

Costco Manager Training –Addressing Violence Critical Incidents and Grief and Loss

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Welcome to the Costco manager training. In this session, we're focusing on addressing domestic violence, critical incidents, and grief and loss. My name is Brig Dunsmore, and I will be your host for the presentation today. Today our focus will be on defining domestic violence, reviewing data about domestic violence and its impact on the workplace, some common signs of domestic violence, and we'll identify actions that you as a manager can take, we'll review the critical incident process and discuss dealing with grief and loss, as well as reviewing services available to help managers and employees in the moment.

First, let's look at a few statistics related to domestic violence and look a little closer at how it impacts the workplace. As noted here, domestic abuse or intimate partner violence is defined as a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one intimate partner to gain or maintain power over another. Domestic violence definitely has an impact in the workplace, and more than half of victims report that domestic violence impacts their work. 75% of victims report harassment at work and this has made 56% of them late for work at least five times per month.

28% of them leave early, at least five days per month, and 54% miss three or more full days of work per month. So when an employer isn't aware of the domestic violence issues, what they see are attendance and performance problems. The result is that 60% of employees experiencing domestic violence have to quit or are fired from their jobs. Now, of note, Costco wouldn't knowingly fire an employee when their issues stem from domestic violence, the interest there would be to support and help. 71% of employee assistance providers have reported an employee being stalked at work, and 83% have assisted an employee with a restraining order.

Domestic violence is unfortunately a common problem and one that you are likely to deal with in your role as a manager or supervisor. Let's look at some warning signs. As a supervisor or manager, you should be aware when there are changes in an employee's demeanor and work performance. The items in the Be aware column may not directly indicate that a person is experiencing domestic violence, but they should raise some flags and lead to a discussion about how the employee is doing. You may find that other things are happening.

The employee may report that they're dealing with depression, anxiety, loss, or that they're

struggling to cope with daily stressors. Your ability to connect with the employee to note that you're seeing some changes and ask how they're doing may make a huge difference in creating an atmosphere that when someone is dealing with domestic violence, they can open up to you and get help. And even if the employee isn't dealing with domestic violence, your awareness of these signs and willingness to discuss them with your employee can help them find a way to talk about their challenges, which allows you to be able to connect them with appropriate supports and resources.

And this can mean a big difference for them personally as well as to the productivity of the whole team. In the Act column. These are issues that if seen should motivate you to take action and have a discussion with the AGM or GM. These include the employee telling you that they are in fact dealing with domestic violence, obvious injuries especially if they're repeated or minimized, disruption in the workplace by an employee's significant other, and then maybe have a visit to the employee or frequent visits, or messages erroneously left for co-workers, and signs of anxiety and fear. So act on those things.

Let's look at this scenario and talk more specifically about actions you can take. So Jamie's situation, Jamie's been arriving late to work more and more recently, and at the of her shift, seems to be increasingly reluctant to leave. Today when she arrived, she had a bruise on her cheek that she says she got tripping on her stairs the day before. She quickly starts her work but avoids interacting with anyone. A couple of hours later, a boyfriend comes to the warehouse, asks what Jamie is doing, and says that he just wanted to check on her to make sure that she's okay. Jamie appears anxious while he's there and relieved when he leaves. So think of possible signs of abuse that you're seeing, changes in behavior, being late to work, she doesn't want to leave, there's an injury which Jamie's downplaying, isolating and avoiding, her significant other comes and asks what Jamie is doing, and she shows anxiety or anxiousness, nervousness during the boyfriend's visit and relief when he leaves.

So what would you do? You have reason for concern, so report the issue to the AGM or GM and follow the direction. Pull Jamie aside somewhere private to talk. If there are others around, it's less likely that she'll be comfortable enough to really open up and she may become defensive. Be open to the idea that she may need and want a support person with her. If that's the request she makes, considerate it. Now while discussing performance isn't easy, it may be the best way to work your way into a conversation about concerns you have for her safety. Tell her about the changes you've seen recently and let her know that you want to be sure she's safe.

Don't push, again, as it may make her defensive but let her know that you're there for her. If Jamie doesn't disclose issues of domestic violence, continue to follow up with her about her performance, any additional safety concerns that may arise, and express caring and concern about her wellbeing. If things continue or if her partner seems to be stalking her at work, or if Jamie acknowledges that she is in fact experiencing domestic violence, again, take a partner and talk to the AGM or GM. They will reach out to Resources for Living's critical incident stress management team for guidance and follow their direction on next steps.

Now, one reminder, if someone arrives at the warehouse and clearly needs medical attention, meet that need first and then proceed with the other steps. If Jamie denies concerns, you can continue to follow up with her about performance issues, and use your good judgment. As we discussed earlier, often victims of domestic violence are at increased risk of losing their jobs because of the way it impacts attendance and performance. So try to be supportive and helpful while expressing performance expectations. If she reports to other things like depression, anxiety or stress are impacting your performance, talk to her about RFL and work with her to call and access resources available to her.

And if at any point in your conversations Jamie acknowledges concerns with domestic violence, ensure that you have communicated the issue to the AGM and GM. Again, they'll reach out to the Resources for Living's critical incidents stress management team and you can follow the recommendations provided. RFL can help connect Jamie with a counselor to support her mental health needs as well as support her with creating a safety plan, and they can refer her to legal services and make suggestions about steps she can take to protect herself. And remember, don't confront Jamie's abusers, that may put her at greater risk, and don't jeopardize your own personal safety.

If you feel you are at risk, call 911. Now on the slide, there's some other resources that you can provide to her. The National Domestic Violence Hotline is a place people can call for themselves or others to identify and understand abuse, create safety plans and connect with local resources. [Nomore.org](http://nomore.org) can help support survivors and provide tips to help identify and stop abuse. Love is Respect is an organization focused on helping young people understand healthy relationships, safety, and getting help when needed. Often people stay in relationships because they're concerned about their pets. Safe Haven's pet shelter search is a way to access shelters for pets of people experiencing domestic violence. Women's Law can help victims get legal help.

And as an FYI for you, several states provide a leave of absence for people experiencing domestic violence, and the employee may need help relocating. Should those issues arise, be sure that you've involved the GM. Let's shift for a moment and talk briefly about critical incidents. There are many scenarios that could trigger a critical incident and the important thing will be knowing how to respond if you are faced with one. Critical incidents are highly stressful events that have the potential to overwhelm an individual's usual coping abilities. They include situations that cause severe stress to employees and that may disrupt present or future productivity in the work setting.

Critical incidents include deaths of coworkers, multi casualty injuries due to accidents or disasters, and traumatic events or situations impacting the workplace. Critical incidents may pose particular challenges for management. There's single standard response. Effective workplace responses to critical incidents should be tailored to fit each event. Depending on the situation, usually affected individuals have adequate strength, skills and capabilities, and with appropriate supports, will recover well over time. However, for some individuals, personal history or current life situations may make them more vulnerable to the effects of a critical incident.

When managed effectively, the negative impact on individuals and the workplace can be greatly reduced. Certainly it should be noted that some critical incidents are significant and traumatic enough that many people could be affected. So what do you do? Start with assessing. In some instances, this needs to happen fast. If there's an active threat of harm to anyone, you need to quickly take appropriate action. So get out of harm's way. In the case of a natural disaster or threat to the warehouse, do what you can to ensure people are in a safe place. That may mean sheltering in the store or leaving the warehouse if there's a gas leak or if something else has made the warehouse unsafe.

In the case of a workplace accident, again, ensure that there is no danger to yourself or others before helping anyone that's already been harmed. Call 911 to get police or rescue personnel to the scene as quickly as possible. If there's no immediate risk of harm to you or others, or if that risk is subsided, the next step is to inform the AGM or GM who will then reach out to the critical incident stress management team, follow the directions that they provide. This slide shows resources available through the critical incident stress management team including support following a traumatic event. You can scan the QR code for additional resources and information.

Through this training and previous ones, we've talked a lot about critical incidents stress management services, so let's talk about what happens when the AGM or GM reaches out to them. So first, your assistant general manager or general manager reaches out to the RFL critical incidents stress management team and they're assigned a management consultant. The management consultant gathers information including the caller's name, title, phone number and email. They also gather details about the circumstances of the event. If the AGM or GM requests a provider for an onsite debrief, the management consultant schedules those services and provides coaching about the recommended time for response.

Now, an immediate response may bring someone onsite within two or three hours, however, a quick response may not always be the most effective approach. The management consultant will discuss this with the AGM or GM. A response within 24 to 72 hours is generally recommended in order for participants to receive the most benefit from this service. The management consultant will notify the AGM or GM about how long a provider should be on site based on the event and the impact, and the management consultant also educates the AGM or GM about RFL benefits available to employees and sends them an email with articles and resources relevant to the experienced event.

Then an onsite occurs, and we'll go into that in more detail in the next slide. The GM and AGM are encouraged to invite employees who need individual confidential support to access that through RFL, and the AGM and GM can request additional onsite resources as needed. All right, so let's talk a little bit about the onsite process. So the management consultant identifies and schedules the provider to meet onsite with the Costco team. This provider reaches out to the AGM or GM to discuss how they will proceed with the onsite debriefed, and the AGM and GM reaches out to the impacted employees to let them know about the onsite and encourages them to sign up for sessions using a confidential signup

form. Employees are informed that services are voluntary and confidential, and that the provider doesn't share specific feedback outside the group or individual sessions. Then the AGM or GM works to ensure that impacted employees are available and have time to utilize the provider services.

They coordinate a private space for the sessions, and coordinate any special security access the provider may need. If services are virtual, they will ensure that employees have access to the virtual link and are able to participate. They educate employees that ongoing RFL support is available to them 24/7 at no cost. Let's look at a more frequent critical incident scenario and determine what you would do. We'll look at how the critical incident process may work in a specific situation.

So Tony. Tony's a longtime employee at the Warehouse. He's well liked and is friends with many of his coworkers. Unexpectedly, Tony becomes ill and after several months of illness, he dies. The loss is hard for employees, and as a manager, you can see that several people are struggling to cope with Tony's death, That's a tough situation, and one that you may have dealt with already. So what do you do? The goal will be to support people through their grief and loss. So coordinate with your AGM or GM as they reach out to the critical incidents stress management team and make arrangements to have supports available.

This may involve a therapist coming on site and/or setting up counseling and support resources for those who need it. Supporting your team at a time of loss will include acknowledging the loss and people's feelings, including your own. And it's okay to share your own sense of loss. It will help you grieve and will make you more relatable and human to your team and that will help them with their grief. Pull the people aside who are dealing with loss and ask them how they're doing, listen, continue to acknowledge their feelings, and when it comes to counseling and support, not only is it a resource available to your employees, but understand that you might be one of the people that needs to utilize this resource, and that's okay.

Open communication will continue to be vital as people work through their grief and heal. Remember that people work through grief in different ways and at different speeds, and they may have times where the loss is felt more keenly than others, so keep checking in. Encourage people to share and reflect and summarize what they tell you. And watch for team members who are having a particularly hard time with the loss or whose grief seems to be persisting. Watch for that in yourself too. If you see that happening, talk to the person about the signs of grief that you're seeing and about the resources available to help, encourage them to use the RFL resources available, and remember to utilize them yourself if needed.

Let's focus a little bit more on grief and loss. As mentioned, critical incidents can come from several events and situations. The most common of these is a death whether on or offsite, expected or unexpected. So let's talk a little bit about what to do when people experience a loss. Understanding people's reaction to loss is important for you as a supervisor and manager. It allows you to have greater empathy and respond in more appropriate ways.

Now, we've talked about how to support employees when another employee dies, now let's spend some time talking about ways to support employees when they lose a family member or someone close to them. Everyone handles grief and loss differently. A person experiencing a loss may feel guilty, angry, sad or none, some people may show their emotions while others keep their emotions to themselves. Regardless of how an employee is processing the loss, it's important as a manager to know how to respond when an employee is grieving.

For a manager or supervisor, when an employee has experienced a loss, knowing what to say can be the hardest part of supporting them and grieving. As a leader, you can express your sympathies, but more importantly, acknowledging your employee's loss by being flexible and understanding is really a big thing. Show kindness and follow up with employees about how they're coping, make sure they have support, whether that is friends and family, or consider making a referral to Resources for Living if they're struggling to manage their grief. And remember, Costco offers three to five days of paid bereavement leave for the lost family members, and a period of extended unpaid leave may be available in extenuating circumstances, so refer to the employee agreement for details about that. Some things to avoid.

People need to work through their grief in their own time and in their own way, it's not yours to fix. So things like bright side statements which are asking the person to look on the bright side, this is where we try to cheer someone up by turning their attention to the positive, but really it's just an attempt to relieve our own discomfort. It may include statements like, "At least you still have dot, dot, dot," or, "Life goes on," or, "Be grateful for what you have." Ultimately this only serves to trivialize the feelings people have. Even though we're just trying to show that we can relate and empathize with the person, when we talk about our own experience with loss, it can shift the focus to us and imply that we understand.

And the truth is we don't completely understand what the other person is thinking or feeling. Instead, ask them to tell you about their loved one. Giving unsolicited advice can make it feel like a judgment. The person is doing what they think they should do and they don't really need us telling them what to do when they haven't asked. And often people say things like, "Let me know if you need anything." Again, this is something that makes us feel better, but often there's no follow up with these vague offers and it leaves pressure on the griever to reach out if they need something. Instead, offer specific support like, "I'm coming over Wednesday to bring you dinner."

Religion and faith are very personal, and no one wants to hear that they're suffering grief because it's what God wanted or that their loved one is in a better place. Instead of focusing on the loss through the lens of religion, focus on the person's qualities and honor that. And you might say, "Oh, you're doing so well," but do you really know that? And if the person isn't doing well, they may feel misunderstood or isolated, they may feel like they aren't able to express their real thoughts and feelings. I mentioned that knowing what to say can be a real challenge, and here's some suggestions that come from a document, When a Death Affects Your Location, which is part of the benefit program tools' Google Site.

On the Say side, it's a good idea to express our sorrow for the person's loss and our concern for them. As supervisors and managers you want your employees to know that you are there for them, acknowledge their feelings and normalize their grief, encourage them to take care of themselves since that is something that grieving people may forget to do, make sure that they're aware that RFL is a resource available to them to help them through their grief. We discussed a lot of the don'ts in the previous slide and I think we can all review this list and understand why it may not be good to say these things to people. We want to avoid minimizing the grieving person's feelings or make them think that the expectation is that they just get over it.

Sometimes in our own well-meaning discomfort we say something we shouldn't, and you know what? That's okay, we all make mistakes, just follow up with something to let the grieving person know that you care and that you're thinking about them. And one comment about telling people to be strong, we want them to know that it's okay if they're not, and we're here to help them even when they're not doing well. Your RFL website has many resources that can help you support yourself and/or your team members that are struggling with grief.

So check out those resources and share them with your employees as needed. Just to review the services that are available to supervisors and employees, Resources for Living is the starting point for mental health care and resources for everyday life. It's a confidential service that is designed to support Costco employees, whether they're dealing with big life issues or lots of small challenges, or if they just don't know where to start. Resources for Living is available to all Costco employees, their dependents up to age 26, and their household members.

Any eligible person can call Resources for Living and connect with the care partner who will help them access the resources and supports that they need. Thank you for spending a few minutes today talking about what to do when an employee is dealing with domestic violence, when a critical incident occurs, and dealing with grief and loss. Remember that there are resources available to you and your employees that can help reduce stress and address mental health needs. Resources for Living is here to support you and can be reached at the number listed on this slide. We've also included the telephone number for Costco Human Resources, which you can use to connect with Costco Benefits and personnel. Thanks again.

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