

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Question:

I manage an employee who I am concerned is in an abusive relationship. Due to COVID-19 stay at home orders we are all having to work from home. I am very worried for her safety. When she is in the office, I can see how she is doing and be there to support her but I'm afraid to say the wrong thing during our supervision meetings in case her abuser is listening in. What can, or should, I do?

### Answer:

It is disconcerting when you know an employee's situation may be made worse. Here are things you can do. First, be mindful of unexplained changes in behavior that may be signs of something more serious. For example, if your employee suddenly stops using video-conferencing to hide physical signs of injury or because their partner is monitoring them in the background. Perhaps their writing style or correspondence no longer sounds like them. An abusive partner may be reading and editing their emails. These are potential indicators for the need for intervention or connection to the survivor.

Regular check-ins can help provide a sense of normalcy and connection to the outside world to break through the employee's feeling of isolation. Check-in on your employee to listen and support *without* a focus on the abuse you suspect or know is happening. The use of video calls can enhance your connection and allows you to "see" your employee and help assess any concerns or issues.

Finally, be ready with information on sick and safe leave policies and other workplace accommodations, along with national and local community resources.

### Question:

I want to reach out to one of my employees who I am concerned about but I am worried that by reaching out I may just cause problems for them. Any suggestions?

### Answer:

You are right to reach out to an employee who you think may be in an abusive relationship. These connections are critically important to survivors. But as you note, an abusive partner may be monitoring their phone, texts, emails, or use of social media, and it's best to reach out using the safest forms of communication possible. If you do not know if a form of communication is safe, do not discuss your concerns about violence and instead offer general support for the stressful nature of the work from home situation. If a survivor discloses violence to you, consult with them in order to determine which forms of communication are least likely to be seen by an abusive partner.

You may also provide information to all employees that includes domestic violence resources, the workplace EAP and other non-specific resources. This which enables you to reach an employees who are surviving abuse without singling them out.