleague experiencing abuse.
- Sensitivity about home life or hints of trouble at home — comments may include references to bad moods, anger, temper, and alcohol or drug abuse.
- Disruptive personal visits to workplace by present or former partner or spouse.
- Fear of job loss.
- The appearance of gifts and flowers after what appears to be a dispute between the couple which may include physical violence.

Someone who is behaving abusively at home may be “invisible” as an abuser at work. Perhaps he is an excellent worker, manager, professional and does not reveal overtly violent behaviour in the work environment. Below are some visible warning signs that may indicate an abusive temperament:

- May bully others at work.
- Blames others for problems, especially his/her partner.
- Denies problems.
- Shows “defensive injuries” (such as scratch marks).
- Is knowledgeable about the legal and social service systems and use it to his/her advantage so it appears that he/she is the victim.
- Is absent or late related to his/her actions toward the victim or for court or jail time.
- Calls his/her partner repeatedly during work.