

New Directions from the Field:

Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century

Recommendations for the Business Community

The recommendations below, which appear in the May 1998 *New Directions* Report, have been reformatted for replication and distribution.

Studies clearly indicate that crime has an impact on where people choose to live, work, and shop. Over the past 15 years, employers have recognized that it is good business to offer employees a full spectrum of assistance programs to help them deal with problems, including criminal victimization, that affect job performance and the safety of the workplace. They are beginning to develop efforts to prevent violence in the workplace. When violence strikes, employers now realize that they must deal with both the physical injury and the emotional consequences of trauma. Unfortunately, many barriers still block corporate America's ability and willingness to respond fully and appropriately to crime victims. In an effort to address these barriers, the following recommendations for the business community are set forth by the field:

1. Business leaders should commit resources in addition to money to victim assistance and crime prevention efforts.
2. All managers, supervisors, union officials, shop stewards, and other designated employee representatives should receive training on how workplace violence impacts employees and the company; how to develop and implement policies and procedures to resolve conflicts before they erupt into violence; and how to develop and implement crisis response plans in the aftermath of violence.
3. In cases of serious trauma and multiple victims, employees should be assisted by long-term expert psychological counseling.
4. Counseling for psychological injuries suffered by victims of terrorist attacks in the workplace should be covered by workers compensation and other employer-sponsored insurance.
5. Workplace policies and programs should be responsive to the needs of all crime victims, including victims of domestic violence.
6. Employers and unions should work together to adopt leave and benefit policies that accommodate the needs of victimized employees to go to court, counseling, or a shelter without penalizing them with unexcused absences or dismissal.
7. All managers, supervisors, union officials, and shop stewards should receive training on how to recognize signs of domestic violence in their staff and apply organizational policies and programs to employees or members who are victims of domestic violence.
8. Employee assistance program (EAP) staff, corporate fitness and wellness programs, and workplace health services providers such as occupational nurses and medical directors should receive specialized training in how to deal with employees who have been victimized.
9. All workplaces should educate their employees to increase awareness of domestic violence and sexual assault as societal and workplace issues. Such education will promote compassionate responses to the needs of these victims and will serve to encourage victims to seek services available to them in the workplace and in their community.
10. Research is needed that focuses on the risks and costs of workplace victimization to both the company and the employee.
11. Due to the complex issues and effects of workplace victimization, a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach to delivering services for these victims must be developed and implemented at the national, State, and local levels.
12. Employers should adopt policies and practices that accommodate crime victims who suffer physical and psychological disabilities as a result of their victimization in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

13. Employers should report all violent crime that occurs on their premises and encourage their employees to do likewise.
14. Workers compensation programs should be combined with employee benefit programs to cover all expenses and lost income employees incur as the result of violent victimization on the job.
15. Employers should develop and implement crime prevention and safety measures to protect their employees, clients, and customers.