Procedure
Workplace Aggression and Violence

1. Purpose

This procedure outlines the process to identify hazards, assess and control risks associated with workplace aggression and violence.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to all DPTI workers.

3. Definitions

TERM	DEFINITIONS
Abuse	Behaviour that involves the misuse of physical or psychological strength or power, the ill treatment of someone and/or insulting language.
Aggression	Any behaviour by a person that is or has the potential to be intimidating, abusive, violent, threatening or offensive.
Assault	An unlawful physical attack and/or attempt to inflict violence on another.
Threat	A statement or action with the intent to harm a person or damage their property.
Workers	Any person who carries out work in any capacity for the department and may include: • employee; • trainee; • volunteer; • outworker; • apprentice; • work experience student; • contractor or sub-contractor; • employees of a contractor or sub-contractor; or • employee of a labour hire company.
Workplace	Any place where a worker works and includes any place where such a person goes, or is likely to be, while at work.
Workplace Violence	Any incident where a person is abused, threatened, harassed, intimidated or assaulted in circumstances arising out of, or in the course of their work.

4. Procedure detail

Aggression and Violence is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in any departmental workplace.

The procedure covers three types of workplace aggression and violence:
• External violence is usually associated with robbery or other crimes and the perpetrator is someone outside the workplace.
• Service related violence arises when providing services to customers or clients.
• Internal violence occurs between workers.

4.1 Workplace Aggression and Violence

Workplace aggression and violence is any incident where a worker is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work. It includes a broad range of actions and behaviours that can create a risk to the health and safety of workers.

Examples of workplace aggression and violence include:

- Biting, spitting, scratching, hitting and kicking.
- Throwing objects.
- Pushing, pulling, shoving, tripping and grabbing.
- Verbal abuse, threats, armed robbery, assault.
- Attacking with knives, guns, clubs or any type of weapon.
- Racial abuse.

4.2 Identifying Hazards

Managers/supervisors must ensure that hazards related to workplace aggression and violence are identified and controlled in consultation with affected workers and where applicable the Health and Safety Representative/s (HSR).

Workplace aggression and violence hazards will generally arise as a result of:

- the work environment;
- the work tasks and how they are carried out; and
- the way work is designed and managed.

Typical hazards that give rise to work related violence include:

- handling cash, drugs and/or valuables;
- working alone, working in isolation, and working in the community;
- working in unpredictable environments;
- working at night or outside business hours;
- providing services to distressed, angry, incarcerated and/or people who have an unreasonable expectation of what an organisation and/or worker can provide them;
- service methods that cause frustration, resentment or misunderstanding; and/or
- enforcement activities.

4.3 Risk Assessment

A risk assessment should be undertaken to identify appropriate controls that can be implemented to either eliminate or minimise the risk to worker/s.

Risk assessments must be conducted in accordance with the WHS Risk Management Procedure.

Risks associated with aggression and violence in the workplace can be identified by:

- reviewing incident frequency and trends reported in the Hazard and Incident Reporting Module (HIRM);
- consulting with workers, managers, and HSRs about risk factors and incident rates;
- reviewing working arrangements such as working alone or in isolation, or protocols for engaging with potentially aggressive customer and clients; and/or
- identifying hazards through a workplace inspection or safety walks.

Refer to the Workplace Aggression and Violence Checklist for assistance in identifying and controlling workplace aggression and violence risks in the workplace.

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4.4 Controlling the risks

Controls must be developed and implemented to achieve the highest level of protection that is reasonably practicable. Control measures may include:

- changes in structural and administrative practices;
- redesign of work practices and systems and appropriate awareness and protective response training;
- separating the hazard or hazardous work practice from the worker through engineering or administrative controls (such as screens, barriers etc.);
- developing protocols and procedures for managing aggressive customers and clients, whether in person, on the phone, or online; and
- increasing the resilience of workers through appropriate induction, awareness and skills training in safe work practices and response procedures.

Measures to control the impact of aggressive and violent incidents on workers after an incident has occurred may include:

- encouraging affected workers to utilise the Employee Assistance Program (Refer to section 4.4.2);
- ensuring all incidents are reported in HIRM, and a debriefing and/or investigation occurs;
- implementation of protocols for when and how SAPOL is notified; and
- consideration of additional security measures that may need to be developed following an incident.

A review of risk control measures should occur:

- at regular intervals;
- when workers indicate the control measure is ineffective or not as effective as it should be;
- when an HSR or Health and Safety Committee request a review;
- when there have been significant changes in the work environment or work tasks; and
- after incidents.

4.4.1 Training

Training is not the primary way to control the risk of workplace aggression and violence, but a part of the overall risk mitigation approach.

Training could be considered to raise awareness of the following areas:

- Violence prevention measures;
- Workplace policy and procedures including emergency response;
- De-escalating aggression – for example identifying signs of aggression, verbal and non-verbal, communication strategies, encourage reasoning, listen carefully, and acknowledge concerns.
- Situational risk assessments – for example when visiting homes or working off-site.
- Positive behaviour strategies and managing behaviour of concern.

Training must be organised by managers/supervisors in partnership with Organisational Performance and Development.

4.4.2 Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The EAP is a confidential, short term, professional counselling service that can assist workers with both work and personal related issues.

In the event of a critical incident where those involved may have a need for a debriefing service the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider can be contacted.

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Further information on the departmental Employee Assistance Program can be found here.

4.4.3 Local Procedures

If workplace aggression and violence has been identified as a risk, local procedures should be developed to ensure that workers have the necessary knowledge, skills, training and information to enable them to protect their own health and safety.

Depending on the level of aggression or violence involved, local procedures should refer to or include:

- How training, induction and information will be provided to workers concerning:
    - Communication and interpersonal skills necessary to improve the workers ability to detect signs of imminent violence and to defuse the potential.
    - Recognising normal customer and client initiated abusive, aggressive or violent reactions and introduce ways of coping for individuals following an incident in order to reduce the effects.
    - Procedure for working in unfamiliar environments.
    - The level of skills and experience required by workers in 'front line' positions.
- How workers should seek help both during and after an act of aggression or violence.
- How workers can report an incident of aggression and violence (electronically in HIRM or verbally to their Manager).
- How workers are required to respond to aggression or violence.
- What observations should be made by workers during an incident such as details of the aggressor, the events leading up to the violence etc.
- Emergency plans and procedures when evacuation is required, including under what circumstances should work areas be cleared of people.
- How access to first aid will be provided.
- How workers will be temporarily relieved from their work duties, if required.
- Who will communicate the incident and to whom.
- Who will debrief the victim(s) of the incident.
- Who will provide counselling, if required.
- Who will investigate and report the incident in accordance with departmental procedures and WHS legislative requirements.
- Under what circumstances will SAPOL be called into the workplace and who will be responsible for such action.

The Workplace Aggression and Violence Guideline will assist in developing local procedures.

4.5 Internal Violence

Internal violence is a risk to the health and safety of workers. If workers experience internal violence it should be immediately reported to their Manager, Health and Safety Representative, or People Section and reported in the HIRM.

OP008: Managing our People provides further information on Discrimination, Harassment, Bullying and Victimisation including preventing and responding to bullying.

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4.6 Reporting of Hazards, Near Misses, and Incidents

All hazards and incidents that result in physical or psychological harm to workers, including 'near miss' incidents, must be reported in the HIRM by the worker or by their manager on their behalf.

5.   Record management

Any records and documentation pertaining to this procedure must be maintained in accordance with legislative and DPTI record keeping processes. Refer to the DP009 Recordkeeping Policy for information regarding records management.

6.   Roles and responsibilities

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES
Managers/Supervisors	Must ensure that: • the risks of workplace aggression and violence are identified and assessed; • appropriately skilled personnel are recruited to roles that have a high risk of exposure to aggression and violent behaviour; • information is available for workers on how to manage workplace aggression and violence; • training needs are identified and appropriate training provided to workers including skills to recognise and defuse potentially aggressive and violent incidents and what controls and responses are appropriate; • employees are made aware of the Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector; • strategies to manage workplace aggression and violence before, during, and after an incident, including actively supporting workers are developed; • any incident is reported in HIRM; • processes such as debrief, counselling, and follow up schedules are actively supported; and • any incidents are reviewed and corrective action taken when appropriate.
Workers	Workers must: • undertake appropriate awareness and response training; • participate in the identification of risks and implementation of controls; • comply with the Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector; • comply with procedures and practices designed to prevent the occurrence of aggression and violence at work; • take reasonable care of their own health and safety in the workplace and the health and safety of others; • ensure they do not contribute to, or participate in activities that may contribute to aggressive and violent behaviour; • participate in debriefing and attend counselling if required; and • report incidents to their managers, and record incidents in HIRM.

7.   Supporting Documentation

- Hazard and Incident Reporting Module

- Incident and Injury Reporting Procedure

- OP008: Managing Our People

- DPTI Employee Security Guide

- Workplace Aggression and Violence Checklist

- Workplace Aggression and Violence Guideline

- WHS Risk Management Procedure

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- [Suspect Description Checklist](#)

- [Phone Threat Checklist](#)

- Service SA - Managing Aggressive, Threating or Violent Customers Procedure

- Service SA - Armed Robbery Procedure

- Service SA - WHS Information Sheet – Responding to Suicide or Self Harm Disclosures

- Service SA - Guidelines for requesting a Security Guard

- Service SA - Testing of Duress Buttons and Personal Alarms in Customer Service Centres

- [Body Worn Camera Policy](#)

- [Protective Security Contacts](#)

- [DPTI Security Notification Protocols](#)

8.   References

- *[Work Health and Safety Act (SA) 2012](#)*

- [Work Health and Safety Regulations (SA) 2012](#)

- [Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector.](#)

- [SafeWork SA – Work Related Violence – Preventing and responding to work-related violence.](#)

9.   Document Amendment Record

Date	Version	Revision Description
04 January 2019	1.0	Original Version
Document Review Schedule		3 Yearly

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