

Preventing Sexual Assault

In conjunction with the proclamation signed by Mayor Jim Byard, Jr., Mayor Todd Strange, and Colonel Khris Beasley, this month's Spotlight on Crime Prevention will focus on the prevention of sexual assault and sexual assault awareness.

While working or on duty, U.S. employees experienced 36,500 rapes and sexual assaults from 1993 to 1999. This excludes the more than 12,000 annual reported acts of sexual harassment at work. Sexual violence that happens in the workplace is unfortunately common. All forms of sexual violence result in high costs for businesses and the economy. Sexual violence on the job correlates with decreased productivity, higher rates of absenteeism, and lower employee morale. Interrupted work, as a result of sexual violence, can also jeopardize the economic stability of individuals, families, and communities. Economic insecurity can lead to a greater dependence on public assistance programs and poor outcomes for families and society. It also increases healthcare costs for both individuals and employers. If employees bring lawsuits against a company for sexual harassment or violence, businesses may incur large legal fees.

In addition to acts of violence that do occur at work, the work setting also influences individuals and communities in other ways. We spend an average of 160 hours a month at work. The work environment has a large impact on individuals, families, and communities. If people feel threatened, harassed, or unsafe at work, the negative effects can spill over into other settings. Employers and businesses also have strong voices in our communities. It is critical that we reach them with messages about how they can play a role in building respectful workplaces and preventing sexual violence.

[Workplace Violence Facts](#)

Defining Sexual Violence

Sexual violence includes all types of sexual behavior, ranging from sexual harassment to rape and incest, that happens without the freely given consent of the victim. All forms of sexual violence can and do happen in the workplace. While working or on duty, U.S. employees experienced 36,500 rapes and sexual assaults from 1993 to 1999.

Sexual Violence at Work

Most often, we hear about sexual harassment in the workplace. In 2006, the Equal Employment Opportunity Council received 12,025 charges of sexual harassment (15.4% filed by males). In the pyramid below, the range of sexually violent behaviors can be seen. Most of these are considered sexual harassment. Behaviors that involve physical contact are usually called abuse, rape, or sexual assault. All forms of sexual violence can and do happen in the workplace. The abuser or offender can be of the same or opposite sex, a supervisor, an agent of the employer, a supervisor in another area, a co-worker, or a non-employee.

Consequences for Victims

Due to the often devastating emotional and physical consequences of sexual violence, victims may have difficulty meeting ongoing work demands in the aftermath of an assault. Women who have been raped or sexually assaulted report decreased work functioning, sometimes for up to 8 months after the attack. Almost 50% of rape victims lose their jobs or are forced to quit in the aftermath of the crime.

Cost of Workplace Sexual Violence

All forms of sexual violence result in high costs for businesses and the economy. Sexual violence on the job is related to lower productivity, higher rates of absenteeism, and lower employee morale. In 1994, sexual harassment cost the federal government an estimated \$327 million due to job turnover, sick leave, and individual and work group productivity losses among federal employees. Interrupted work as a result of sexual violence can also jeopardize the economic stability of individuals, families, and communities. It also increases healthcare costs for both individuals and employers. If employees bring lawsuits against a company for sexual harassment or violence, businesses may incur large legal fees.

Preventing Workplace Sexual Violence

Prevention means stopping sexual violence before it happens. This requires us to change how we treat one another, and how we look at sexual violence in our society. Employees and employers have a role to play in prevention.

Here are some examples:

- Employees treat one another with respect and dignity, regardless of gender, race, or religion.
- Employers have well-publicized company policies for reporting and responding to acts of sexual harassment and violence.
- Businesses support their local rape crisis center through donation of time and/or money. By showing they care, others in the community are inspired to learn more about how to help.

[Workplace Outreach Guide](#)

This information is advisory in nature. No liability is assumed by reason of the information in this document. This information was taken from [The National Sexual Violence Resource Center website](#). For more information and to watch the available public service announcements, please visit [NSVRC](#).