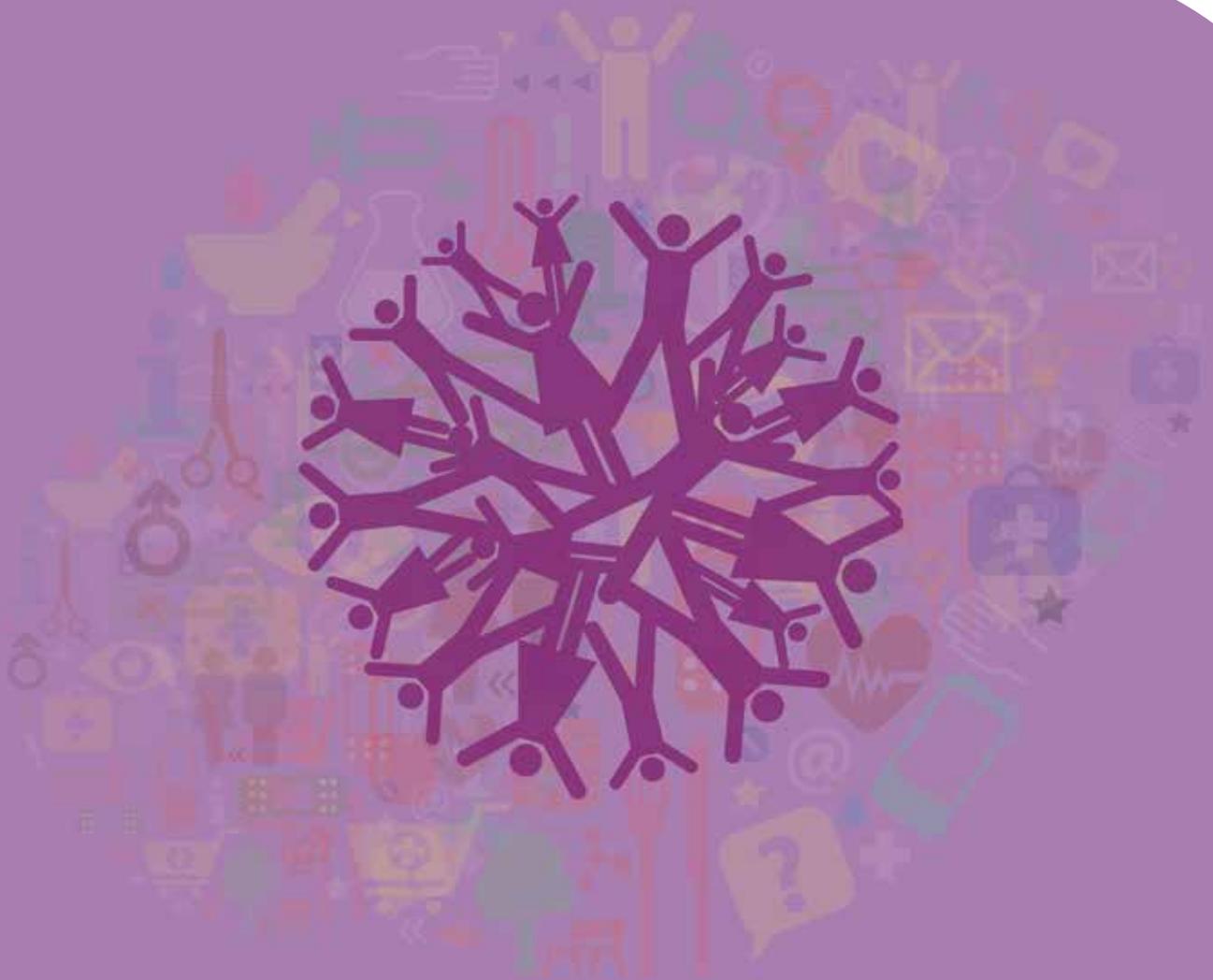


# CHCMGT005

## Facilitate workplace debriefing and support processes

Release 2



*Learner guide*

CHCMGT005

# Facilitate workplace debriefing and support processes

Release 2

Learner guide

Aspire version 1.3



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## Version control and modification history

Version	Release date	Modification
Release 2, version 1.1	April 2017	First release
Release 2, version 1.2	January 2019	Minor corrections as part of our continuous improvement program
Release 2, version 1.3	July 2019	Updated to reflect the new Aged Care Quality Standards

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### CHCMGT005 Facilitate workplace debriefing and support processes Release 2

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Level 1, 464 St Kilda Road  
MELBOURNE VIC 3004 AUSTRALIA  
Phone (03) 9820 1300

First published April 2017

Reprinted (with amendments) January 2019

Reprinted (with amendments) July 2019

Cover design Rewind Creative

Printer Doculink Australia Pty Ltd, 1d/28 Rogers Street,  
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e-ISBN 978-1-76059-925-6 (PDF version)

ISBN 978-1-76059-923-2

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## Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *CHCMGT005 Facilitate workplace debriefing and support processes*, Release 2. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: [www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au).

## How to work through this learner guide

This learner guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the learner guide you need to read, and which practice tasks and learning checkpoints you need to complete. The features of this learner guide are detailed in the following table.

<b>Feature of the learner guide</b>	<b>How you can use each feature</b>
<b>Learning content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Read each topic in this learner guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.</li> </ul>
<b>Examples and case studies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Examples of completed documents that may be used in a workplace are included in this learner guide. You can use these examples as models to help you complete practice tasks and learning checkpoints.</li> <li>▶ Case studies highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.</li> </ul>
<b>Practice tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Practice tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which practice tasks to complete.</li> </ul>
<b>Video clips</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Where QR codes appear, learners can use smartphones and other devices to access video clips relating to the content. For information about how to download a QR reader app or accessing video on your device, please visit our website: <a href="http://www.aspirelr.com.au/help">www.aspirelr.com.au/help</a></li> </ul> 
<b>Summary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.</li> </ul>
<b>Learning checkpoints</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ There is a learning checkpoint at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which learning checkpoints to complete. These checkpoints give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.</li> </ul>

## Foundation skills

As you complete learning using this guide, you will be developing the foundation skills relevant for this unit. Foundation skills are the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills and the employability skills required for participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life.

The following table outlines specific foundation skills noted for your learning in this learner guide.

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Understanding your job role, organisational procedures and legal responsibilities</li> <li>▶ Managing your work and seeing how well you are going and making goals for yourself at work</li> <li>▶ Seeking professional development opportunities for continuous improvement</li> </ul>
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Understanding how documents are presented and being able to navigate through documents</li> <li>▶ Understanding industry- and job-specific terminology</li> <li>▶ Interpreting key information in relevant documents</li> <li>▶ Understanding routine workplace checklists and documentation</li> </ul>
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Planning, drafting and writing reports and documents</li> <li>▶ Communicating through written letters, email and online</li> <li>▶ Recording progress; reporting incidents</li> </ul>
Oral communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Clarifying instructions</li> <li>▶ Providing information</li> <li>▶ Supporting others through encouragement, negotiation and conflict resolution</li> <li>▶ Using body language to model desired behaviour and responding to others' body language</li> </ul>
Numeracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Calculating costs, weights, measurements of height and distance</li> <li>▶ Interpreting measurements</li> </ul>
Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Working well with other people by cooperating, collaborating, encouraging and building rapport</li> </ul>
Planning and organising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Planning your workload and commitments</li> <li>▶ Implementing tasks</li> <li>▶ Completing work on time</li> <li>▶ Knowing how to deal with hazards and risks</li> </ul>
Making decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Understanding and applying decision-making processes</li> <li>▶ Reviewing the impact of your decisions</li> </ul>
Problem-solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Identifying problems</li> <li>▶ Working out how to fix a problem using problem-solving processes and reviewing the outcome</li> </ul>
Innovation and creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Recognising opportunities to develop and apply new ideas</li> <li>▶ Generating ideas by thinking of new ways to do something</li> <li>▶ Making suggestions to improve work</li> </ul>

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Technology and digital literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Efficiently using digitally based technologies and systems correctly and safely</li> <li>▶ Accessing, organising and presenting information</li> <li>▶ Using equipment correctly and safely</li> </ul>

## What do you already know?

Use the following table to identify what you may already know. This may assist you to work out what to focus on in your learning.

Topic	Key outcomes	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1 Monitor welfare of colleagues	1A Monitor stress and emotional wellbeing, and take action where issues arise	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1B Acknowledge, accept and identify diverse needs of colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1C Identify and use performance standards to monitor stress and emotional wellbeing	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1D Use self-assessment and reflective behaviour strategies to monitor performance	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1E Seek and act on formal and informal performance feedback	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1F Plan to identify and develop proposals to support areas of need within the organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident

Topic	Key outcomes	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 2 Conduct structured debriefings following an incident	2A Plan, prepare and conduct debriefing	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2B Schedule debriefing as soon as possible after an incident	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2C Conduct debriefing in a safe environment and facilitate open discussion	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2D Use debriefing techniques to encourage exploration and reflection	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2E Use questioning to encourage colleagues to explore and acknowledge concerns	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2F Identify and respond to indicators of risk	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2G Document and report outcomes of debriefings	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2H Identify, respond, support and refer colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident



## Topic 1

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 1A Monitor stress and emotional wellbeing, and take action where issues arise**

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- 1B Acknowledge, accept and identify diverse needs of colleagues**

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- 1C Identify and use performance standards to monitor stress and emotional wellbeing**

---

- 1D Use self-assessment and reflective behaviour strategies to monitor performance**

---

- 1E Seek and act on formal and informal performance feedback**

---

- 1F Plan to identify and develop proposals to support areas of need within the organisation**

---

## Monitor welfare of colleagues

Health and community service workers often deal with situations that are complex and challenging. They are particularly vulnerable to work-related stress and potential burnout. Supervisors must know how to identify risks to wellbeing and offer appropriate support to protect colleagues from psychological injury. Where issues develop they need to have strategies in place to assist recovery and rehabilitation.

# 1A Monitor stress and emotional wellbeing, and take action where issues arise

The role of the supervisor is to provide emotional as well as administrative and educational support. You need to make sure that the safety of people with support needs and workers (as well as your own safety) is protected at all times. You must be able to recognise when a worker is unwell, not working safely or at risk of physical, psychological or emotional harm. Become familiar with your organisation's policies and understand your responsibilities and legislation on issues affecting health and wellbeing. Continually update your knowledge and awareness of best practice standards for avoiding or dealing with psychological injury and mental health issues.

## Stress and wellbeing in Australian workplaces

The Australian Psychological Association's 2014 Stress and Wellbeing survey found that up to 44 per cent of Australian workers experience workplace stress. Work problems have a huge influence on mental health and wellbeing. Stress and low morale at work can lead to reduced productivity, burnout and safety risks for workers and the people they work with. Preventing workplace injury and illness is an obligation under work health and safety (WHS) legislation.



## Rights and responsibilities

Under WHS legislation, the term 'persons conducting a business or undertaking' (PCBU) is used to describe a range of individuals including employers, a principal contractor or a person with management or control of a workplace.

Both the PCBU and workers have WHS rights and responsibilities, based on the concept of duty of care. Duty of care is a legal obligation to ensure that the PCBU and others are not harmed by their actions or omissions.

As a PCBU, an employer has a primary duty of care and workers have a duty to take reasonable care. It is important to encourage workers to protect themselves and the people they support from physical and psychological harm.



## Workplace wellbeing and supportive leadership

Research in Australia by Cotton and Hart (2002) suggests that staff wellbeing can be strongly influenced by supportive leadership. Supportive leadership is a management style that is particularly effective in situations where work is stressful, tedious or potentially dangerous. A supportive leader concentrates on reducing stress and frustration in the workplace and demonstrates behaviour that expresses concern for colleagues and an interest in their individual needs.



## Monitor stress and emotional wellbeing

How can we measure welfare or wellbeing? Though there is no general agreement on the definition of these terms, there is consensus that good health is an essential component. The World Health Organization's definition of good health is a state of complete physical, social and mental wellbeing. It maintains that promotion, protection and restoration of mental health is of key concern to individuals, communities and societies.



## Understand risks to mental health

Mental health as defined by the World Health Organization (2014) is more than the absence of mental disorders and disabilities. It is 'a state of wellbeing in which an individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stressors of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community'.

Here are the major risks to mental health, as identified by the World Health Organization.

### World Health Organization risks to mental health

- ▶ Poor physical health
- ▶ Social exclusion
- ▶ Rapid social change
- ▶ Stressful work conditions
- ▶ Gender discrimination
- ▶ Risks of violence and human rights violations

## Indicators of issues

Many people experience the symptoms of work-related stress and low morale at some stage in their working lives. You should never ignore the signs of colleagues suffering low morale and stress, even if these may be due to personal reasons outside your control.

Here are some general and personal indicators of significant issues among workers.

General workplace issues indicators	Personal issue indicators
▶ General job dissatisfaction	▶ Appearing tired
▶ Decreased concern for colleagues	▶ Regular tardiness or absences
▶ Detachment from team leaders	▶ Signs of anxiety and/or depression
▶ Diminished care, cynicism	▶ Continual errors being made
▶ Leave for illness, such as depression	▶ Conflict with others
▶ High staff turnover	▶ Filing complaints

## Risk of psychological injury

Stressful working environments can lead to mental health issues like anxiety, depression or psychological injury. In the health and community services sector, workers are often at risk of psychological injury due to burnout, grief and loss, or trauma related to incidents of violence and aggression. If not addressed and managed properly, threats to physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing in the workplace can lead to psychological injury or risk to the safety and welfare of colleagues and recipients of care.

According to research for the government agency Comcare, people who demonstrate the following behaviours or physical symptoms may be at risk of psychological injury.

### Behaviours

- ▶ Erratic; with unplanned absences
- ▶ Complaints of not coping with workload; not getting things done
- ▶ Reduced participation in work activities; withdrawal from colleagues
- ▶ Unable to concentrate; memory lapses; increased errors and/or accidents
- ▶ Loss of confidence; indecisiveness
- ▶ Increased consumption of caffeine, alcohol or sedatives
- ▶ Emotional responses
- ▶ Complaints of lack of management support; conflict with team members/managers; fixations with fair treatment issues; use of grievance procedures

### Physical symptoms

- ▶ Constant tiredness
- ▶ Sick and rundown; headaches; gastro-intestinal disorders, rashes
- ▶ Reduced reaction time
- ▶ Difficulty sleeping
- ▶ Weight loss or gain
- ▶ Dishevelled appearance

Source: Comcare: [www.comcare.gov.au](http://www.comcare.gov.au)

## Prevention and management of psychological injury

Comcare has devised the good management practice principles for prevention and management of psychological injury in the Australian workplace.

Here are the principles for managing psychological injury.

### Managing psychological injury

Demonstrate commitment to psychological injury management.

Understand causes of psychological injury in the workplace.

Destigmatise psychological injury in the workplace.

Clearly define policies and procedures.

Ensure policies and procedures are consistently applied.

Improve training and awareness of mental health and psychological injury management.

## Take steps to resolve issues

Once you have recognised the early warning signs of risk to psychological wellbeing, you need to take steps to identify the underlying issue and then decide on the most appropriate action. Stress or anxiety can be caused by many factors. A colleague may be facing relationship issues, grief and loss or have suffered bullying, violence or aggression. It is important to develop relevant communication skills and problem-solving strategies so you are able to understand the reasons for the symptoms you have recognised and to decide on the best option for resolving the issues.



## Identify underlying issues

When seeking to identify the underlying causes of a colleague's distress, you may find it useful to focus on communication skills.

Here are some useful communication skills to develop to support stressed workers.

### Probing questions

- ▶ Probing questions are used to dig deeper to find out more specific details and to clarify things; for example, use the word 'exactly' to express the importance of specific information. Example: 'What exactly did you find challenging about the behaviour of John?'

### Direct questions

- ▶ Direct questions are those that end in a question mark and can be answered. Indirect questions are usually statements and may cause confusion or ambiguity.

### Open-ended questions

- ▶ Open questions generally begin with what, when, where, why, or how. They are used to create a conversation; to gain information and details; to gain detailed descriptions of situations; to learn more and to develop relationships. For example: 'What did you find challenging about the situation?'

### Empathy

- ▶ To have empathy is to recognise and acknowledge another person's emotional state – to try to put yourself in their shoes, to feel as well as see things from their perspective, and to show appropriate concern.

### Active and supportive listening

- ▶ Be attentive to what the other person is saying in order to try and understand what they are feeling. Build rapport and trust so they will express their views and opinions freely. The aim is not to offer advice or guidance. Do not interrupt or fill pauses with your own experiences. Summarise or rephrase what you hear and ask for confirmation that you have understood correctly.

## Take action to support colleagues at risk

Research has shown that supervisors who know when to intervene and how to offer appropriate support can often help those facing work-related stress factors and contribute to workplace wellbeing.

Here are some strategies for supporting colleagues at risk and for assisting rehabilitation of those recovering from stress-related illness.

### **Recognise signs**

Recognise the early warning signs of employee distress and low morale.

### **Show empathy**

Support the employee. Demonstrate empathy by initiating a conversation that expresses concern and allows the employee to discuss their health or other concerns in private.

### **Maintain contact**

Contact the employee if there is an unplanned absence from work. Explore with them their reasons for non-attendance. Offer support. Stay in contact with the employee in cases of prolonged absence to maintain the connection with the workplace.

### **Seek assistance**

If you feel unable to provide positive support to an employee, seek help from your human resources department, rehabilitation case manager or through your organisation's Employee Assistance Programs (EAP).

### **Be flexible**

Provide flexible workplace options that enable the employee to be safe and productive at work. This could involve changes to the way the work is organised, additional support through a mentor, or adjustments to work hours or duties).

### **Foster participation**

Ensure that the employee is fully involved in planning options and has co-ownership of job-related decisions.

### **Welcome and confirm**

When an employee returns to work after an absence, meet them to welcome them back. Confirm that their contribution was missed and provide an update about developments in their absence. Agree on any changes to their work and how this should be communicated to the team.

### **Continue support**

Provide ongoing support until the employee has reached their former functional level.

Source: [www.comcare.gov.au](http://www.comcare.gov.au)

## Supportive supervision strategies

You can respond to workplace issues by providing supportive supervision in an individual face-to-face meeting, in a group meeting or by telephone.

Here is more information on how to provide supportive supervision.

### Response to potential workplace issues can include the following types of interventions.



#### One-on-one meetings

- ▶ Arrange to meet the worker to address specific concerns.
- ▶ Work collaboratively with the worker to set goals for the session.
- ▶ Provide resources, strategies and information, such as managing stress or conflict resolution material.
- ▶ Provide referrals if necessary



#### Group meetings

- ▶ Arrange for workers to meet to address specific concerns.
- ▶ Raise concerns and identify areas to address.
- ▶ Collaborate with workers to identify goals that can be set to address areas of concern.
- ▶ Provide resources, strategies and information, such as managing stress or conflict resolution material.
- ▶ Encourage workers to role-play strategies.
- ▶ Provide referrals if necessary.



#### Telephone consultations

- ▶ Telephone the workers concerned and discuss issues.
- ▶ Provide referrals if necessary.

## Manage conflict

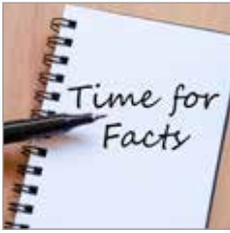
If conflict in your workplace is an issue, here is a plan of action to manage work difficulties.

Here is a five-step plan of action to help resolve conflict in your workplace.



#### Recognise the symptoms

- ▶ Be alert to early warning signs.
- ▶ Regularly highlight and address issues, at daily or weekly team meetings.



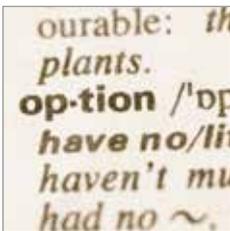
### Identify the problem

- ▶ Gather the facts to determine the problem.
- ▶ Find out the following:
  - ▶ How long ago did the problem arise?
  - ▶ When and where does it occur?
  - ▶ Who is involved?
  - ▶ Who else is affected by the situation?
  - ▶ What effect is the problem having?
  - ▶ What are the likely consequences if the problem is not addressed?



### Analyse the problem

- ▶ Define and evaluate options; consult those affected as well as specialists (if appropriate).
- ▶ Determine best course of action, as there may be several ways to resolve the problem.
- ▶ Aim for all parties to be happy with the outcome. Develop a range of options to address difficulties.
- ▶ Collaborative problem-solving with work team or parties involved can encourage lateral thinking and helps people accept compromises.



### Define resolution options

- ▶ Define and evaluate options; consult those affected and specialists if appropriate.
- ▶ Determine best course of action; there may be several ways to resolve the problem.
- ▶ Aim for all parties to be happy with the outcome. Develop a range of options to address difficulties.
- ▶ Collaborative problem-solving with work team or parties involved encourages lateral thinking and helps people accept compromises.



### Take action

- ▶ Develop a plan of action. This should indicate what each person is expected to do and when; and how the solution will be monitored.
- ▶ Implement the solution promptly. Follow up and monitor outcomes.

**Example**

**Supportive supervision**

Belinda is six months pregnant, and she volunteers as a telephone counsellor. After a one-hour call assisting a person to manage suicide ideations, Belinda seeks supervision. She tells the supervisor she found the call extremely taxing, and is not sure if she was able to help the caller.

Belinda’s supervisor, Rich, listens carefully to Belinda’s account of the call, and hears the stress in her voice. He validates her effort, telling her she did everything she possibly could to assist the caller. He then suggests Belinda finish her shift and go home for a rest. He doesn’t want her to experience unnecessary stress, particularly as she is pregnant. The following morning, Rich phones Belinda at home to check how she is feeling about the call, and Belinda confirms that she is feeling okay.



## Practice task 1

1. A colleague appears tired and agitated and has called in sick twice in one week. How could you use effective communication skills to identify and respond to the underlying issues?

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2. What policies could you implement in your workplace to assist a colleague who is suffering or has recently suffered from stress-related illness?

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**Click to complete Practice task 1**

# 1B Acknowledge, accept and identify diverse needs of colleagues

Workplace diversity involves recognising the value of individual differences and managing them to ensure a workplace that is free from discrimination, bullying and unethical practices. A workplace that embraces diversity accepts and respects the various racial, cultural, societal, geographic, economic, language backgrounds and abilities of its staff.



Supervisors should assist and encourage colleagues to view their different attributes as valuable assets that can contribute to the team and its work. Understanding difference should also allow you to accommodate individual needs and create personalised development plans.

## Understand workplace diversity

All staff should understand what is meant by diversity and how it affects their role in the workplace. Diversity is not about 'them' and 'us', nor is it just about different cultures, religions and ethnicity. It encompasses the range of differences between all people around the world. Understanding diversity means acknowledging that there are many differences within cultures, and that culture does not apply only to matters of nationality, language, race or religion.

Your workplace may employ a variety of people who exhibit a number of the following differences.

Some of these areas of difference are shown here.

### Ability, aptitude or disability

- ▶ Staff may have a basic education or be highly qualified.
- ▶ People may have a physical or cognitive disability.
- ▶ Some people may be suited to a particular job role more than others based on their skills, ambition and aptitude.

### Age

- ▶ An organisation may employ people of all ages, from young people straight from high school to people in their 60s or 70s.

### Culture

- ▶ Some people may have different cultures to your own.
- ▶ Many people from other countries and may wish to continue their customs and beliefs.
- ▶ Different cultures may promote different work ethics.

### **Ethnicity**

- ▶ Staff may come from a variety of countries with different languages, cultures, beliefs and ways of dressing.

### **Gender and gender identity**

- ▶ A workplace may have a balanced ratio of male to female staff, while some may have more male or more female staff.
- ▶ Some people may identify as a different gender to the one they were assigned at birth.

### **Language**

- ▶ While English is the main language in most Australian workplaces, English may not be the first language for many employees.

### **Marital status or family arrangements**

- ▶ Staff may be married, separated, in a de facto relationship or single. They may be a single parent, have children or have no children.

### **Nationality**

- ▶ A person may settle and work in Australia but retain their original nationality. Even when a person is naturalised as an Australian, the person's original nationality may still affect their actions.

### **Personality**

- ▶ A diverse workplace usually has people with a range of different qualities, such as people who are outgoing, shy, cheerful, quiet, talkative and imaginative.

### **Race**

- ▶ Race refers to a group of people who have similar features such as skin colour, type of hair, eye colour and other physical features.
- ▶ A person's race is determined by their ancestry and genetic background.

### **Religion**

- ▶ People may have a specific religion they follow strictly, have beliefs based on their culture or have no religious affiliation.

### **Sexuality**

- ▶ Sexuality can include heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality, but there are many other terms a person may identify with.

## Acknowledge diversity in policies and procedures

Organisations are obligated to develop policies and procedures based on legislation relating to human rights, equal opportunity, harassment and discrimination. Supervisors must be familiar with relevant Commonwealth and state/territory-based legislation and be able to explain how their organisational policy on diversity and procedures can help meet various needs.

All staff should be given the opportunity to contribute to policies and procedures and help identify the diverse, particular and changing needs that exist in your workplace.

Here is a list of relevant legislation.

### **Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)**

- ▶ *The Age Discrimination Act* states that people must not be treated more or less favourably on the basis of their age.

### **Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)**

- ▶ *The Disability Discrimination Act 1992* gives a broad definition of disability and prohibits direct or indirect discrimination based on disability. All states and territories have established bodies to deal with disability discrimination issues under the legislation they administer.

### **Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)**

- ▶ *The Racial Discrimination Act* underpins Australia's obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Its main objectives are to promote equality before the law for all people and to make discrimination against people on the basis of their race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin unlawful.

### **Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)**

- ▶ *The Sex Discrimination Act* recognises the need to prohibit, as far as possible, discrimination against people on the grounds of sex, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, breastfeeding or family responsibilities.

### **Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)**

- ▶ *The Australian Human Rights Commission Act* aims to ensure that people of all backgrounds are treated equally and have the same opportunities. The Act also makes discrimination against people on the basis of their race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin unlawful.
- ▶ This Act established the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and gave it the functions to protect individuals' rights

### **Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (Cth)**

- ▶ *The Workplace Gender Equality Act* replaces the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999* (Cth).
- ▶ The legislation aims to improve and promote equality for both women and men in the workplace, rather than just focusing on women, as both men and women have been discriminated against in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and family care arrangements.

## Manage workplace diversity

As well as sound knowledge and understanding of anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation, supervisors need to understand what is meant by culture and cultural competence and how the principles of cultural competence are applied in Australia. Understanding your own culture and recognising how it has formed your identity and governs your ideas of what is acceptable behaviour should help you to become culturally competent and to demonstrate inclusive and culturally responsive behaviour to your colleagues.

Here is an explanation of some key concepts.

### Culture

Culture is sometimes described as a lens through which we view the world. Everybody's perceptions and daily interactions are influenced by their culture.

### Cultural competence

Cultural competence is commonly defined as a set of congruent behaviours, attitudes and policies that enable professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. To demonstrate cultural competence you need to have a clear idea of what constitutes culture and difference.

### Diversity

Diversity relates to differences based on many factors. The acceptance of diversity through inclusive practices avoids discrimination.

### Discrimination

To discriminate means to treat someone differently based on one or more of their attributes, such as gender, race, religion or beliefs.

## Facilitate discussions about diversity

A key responsibility for a manager is to implement regular, critical reviews of organisational diversity policy to ensure it remains current. This includes checking legislation, seeking and analysing feedback, and making suggestions to improve the policy. Your colleagues can also provide invaluable feedback and suggestions to ensure policies are implemented effectively and efficiently and reflect their current needs and realities. Make time for formal and informal situations where staff are encouraged to discuss diversity, their particular needs and how these relate to the procedures that are in place.



## Identify and respond to needs

Having staff complete a profile that registers such things as age, gender, ethnicity may assist you to anticipate some of the diverse needs of your workplace. However,

it is important that you do not make assumptions, positive or negative, based on a person's social, educational, linguistic, religious or cultural background, age or gender identity.

Your workplace may have specific needs related to the following cultural issues.

### Beliefs and values

- ▶ Be aware of how specific religious or spiritual beliefs and value systems can influence behaviour and practice. However, there are many different varieties within major religious systems and practices, so be mindful of making assumptions. Find out what may or may not be relevant to the people you are working with. Consider how fasting rituals might influence your colleagues at various times. How could you respond?

### Age

- ▶ Different cultures have different attitudes to the social significance of age or youth and the needs of young and elderly people. Respect is shown in a variety of ways. Be aware of behaviour that may be interpreted as disrespect or rudeness, or lack of caring.

### Health and disability

- ▶ Your colleagues may come from backgrounds or work with people from cultural backgrounds that have very different views about treatment of people with diverse abilities and health (including mental health). Views on when, how and what to eat can also be important considerations.

### Gender and sexual preference

- ▶ Work practices may need to be adapted to take into account different cultural views – some people are not comfortable with the idea of a man being alone with a single woman, or a man or woman carrying out certain tasks. Be aware of how cultural attitudes to homosexuality, transgender and non-traditional partnerships can affect members of your team, emotionally or professionally.

## Workplace practices that support diversity

In many workplaces, social and cultural differences between colleagues and/or people with support needs can create tension and misunderstanding.

The following table outlines some strategies to help you deal with these situations and to help people in the workplace act with more awareness and sensitivity.

### Educate and train

- ▶ Share differences and create a team culture that is respectful of differences, acknowledges that each member has their own strengths and weaknesses and that these all need your support and consideration at some point.
- ▶ Provide training or information to assist team members.

### Encourage discussion

- ▶ Develop and support an environment where people can share information.
- ▶ Prepare new staff and give them the opportunity to talk about their needs and concerns.
- ▶ Encourage team members to ask questions in non-judgmental ways; for example, instead of saying 'Why do you do that?' or 'Why don't you eat meat?' ask 'Can you tell me about why that is important to you?'

### Don't assume

- ▶ The only way to understand each person as an individual is to ask people about themselves. Basing your knowledge on assumptions demonstrates ignorance and disrespect.

### Share traditions

- ▶ Research cultural issues to help you gain a better understanding of the people you interact with. Some traditions may be similar to your own, while others may be specific to the person or their cultural background.
- ▶ Find out how each person celebrates traditions and incorporates this into your team celebrations.
- ▶ When the tradition is special to one person, ask if they can share it with the team in some way.

### Address issues

- ▶ Address any issues before they become a bigger problem.
- ▶ Make sure each team member knows their contribution is important.
- ▶ Have an honest and open discussion, along with ongoing feedback and trialling of ideas, to fairly cater for everybody's needs.

## Demonstrate inclusivity

Embracing diversity means focusing on what individuals can do, not what they can't do, and giving them the opportunity to inform, educate and share with their colleagues new perspectives, experience, skills, and knowledge. Supervisors should listen carefully, observe and intervene to make sure everyone is given an opportunity to explain and demonstrate their different needs and responses to workplace circumstances. Be sure to use a communication style that reflects inclusivity.

Here are some communication issues to consider when interacting with people with diverse needs or from diverse backgrounds.

### **Pace delivery to suit audience**

- ▶ People who are unfamiliar with the English language or have hearing or other comprehension problems often find understanding easier if a person speaks slowly.
- ▶ Speaking rapidly or loudly can appear rude or disrespectful.

### **Articulate clearly**

- ▶ Speak clearly; don't run words together; ensure you leave small breaks for punctuation and effect.
- ▶ Avoid the use of jargon and abbreviation. Jargon is workplace slang that becomes a part of your everyday language, but means nothing to those outside your workplace culture.

### **Check understanding**

- ▶ If you aren't sure how someone has interpreted your message, ask the person to whom you are speaking to tell you what they have understood so you can rephrase your message if necessary.

### **Eye contact**

- ▶ Be aware of cultural, social or medical considerations; for example, in Western society, we expect people to look at us when we're talking. Lack of eye contact can be indicative of shyness or shiftiness. In some cultures, maintaining eye contact can be seen as rude, lewd or hostile.
- ▶ Eye contact can be difficult for those suffering from autism or social anxiety.

## **Develop cultural competence**

To work effectively with culturally diverse people and recognise their needs, you must develop your knowledge and skills.

Here are some things you can do to develop cultural competence in the workplace.

### **Recognise cultural influences**

- ▶ Recognise how ethnicity and culture – including social and educational culture – may have an impact on a person's behaviour.

### **Understand yourself**

- ▶ Become aware of how your own cultural background/experiences, attitudes, values, and biases inform your ideas and your language. Often we are unaware of how our day-to-day decisions are influenced by these. You cannot act in a culturally responsive way if you do not recognise how you are limited by and influenced by your own cultural knowledge and linguistic practices.

### Educate yourself

- ▶ Educate yourself as much as you can to increase your understanding about the needs of culturally diverse people. Seek information about cultural, social, psychological, political, economic, and historical factors relating to any specific group that you or your colleagues may be working with. Learn how languages categorise and define things in different ways.

### Educate your colleagues

- ▶ Assist your colleagues to become aware of their own cultural values and norms, and facilitate discovery of ways they can apply this awareness both within and outside your organisation.

### Communicate clearly

- ▶ Provide information in a language or a form of language that all your colleagues can understand. Be aware that language comprehension is not only a problem for non-native speakers of English. Facility with informal spoken language does not always mean that reading and writing skills are well developed. You should provide essential information both orally and in written form.

### Respect for all

- ▶ Respect everybody’s religious and/or spiritual beliefs and values. Work to eliminate biases, prejudices and discriminatory practices.

## Example

### Measure cultural competence

A National Cultural Competency Tool has been specifically designed for use by mental health services. It aims to assist workers to meet the National Cultural Competency (NCCT) Standards and to help organisations comply with Commonwealth Government legislation. You can read more at: <http://aspirelr.link/ncct>. Scroll down and select ‘National Cultural Competency Tool (NCCT) for mental health services’.

The principles of cultural competence underpin the Australian government’s approach to ensuring people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds receive equitable mental health services.

The NCCT Standards, which apply to all mental health services in Australia whether public or non-government, are based on the following principles of cultural competency.

#### Cultural competency principles reflected by NCCT Standards

- ▶ Respect rights, including human rights and the fundamental right of all Australians to access health care that meets their needs.
- ▶ Meet legislative requirements; for example Equal Opportunity Acts.
- ▶ Take responsibility; for example for action to address rights and legislative requirements.
- ▶ Embrace diversity; for example, rather than treating everyone the same, acknowledge and respect cultural and experiential differences.
- ▶ Ensure equity and inclusiveness, such as equality of access and non-discrimination.

## Practice task 2

1. In what areas might you look to find if members of your workplace have needs relating to diversity?

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2. List two strategies you could use to avoid misunderstanding or conflict in your workplace.

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**Click to complete Practice task 2**

# 1C Identify and use performance standards to monitor stress and emotional wellbeing

Standards are broad statements of what is expected of an organisation or person. Being aware of the professional and personal standards relevant to each role in the workplace, and knowing when and how to refer to them in particular situations can help all staff avoid stress. Monitoring and reporting are vital to health and safety management. Following best practice management standards can help you monitor your organisation's effectiveness in responding to issues of stress and risks to emotional wellbeing. Monitoring how well your colleagues are performing in relation to professional and personal standards and noting absence and illness rates can alert you to issues that might pose risks to individual and general wellbeing in your workplace.



## Identify areas for skills development

Evaluating a worker's skills and needs allows you to provide adequate support to them, such as administering a stress management plan following a critical incident.

Consider the following information when evaluating workers under your supervision.

### Informal or formal

The evaluation may be formal or informal. Informal evaluation of skills may involve interviewing the worker about their emotional state and whether they can identify areas for development. You may also ask how they were emotionally impacted by the event, and assist the worker to identify how support can be provided. Often, an informal evaluation is followed up with a formal evaluation, such as a one-on-one meeting.

### A specific template

Your organisation may provide a specific template to use to help the worker evaluate their skills and needs. Templates vary depending on whether you are providing debriefing after a critical incident, at the end of a program or during the implementation of a new program.

### Ownership and participation

Encourage the worker to have ownership over the evaluation process, as this motivates them to participate in skill development and ensures they receive the support they need following the event. To encourage participation in the evaluation process, support workers to conduct critical reflection and self-evaluation.

## Performance standards

There is a range of national and international standards relevant to health and community services work. These provide a framework for evaluating skills development needs, and for quality service delivery. They highlight important principles of health and community services work, such as respecting the rights of individuals, promoting safety and wellbeing and ensuring access and equity.

The professional standards that apply to your organisation depend on the sector in which you work and will reflect relevant ethical and legal requirements. In addition, your organisation should have clear and easily accessible descriptions of the kinds of behaviour and personal performance standards expected of staff. Regular monitoring of how well your team members are performing in relation to these guidelines can help identify any underlying issues and possible solutions to avoid or address risks to emotional wellbeing of all staff and service users.



## Professional standards

Health and community services organisations create policies, protocols and procedures to comply with regulatory requirements and ensure workers have clear guidelines to follow in carrying out their duties. These guidelines reflect the legal and ethical obligations of community services work and provide a framework for a consistent standard of practice. The responsibility for monitoring how policies and procedures are put into practice usually rests with staff working in supervisory or team leader roles.

The following outlines some of the Australian standards that may be relevant when monitoring the behaviour and performance of staff in your workplace.

### National standards relevant to health and community care work

- ▶ The Aged Care Quality Standards
- ▶ National Standards for Disability Services
- ▶ National Standards for Mental Health Services
- ▶ National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards
- ▶ Case Management Society of Australia National Standards of Practice for Case Management.
- ▶ Good practice standards for Community Health Services
- ▶ National Cultural Competency Standards

## Management standards

The UK's Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has designed Management Standards for Work Related Stress. These professional standards are recommended by the Australian Government's Comcare to guide managers in monitoring emotional wellbeing and planning stress management. The standards cover six areas associated with poor health and wellbeing in the workplace if not properly managed.

Here is an outline of the six standards.

<b>Primary areas of workplace stress</b>
<p><b>Demands</b> Workload, work patterns and the work environment</p>
<p><b>Control</b> How much say a person has in the way they do their work</p>
<p><b>Support</b> Includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.</p>
<p><b>Relationships</b> Promoting positive working relationships to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour</p>
<p><b>Role</b> Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles</p>
<p><b>Change</b> How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation</p>

## Personal standards

As a supervisor, you must ensure that your workers receive clear guidelines regarding the standards required for their personal performance. They should also understand what behaviour and standards are expected of supervisors and how they should interact with management and other team members. It is your responsibility to ensure these requirements are made available to your colleagues in a way that they can understand.

You should also ensure plenty of opportunity for discussion of issues or questions concerning these requirements, or obstacles that might prevent staff from performing to necessary standards.

Behaviour/performance standards should be found in:

- ▶ position descriptions
- ▶ individual work contracts
- ▶ organisational policies and procedures.

## Use performance processes to clarify expectations

Specific role and behaviour expectations should be expanded on as part of the performance management and appraisal process. All staff should be able to contribute to documents that specify goals they are expected to achieve and how. Supervisors should also make sure that expectations for performance and the criteria by which it will be measured are concrete, clearly explained and understood. Clear communication regarding personal performance standards should help to reduce stress for all employees and supervisors.



Where staff struggle to meet performance standards, assisting them to plan and carry out measures to address skill shortfalls is aimed at securing a range of improvements for the individual staff member, the people they provide care and support to, and the organisation's ability to meet its obligations.

## Monitor and measure performance

Most performance monitoring is conducted through performance appraisals, which deal specifically with an employee's performance over a given period of time and their ability to fulfil specific personal, team and service goals. They provide opportunities for supervisors to monitor issues that might affect the performance or wellbeing of individuals and assist them to find solutions.

Here are some points to consider in relation to performance monitoring.

### Measuring performance

Performance may be measured against the following:

- ▶ Punctuality, honesty and integrity
- ▶ Appearance
- ▶ Interaction with children
- ▶ Relationships with families
- ▶ Teamwork
- ▶ Service goals
- ▶ Professional development and advancement

### Performance appraisal as a tool

A performance appraisal is a tool for measuring a person's performance against selected criteria. The criteria will be both quantitative and qualitative, meaning they will provide a measure for the quality of performance as well as quantity (for example, meeting specific targets). Performance issues can be discussed positively and strategies can be developed to improve performance. Ideally, appraisals are a positive experience and provide feedback on progress since the last meeting. Any non-performance should be discussed separately from performance appraisals in specific counselling sessions.

### Aims of performance appraisal

The aims of performance appraisals are to:

- ▶ provide open and honest feedback on performance
- ▶ facilitate discussion between worker and manager about mutual needs
- ▶ validate quality practices
- ▶ identify training needs
- ▶ provide a basis for workplace decisions regarding pay increases, promotion and professional development.

### Post-appraisal commitments

Follow-through is imperative for ensuring any performance issues are addressed and progress is made. A manager should document the discussion and ensure the worker receives a copy and signs it. Performance appraisals can be motivational, uplifting and positive experiences when handled well, and allow you to address performance issues in a fair and non-discriminatory way.

### Integrating with professional development

Supervision meetings and performance appraisals should be used to identify areas for development. Feedback should be constructive and work both ways, so it is an opportunity for improvement for employee and managers. Goals and limitations to achieving those goals should be discussed and actions to achieve the goals agreed to by both supervisor and worker. Such actions might include:

- ▶ further training
- ▶ updating knowledge about legislation, standards, policies and procedures
- ▶ arranging mentoring.

## Monitor and manage stress and emotional wellbeing

Initial efforts to monitor stress and emotional wellbeing in the workplace have focused on recognising and managing individual personal risk. This is in line with legal and ethical requirements that recognise the rights of workers to be protected from psychological injury and to receive support for recovery and rehabilitation when injury does occur. More recent research suggests that the most effective way to approach stress management in the workplace is to take a holistic approach, where organisational factors that can contribute to psychological injury are also addressed. Using management standards can help to monitor an organisation's approach to managing stress and workplace wellbeing.



Monitoring and managing the wellbeing of groups within the organisation can lead to the development and implementation of organisation wide measures, such as ensuring appropriate and diverse workloads and building a workplace culture that normalises the risks of secondary trauma, making it easier for individuals to talk about and get support for.

## Self-care as a means of managing stress

Both the organisation and the individual worker have a role in managing wellbeing. In addition to organisational policies and procedures that promote the wellbeing of staff, the adoption of self-care practices has been found to be helpful in managing stress. You can model these practices and promote their use as part of facilitating support processes. This can begin with a self-care audit and a plan to manage stressors. The plan may include adopting behaviours such as the following, which are listed on a DHS publication *Leading Practice* – a resource guide for child protection leaders.

Here is an outline of the different areas in which to practise self-care.

### Physical self-care

- ▶ Eat regularly and healthily.
- ▶ Get enough sleep and in a proper sleep routine.
- ▶ Indulge with comforting physical touch.
- ▶ Wear clothes in styles and textures that make you feel good.
- ▶ Dance, sing, run or walk.
- ▶ Get or stay fit.

### Psychological self-care

- ▶ Change your clothes when you get home.
- ▶ Make a rule about what time you finish or start work. Stick to it!
- ▶ Keep a journal.
- ▶ Watch movies that make you feel good.
- ▶ Attend counselling or therapy if necessary.
- ▶ Say no to extra demands; say yes to opportunities for growth.
- ▶ Try new hobbies.

### Emotional self-care

- ▶ Spend time with people who make you feel good.
- ▶ Cry when you feel you need to.
- ▶ Make a list of as many things as you can think of that bring you pleasure or comfort – plan to do one each day.
- ▶ At the end of each day, notice one thing you did well.
- ▶ Play and be with children.
- ▶ Take social action in a form that makes you feel potent – donate, write letters, join protests.

### Spiritual self-care

- ▶ Practise reflection and mindfulness.
- ▶ Spend time in nature – go to the park, watch the sun set.
- ▶ Find a spiritual connection to others – through community or a club.
- ▶ Sing.
- ▶ Pray or meditate.

### Workplace self-care

- ▶ Take regular breaks at meal times.
- ▶ Schedule your holidays and make plans to look forward to.
- ▶ Get to know your colleagues.
- ▶ Share mealtimes or breaks.
- ▶ Organise a lunchtime walk group.

## Facilitate stress-free performance management

Many of the factors that contribute to work-related stress and psychological injury are due to poor people management practices, according to research published by Comcare. In particular, the government body has identified inadequate performance management as one of the risks to workplace wellbeing.

Comcare suggests the following for effective performance management.

### Requirements of effective performance management

Effective performance management should:

- ▶ make expectations clear
- ▶ ensure procedures are understood by all staff
- ▶ be a two-way process, covering
  - feedback on performance
  - areas for improvement
  - future goals and objectives
  - training needs.

### Expectations of a performance manager

Effective performance managers should:

- ▶ be trained to provide effective development-oriented feedback
- ▶ give continuous feedback rather than restricting it to performance reviews
- ▶ consider using the HSE's management standard on support as a guide.

## Evaluate performance standards

To ensure clarity and avoid confusion that may lead to poor performance and consequent stress in the workplace, managers should make sure that performance is measured against clear criteria and appropriate standards.

The following is a useful guide to evaluating performance standards.

Performance standards should be:

- ▶ clear and measurable – to ensure supervisor and worker can identify areas of concern or need for improvement
- ▶ appropriate to the particular worker's roles and abilities
- ▶ explicit about opportunities for reinforcement of work behaviour
- ▶ based on accurate, relevant performance-based data (not behaviour, opinion or hearsay).

## Address poor performance promptly

Addressing performance that does not meet personal and organisational standards is fundamental to monitoring and managing workplace wellbeing. Poor performance that is noted but not addressed immediately has the potential to escalate and threaten workplace morale, productivity, and may lead to psychological injury.

There are a number of reasons for poor performance, as shown here.

Reasons for poor performance include:

- ▶ confusion about what is expected because goals, standards or policies are not clear or have not been established
- ▶ a mismatch between capabilities and the job the worker is required to do
- ▶ lack of knowledge or skills to do the job expected of them
- ▶ lack of personal motivation, low workplace morale and/or poor work environment
- ▶ personal issues, such as family stress, health problems or substance abuse.

Source: *Employment Essentials: Managing Performance*. [www.industrialrelations.nsw.gov.au](http://www.industrialrelations.nsw.gov.au)

## Legal and ethical considerations

All health and community services workers have an obligation to be aware of and apply relevant legislation and duty-of-care requirements and to follow organisation policies and procedures. If you work in a supervisory role, you have a greater responsibility. Assisting your colleagues to improve their understanding of requirements and how to apply them will help avoid unnecessary stress in your team due to a lack of clarity and also help prevent incidents due to behaviours of concern. Learn to identify and clearly explain legal responsibilities of work roles and encourage staff to clarify and fulfil their duty of care responsibilities. Monitor how they apply legislative requirements and make sure they are made aware of any changes in legislation that might impact their work and wellbeing.



## Breaching ethics

A worker may breach ethics knowingly or unknowingly. If this happens, you should refer to the code of conduct or ethical guidelines for your industry to determine whether the issue is an ethical dilemma. Note that ethical dilemmas are not legal issues. If the breach has legal implications, you need to take appropriate action, such as reporting it to the relevant authority.

### Examples of ethical breaches

- ▶ The worker has a sexual relationship with the person with support needs.
- ▶ The worker lies.
- ▶ The worker discusses the personal issues of an individual with support needs with somebody unrelated to the work context about.
- ▶ The worker has been spending the money of individual with support needs on the behalf of the individual, without their consent.

## Manage complex ethical issues and dilemmas

Community services workers are likely to face a number of ethical dilemmas in the course of their work. An example of this kind of dilemma is supporting a person with care needs who wants to have a baby, even though they have been medically advised not to.

Workers may need to choose between two or more morally acceptable courses of action or between equally unacceptable alternatives. If there is a legal aspect to the issue, it is not an ethical dilemma. A situation of this type can be resolved by following legal means, such as reporting or recording.

Workers can refer to their job description to confirm their rights and responsibilities and the boundaries of their work role, which will enable them to work ethically and handle situations that are difficult or distressing.

Here are some principles to follow.

### Principles for dealing with ethical dilemmas

- ▶ When in doubt about what to do, always put the welfare of people with support needs first.
- ▶ Strive to be fair and show respect to all service users and workers.
- ▶ Keep personal problems private during work times.
- ▶ Respect service users' right to privacy.
- ▶ Consider situations from the point of view others.

## Breach of professional practice

Professional practice, or best practice, is outlined by your industry's code of conduct and by your organisational policies and protocols.

Here are some breaches that may occur in a community services setting.

### Breach of duty of care

- ▶ Duty of care is the obligation of a person to act in a way that does not cause harm. A breach of duty of care is to act in any way that a reasonable person (based on their experience and training) considers may cause harm. It is still a breach of duty of care even if harm does not actually occur.

### Breach of confidentiality

- ▶ A breach of confidentiality is intentionally or unintentionally collecting, storing or using confidential information in a way that does not adhere to privacy legislation or a service's confidentiality and privacy policy. An example is sharing private information about a person without their consent.

### Breach of professional ethics

- ▶ A breach of professional ethics is behaviour that is contrary to a professional code of conduct, code of ethics, the expressed values of a service or the commonly upheld professional standards in the childcare sector. An example of this is a childcare worker pursuing a personal relationship with a child's parent.

### Breach of procedure

- ▶ A breach of procedure is any action or non-action that is not aligned with service procedures. An example is not following guidelines for petty cash and expenditure, or using a work car for private use.

## Confidentiality

You are duty bound to follow confidentiality legislation and policies when facilitating support procedures.

Each state and territory has different laws that govern privacy and confidentiality, though the guiding principles are similar. You should be familiar with the main points in the legislation that govern the state or territory in which you work.

There are also Commonwealth Acts that apply to the whole of Australia; for example, the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) protects all personal information handled by businesses. Most states and territories have laws designed to regulate how information is managed in education and community services systems.

New privacy legislation was introduced in March 2014, including 13 new National Privacy Principles to regulate how information is handled by businesses and Australian government agencies.



## Support workers to meet organisational standards

Organisational standards are put in place to ensure the agency or service provides a high quality of care and the needs of individuals are met. Organisation standards usually reflect industry standards. An example of an industry standard is the National Quality Standard (NQS) set by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). The supervisor's role is to monitor the performance of the workers and ensure all standards are maintained.

Standards in community service relate to:

- ▶ ethical practice
- ▶ the rights of the person with support needs
- ▶ duty of care
- ▶ safety of the person with support needs
- ▶ safety of workers
- ▶ privacy and confidentiality.

## Use management standards to monitor stress

Referring to the HSE Management Standards may help you monitor risks to the wellbeing of your colleagues. These standards define the characteristics or culture of an organisation where the risks from work-related stress are being effectively managed and controlled. Each standard is accompanied by a 'state to be achieved' that highlights good management practice and describes organisational behaviour necessary to achieve the standard.

The HSE Management Standards:

- ▶ demonstrate good practice through a step-by-step risk assessment approach
- ▶ allow assessment of the current situation using surveys and other techniques
- ▶ promote active discussion and working in partnership with employees to help decide on practical improvements that can be made
- ▶ identify the main risk factors for work-related stress
- ▶ help employers focus on the underlying causes of stress and their prevention
- ▶ provide a yardstick by which organisations can gauge their performance in tackling the key causes of stress.

Source: Health and Safety Executive at: [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

**Management standards**

These HSE management standards cover the primary sources of stress at work and may be used as a guide for good practice.

Here is an outline of each of these standards.

**Management Standard 1: Demands**

This standard includes issues such as workload, work patterns, and the work environment.

**Standard:**

- ▶ Employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs.
- ▶ Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

**How to achieve this standard:**

- ▶ The organisation provides employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work.
- ▶ People's skills and abilities are matched to the job demands.
- ▶ Jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employees.
- ▶ Employees' concerns about their work environment are addressed.

**Management Standard 2: Control**

This standard refers to how much say the person has in the way they do their work.

**Standard:**

- ▶ Employees indicate that they are able to have a say about the way they do their work.
- ▶ Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

**How to achieve this standard:**

- ▶ Where possible, employees have control over their pace of work
- ▶ Employees are encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work.
- ▶ Where possible, employees are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work.
- ▶ The organisation encourages employees to develop their skills.
- ▶ Employees have a say over when breaks can be taken.
- ▶ Employees are consulted over their work patterns.

### Management Standard 3: Support

This standard includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.

**Standard:**

- ▶ Employees indicate that they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and superiors.
- ▶ Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

**How to achieve this standard:**

- ▶ The organisation has policies and procedures to adequately support employees.
- ▶ Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to support their staff.
- ▶ Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to support their colleagues.
- ▶ Employees know what support is available and how and when to access it.
- ▶ Employees know how to access the required resources to do their job.
- ▶ Employees receive regular and constructive feedback.

### Management Standard 4: Relationships

This standard includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

**Standard:**

- ▶ Employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours, such as bullying at work.
- ▶ Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

**How to achieve this standard:**

- ▶ The organisation has policies and procedures to adequately support employees.
- ▶ Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to support their staff.
- ▶ Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to support their colleagues.
- ▶ Employees know what support is available and how and when to access it.
- ▶ Employees know how to access the required resources to do their job.
- ▶ Employees receive regular and constructive feedback.

### Management Standard 5: Role

This standard refers to whether people understand their role within the organisation, and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles.

**Standard:**

- ▶ Employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities.
- ▶ Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

**How to achieve this standard:**

- ▶ The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the different requirements it places upon employees are compatible.
- ▶ The organisation provides information to enable employees to understand their role and responsibilities.
- ▶ The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the requirements it places upon employees are clear.
- ▶ Systems are in place to enable employees to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities.

### Management Standard 6: Change

How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

**Standard:**

- ▶ Employees indicate that the organisation engages them frequently when undergoing an organisational change.
- ▶ Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

**How to achieve this standard:**

- ▶ The organisation provides employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes.
- ▶ The organisation ensures adequate employee consultation on changes and provides opportunities for employees to influence proposals.
- ▶ Employees are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their jobs. If necessary, employees are given training to support any changes in their jobs.
- ▶ Employees are aware of timetables for changes.
- ▶ Employees have access to relevant support during changes.

Source: Health and Safety Executive at: [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk). Reproduced in accordance with UK Open Government Licence conditions.

## Practice task 3

1. What are standards and how can they help a supervisor to monitor stress and emotional wellbeing in the workplace?

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2. How could you use professional standards related to stress management to ensure that your colleagues feel supported and can expect an effective response to concerns?

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3. Identify three responsibilities of a supervisor in relation to considerations.

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**Click to complete Practice task 3**

# 1D Use self-assessment and reflective behaviour strategies to monitor performance

Critical reflection occurs when a worker analyses and challenges the validity of the ideas or common sense beliefs that underlie in their thoughts and actions.

Reflective practice is an essential professional skill for all workers in the community services industry. Regular critical reflection and self-assessment allows you to consider what you are doing and how you could improve or develop your skills, behaviour or attitudes. Use professional and management standards and data collected through feedback from colleagues, service users and your managers to reflect on how



well you are meeting expectations and goals and to provide supportive leadership and to manage stress and emotional wellbeing in your colleagues and yourself.

You can also support workers to critically reflect on their performance and general way of thinking. Critical reflection is an ongoing process of reflection and change.

## Self-assessment and reflective behaviour

Practising critical reflection and self-evaluation will sharpen your self-awareness and help you improve your effectiveness as a supportive supervisor.

Here is an outline of the difference between critical reflection and self-evaluation.



### Critical reflection

Critical reflection allows you to assess the appropriateness of your thinking according to real-life experience and to use this reflection to inform your future actions and practices. As a supervisor, critical reflection should involve an ongoing process of reflection and change as you adapt your ideas and behaviours in light of your reading, listening and thinking.



### Self-evaluation

Self-evaluation involves considering what you are doing, analysing your effectiveness and developing more suitable outcomes or practices. Conducting an evaluation of your own performance motivates you to take responsibility for your actions and your own development.

## Self-evaluation in practice

Self-evaluation can occur in a number of ways. Here are some strategies and tips for practice.

### Informal self-evaluation

Informal self-evaluation is part of the everyday practice of communicating with others, making decisions and reading to gain an increased understanding of theory, research, principles, practices, policies and procedures.

### Formal self-evaluation

Formal self-evaluation occurs as part of your own performance review where you consider your personal abilities and skills. The process should highlight strengths and identify weaknesses and allow you to plan strategies for support and improvement.

### Meetings and discussions

Self-evaluation can also occur at staff meetings or through general discussion, and in any situation that challenges you to take in new information and consider its relevance.

### Self-assessment tips

- ▶ Take your time.
- ▶ Find a quiet place where you can think without interruption.
- ▶ Take a few breaths to relax and enable reflection.
- ▶ Focus on what you are doing correctly and the skills that you have used effectively.
- ▶ Use a checklist and ask yourself questions to elicit areas where you might need development.

## Attend supervision meetings

Supervision meetings and performance appraisals help you to review your existing skills and knowledge, identify limitations, set goals to address them and structure a personal improvement plan. Supervision meetings are generally provided as part of your performance review and are regularly scheduled throughout the year. Their frequency will depend on your organisation and your industry's standards. You may need to seek supervision for a particular issue, perhaps if the worker you are supervising is dealing with a complex issue that goes beyond your scope of practice and field of experience.

Supervision meetings can help you:

- ▶ review your skills
- ▶ review your current knowledge
- ▶ identify your limitations
- ▶ identify your need for further support or training
- ▶ plan professional or personal development
- ▶ address a specific issue.

## Identify your limitations

Here are some areas where, on reflection, you may identify limitations and need for development. If a worker you are supervising is dealing with complex issues that go beyond your field of expertise or experience, you may need to seek advice and supervision from another colleague or refer the person to a service that can provide specialised assistance from a qualified practitioner.

Here are some areas in which you may experience limitations.

### Areas in which you may have limitations

1

#### Personal behaviour

You may find it difficult to wait and remain calm when in conflict.

2

#### Personality traits

You may find it difficult to:

- ▶ adapt to change
- ▶ understand the ideas of others
- ▶ develop extended relationships
- ▶ trust others.

3

#### Learning styles

You may prefer one learning style over another. One of the most common categorisations of learning styles is Fleming's VARK model, which identifies the following types of learners:

- ▶ Visual learners
- ▶ Auditory learners
- ▶ Reading-writing preference learners
- ▶ Kinaesthetic learners or tactile learners

4

#### Professional standards

You may find it difficult to:

- ▶ actively seek professional development opportunities
- ▶ seek, analyse and reflect on feedback
- ▶ seek opportunities for supervision and mentoring
- ▶ identify and participate in personal development
- ▶ integrate learning into improved practice.

5

#### Emotions

You may find it difficult to:

- ▶ remain impartial
- ▶ maintain professional boundaries
- ▶ understand all of your feelings.

**Applying knowledge and skills**

You may lack:

- 6** ▶ knowledge of relevant legislation
- ▶ skills in implementing the frameworks
- ▶ an understanding of assessment and rating systems.

**Understanding and implementing relevant policies, plans and procedures**

You may not:

- 7** ▶ understand or be able to follow the relevant organisational policies, plans and procedures
- ▶ be clear about what the current service philosophy means to you
- ▶ agree with a procedure that is in place.

**Managing time effectively**

You may not be able to:

- 8** ▶ set priorities, tasks and goals
- ▶ organise your daily schedule
- ▶ complete tasks and projects on time.

**Identifying work methods and practices that can improve personal performance**

You may:

- 9** ▶ lack knowledge of best practice
- ▶ have poor professional models.

**Awareness and sensitivity to conflict, culture and context**

You may:

- 10** ▶ be culturally biased
- ▶ fear rejection
- ▶ feel misunderstood
- ▶ lack interest in other people’s perceptions
- ▶ be unable to involve yourself in a support group, reference group or take on an advocacy role
- ▶ feel inadequate.

**Maintain currency**

There are a number of areas to monitor to keep your skills and knowledge up to date with different reasons for doing so.

Here is an outline of these areas.

## Knowledge

- ▶ Keep up to date with ethical frameworks to determine if an incident is ethical or legal in nature, and so you know how to respond.
- ▶ Understand current WHS policies and procedures so you can guide workers to conduct appropriate hazard identification, hazard reports and hazard minimisation.
- ▶ Keep up to date with changes to legislation, so you can guide workers to act lawfully.
- ▶ Keep up to date with codes of conduct and know current breach procedures, so you can act correctly.
- ▶ Keep up to date with standards referring to individual and worker rights, so rights are protected and maintained.
- ▶ Understand the latest research relating to mental health indications and signs of child abuse, so you can support workers to act accordingly.

## Skills

- ▶ You need first-aid training so you can correctly supervise and provide guidance in an emergency procedure.
- ▶ You need technological skills so you can provide skills supervision to workers.
- ▶ You need communication skills so you can effectively provide supervision.
- ▶ You need effective team-management skills so you can maintain a positive work environment and ensure efficiency and satisfaction among the workers.
- ▶ Keep up-to-date with skills such as physical response training, so you can support the best outcomes in a difficult situation.

## Assess your ability to manage stress

To help you to reflect upon your own behaviour and management style, you could use the Stress management competency indicator tool developed by the HSE. This helps you assess whether you are using the behaviours identified as effective for preventing and reducing stress at work. It consists of four checklists, which ask you to evaluate your responses in four areas.

The four areas identified as important for preventing and reducing stress at work are as follows.

### Respectful and responsible: Managing emotions, having integrity

#### Integrity:

- ▶ Being respectful and honest to employees

#### Managing emotions:

- ▶ Behaving consistently and calmly around the team
- ▶ Using a considerate approach
- ▶ Being thoughtful in managing others and delegating

## Managing and communicating existing and future work

### Proactive work management:

- ▶ Monitoring and reviewing existing work
- ▶ Allowing future prioritisation and planning
- ▶ Problem-solving
- ▶ Dealing with problems promptly, rationally and responsibly
- ▶ Participative/empowering
- ▶ Listening to, meeting and consulting with the team,
- ▶ Providing direction, autonomy and development opportunities

## Managing the individual within the team

### Being personally accessible:

- ▶ Available to talk to personally
- ▶ Sociable
- ▶ Using a relaxed approach, such as socialising and using humour
- ▶ Empathetic engagement
- ▶ Seeking to understand each individual in the team in terms of their health and satisfaction, motivation, point of view and life outside work

## Reasoning/managing difficult situations

### Managing conflict:

- ▶ Dealing with conflicts decisively, promptly and objectively
- ▶ Use of organisational resources
- ▶ Seeking advice when necessary from HR and WHS managers

## Example

### How well do you manage stress?

Use the HSE Stress management competency indicator tool to reflect on your behaviour and management style in relation to management of workplace stress. You can access it at: <https://aspirelr.link/stress-management-competency-indicator-tool>.

You will be asked to evaluate your behaviours in four key areas, rating the statements as: strongly disagree, disagree, slightly agree, agree or strongly agree.

Use these statements to reflect on your responsibility and respectfulness as a leader:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ▶ I am a good role model.                      | ▶ I approach deadlines calmly.                 |
| ▶ I treat my team with respect.                | ▶ I take a consistent approach to managing.    |
| ▶ I never speak about staff behind their back. | ▶ I give more positive than negative feedback. |
| ▶ I do what I say I will do.                   | ▶ I deal with problems myself.                 |
| ▶ I act calmly in pressured situations.        | ▶ I allow people to approach work their way.   |
| ▶ My moods are predictable.                    | ▶ I consider team's work-life balance.         |
| ▶ I don't pass on my stress to my team.        | ▶ I am honest.                                 |
| ▶ I welcome suggestions for improvement.       | ▶ I set realistic deadlines.                   |

## Practice task 4

1. Identify two areas where critical reflection might help your supervision practice.

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2. How might you evaluate your effectiveness in managing stress in your workplace?

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[Click to complete Practice task 4](#)

# 1E Seek and act on formal and informal performance feedback

Effective supervisors regularly seek feedback on their performance. Performance feedback can help you to improve your capacity to work within the specific limitations of your role, to develop or improve on personal and professional abilities where necessary, and to ensure that you are fulfilling your responsibilities.



Take advantage of regular supervision meetings and performance appraisals to identify possible areas for improvement or development. You should also seek feedback from your colleagues, either formally or informally. Welcome constructive feedback as an opportunity for improvement, rather than a negative critique of your practice. As you gather information about your actions, you are accepting ideas from others who may be more experienced than you, have different needs from you or have an alternative understanding. Feedback helps you to see if what you are doing is meaningful – it helps you to move forward, set goals and see that you are developing and achieving these.

## Responsibility to seek updates on information

It is important keep abreast of changes to legislation, standards, codes of conduct, organisational policies and procedures and relevant research.

The more access you have to your network, the more likely it is that you will learn when changes occur, or if new information becomes available. If you are using the internet to source information, make sure the website is credible. Government or industry association websites are good sources of information and provide access to publications and relevant resources. Clarify what you do not understand with the relevant organisation or agency.

Here is some more information on seeking updates to information.

### Seeking and updating information

- ▶ Undergo regular supervision with your manager/supervisor.
- ▶ Attend all management meetings.
- ▶ Subscribe to and read relevant association newsletters and industry magazines or websites.
- ▶ Attend conferences and workshops relevant to your work context.
- ▶ Attend specialised training, such as behaviour intervention strategy training.
- ▶ Participate in networking events, such as attending organisation functions.
- ▶ Join relevant social networking groups and forums.
- ▶ Regularly consult organisation policies and procedures, and engage in scheduled policy reviews.

## Professional boundaries and work role

As supervisor you must ensure that all members of your team feel supported, and you need to have strong relationships with people you have supervisory responsibilities for to ensure this.

Refer to your position description, professional standards, your supervisor, codes of practice and legislation and organisational guidelines, for clarification of your work role when necessary. Maintenance of professional boundaries is also important, however, if you wish to provide ongoing support for all team members and ensure that they deliver high quality service and care for service users at all times. Having personal contact with workers outside of work is entirely permissible, but as a supervisor, you need to manage these relationships so they are not detrimental to outcomes in the workplace.

Here are some reasons to maintain professional boundaries.

### Reasons for maintaining professional boundaries

- 1** **Avoiding the risk of favouring workers**

You may begin to favour certain workers based on your personal interactions with them. For instance, you may allocate the worker preferred shifts or offer support to them that goes beyond your role. Favouritism in the workplace is detrimental to the morale of the team.
- 2** **Impact on leisure time**

The worker may feel they have the right to contact you outside your nominated working hours. This may impact your ability to relax and rejuvenate. It may also set a precedent for other workers to contact you unduly.
- 3** **Confusion over role**

The worker may be confused about the support you can offer. They may be seeking emotional counsel during a supervision session when their professional development should be the focus.
- 4** **Decision impairment**

The worker may find it difficult to seek professional support from you if they have social contact with you, which may impair their ability to respect your decisions as supervisor.
- 5** **Avoiding bias**

You may find yourself divided if a conflict arises between your friend and another worker. It may be difficult to main impartial and provide impartial support to both parties.
- 6** **Following processes**

If the worker does breach practice or policy, it may be difficult to follow the legitimate process.
- 7** **Breaching confidentiality**

Confidentiality may be breached if you are discussing work-related issues outside the work environment.
- 8** **Reduction in worker performance**

The worker may not fulfil their obligations because they feel you will protect them from the potential consequences.

## Maintain effective working relationships

Follow these steps to ensure you maintain a positive and effective working relationship with a worker with whom you have social contact.

### Maintain effective working relationships

Maintain clear boundaries in the professional environment. Boundaries may include ensuring that the worker knows when and how they can contact you; that the worker respects your need to be impartial and objective; and providing the worker with a clear outline of their position and obligations.

At work, treat your friend as you do all other workers. Do not make concessions or demonstrate favouritism.

Be aware of your behaviour and topics of conversation outside of the work environment to ensure you maintain confidentiality.

If you feel you cannot provide impartial support when needed, consider using the services of another supervisor or your manager.

Make sure social conversations with the worker during work hours do not impact on individual care or affect your or the worker's responsibilities.

## Models of supervision

The organisation you work for and the people the organisation supports largely determine the supervision model, practices and procedures that people in your role who facilitate workplace support processes will be encouraged or required to follow.

A traditional model of supervision is problem focused and hierarchical: a supervisor is expected to lead the supervisee towards outcomes and goals. A more contemporary approach is strengths based and person centred. Integrative models assume that supervision issues are often complex, so a range of methods may need to be used to suit the situation.

Here is information about different models of supervision.

### Solution-based

The supervisor and the supervisee work collaboratively to meet the needs of the service user. Techniques include using scaling questions and identifying strengths in order to address a problem. This model focuses on what the supervisee is doing rather than the specific issues of the person with support needs.

### Strengths-based

Strengths-based Wu-wei supervision was developed by Edward and Chen (1999). Wu-wei, meaning action/non-action, takes a less directive approach.

It uses techniques such as:

- ▶ symmetrical voices, ensuring the supervisee has opportunity to voice experiences
- ▶ a competence focus, where the supervisor models effective techniques
- ▶ client-participated supervision, where the individual invited to join in the supervision process
- ▶ unassuming transparency, where the supervisor shares their own struggles, if appropriate.

### Success-enhancing

This model was developed by Briggs and Miller (2005). Similar methods are used for solution-based supervision. The supervisor has no direct contact with the person with support needs, only the supervisee. The supervisor encourages supervisees to set goals to develop their practice.

### Peer group

In this model, supervisees take turns sharing experiences and offering support to other supervisees. When used with individual supervision, peer group supervision promotes confidence, ability and knowledge of supervisees.

## The role of the supervisor

When facilitating workplace support processes, background knowledge on theories about the role of people with supervisory responsibilities can guide your understanding of your role.

Kadushin's model of supervision is one of the main theories; describing duties as being mainly of three kinds.

### The role of supervisor

Administrative: promoting standards, regulations, policies and procedures and managing the day-to-day work of the supervisees

Educational: supporting workers by providing knowledge (for example, theoretical frameworks) and evaluating the effectiveness of strategies used

Supportive: maintaining harmonious working relationships, focusing on the emotional needs of the supervisees.

## Identify the organisation's supervision practices and procedures

It is important to identify the organisation's practices and procedures that relate to supporting staff. Consider these points on supervision practices.

### Appropriate or required supervision model

- ▶ The organisation you work for and the individuals the organisation supports largely determine the supervision model, practices and procedures that are used. For example:
  - In social work, Kadushin's model of supervision is commonly used.
  - In counselling, orientation-specific models (the psychodynamic approach) are more commonly used as these approaches relate to counselling techniques and practices.

### Choosing the appropriate supervision model

- ▶ You may be encouraged to use a range of supervision models and practices; for example, you may use a strengths-based model to work collaboratively with a worker, but a developmental model for the supervision process. It may be also appropriate to offer one-on-one supervision and peer group supervision.

### Being supportive, educational and administrative

- ▶ Whatever model you choose, supervision processes must be supportive, educational and administrative. A person who facilitates workplace debriefing and support processes should also have the correct qualifications and experience in the field they are supervising, so they are adequately equipped to fulfil the role.

## Performance appraisals

A performance appraisal is a tool for measuring your performance against selected criteria. The criteria will provide a measure for the quality of performance, as well as the quantity (for example, meeting specific targets). Ideally, appraisals are a positive experience and provide you with open and honest feedback on your progress since the last meeting. You should welcome the chance to discuss mutual needs with your manager and to seek validation of what you are doing. Any serious performance issues should be discussed separately from performance appraisals in specific counselling sessions.



## Types of feedback

You can seek feedback on the effectiveness of your supervision at various times and in various ways. You may receive feedback formally, though a pre-arranged meeting or informally, perhaps as a result of non-verbal communication that leads to questions on your part.

Whatever way you seek or receive feedback, you should make sure that it is constructive and that you respond positively. Listen carefully at all times, ask questions to make sure you understand, reflect on the feedback and take appropriate action where necessary.

There are three levels of feedback that you can request, as described here.

### Levels of feedback

#### Feedback about a process

When you ask for feedback about a process, you are asking for factual information. This feedback should be impersonal.

#### Feedback about your interaction with processes

When you ask about your interaction with a process, you are starting to request personal information.

#### Feedback about relationships, leadership, communications and sensitive issues

Here you are requesting a personal opinion, which is open to perception and links closely to your personal abilities and goals.

## Requesting feedback

When you ask for feedback, think about what it is you really want to find out. How much scrutiny and how deep and meaningful you wish the conversation to be should reflect the levels of feedback you are seeking. Develop specific questions so you are clear and gain the required information. When you are certain about what you want, you are more likely to receive useful information. If needed, offer to give the person providing the feedback time to think about their response or to observe your practice before replying.



## Formal feedback

Formal feedback may be written responses to specific questions, given as a result of structured encounters, such as performance appraisals or during supervision meetings. Feedback can also come in surveys or questionnaires that you have devised for workers you support or from other colleagues regarding specific issues.

If you were seeking feedback from a worker you have supervised, it would be useful to explore the following areas.

### Seek to determine:

- ▶ how effectively you provided support in line with organisational guidelines, such as the recommended model of supervision
- ▶ how effectively you promoted and maintained a high level of care consistent with your work role practice and ethical guidelines
- ▶ how effectively you set and maintained boundaries during the supervision process

- ▶ how effectively you demonstrated respect for the value, dignity and individual needs of the worker
- ▶ how consistently you provided technical knowledge in the supervision session
- ▶ how effectively you provided support in line with organisational guidelines, such as the recommended model of supervision.

## Informal feedback

Sometimes you may receive valuable feedback when you have not specifically asked for it. For instance, during a supervision session you may respond to negative nonverbal communication. You may also observe negative or positive reactions from your colleagues and follow up with questions to clarify your impressions. If you obtain constructive feedback from people you work with or provide support services to, listen carefully and consider how you could integrate the feedback into your development. Check with your networks to see if specific training is offered, or if colleagues can recommend a manual or book to help you develop the skill.



## The right mindset for receiving feedback

Feedback is most beneficial when received and given in a respectful, sincere and courteous manner. Most feedback is for your benefit and can be learnt from.

Here are some tips for receiving feedback.

### Turn it around

- ▶ When you receive feedback that has a negative emotional impact on you, turn this around and think about what the person is really trying to say. Could you have done something better? Did they get the point across or did their meaning get lost in their negative attitude or disorganised presentation? Were you listening or too busy worrying about how you felt, or whether the person was right or wrong?

### Take time to think

- ▶ If the discussion has upset you, take some time to think about it before taking the discussion further. Avoid getting involved in a negative disagreement or losing sight of your professional behaviour and the meaning of the feedback. If you become defensive or aggressive, you will end up losing an opportunity for personal and professional growth.

**Don't be defensive**

- ▶ Sometimes you may not realise you are being defensive until later on. Defensive behaviour can involve:
  - tuning out
  - interrupting
  - attacking your colleague on a personal level
  - arguing over facts
  - justifying yourself with 'buts'.

**Listen carefully**

- ▶ Listen carefully at all times, ask questions, and respond in a way that demonstrates you understand the feedback and are taking it in the way it was intended.

## Integrate feedback

Here are suggestions for acting on feedback to improve your work practice.

**Integrating feedback****Do something about it**

Sometimes this is as simple as working toward a goal. Other times you may need to sift through the feedback to identify what information is meaningful and factual.

**Make a suggestion or a change**

The best response to feedback may be to make a suggestion or a change. Trying something out can be a valuable learning experience.

**Review your performance**

It is important to take feedback constructively, if you can, and use it to review your performance and develop the supervision if required.

**Remember it is an ongoing process**

Development is an ongoing process, and feedback and evaluation can be an opportunity for you to enhance your skills and develop a stronger relationship with workers.

## Example

**Improve your ability to give feedback**

Learning the guidelines for giving and receiving feedback should help you feel confident about giving feedback and accepting it from others.

Here are examples of ways you can improve your ability to give feedback.

**Be specific**

Make sure the feedback you give is specific. Saying, 'I appreciate that you always write your case notes promptly, but sometimes you don't explain what you mean. If you say you have noticed behavioural changes in a person with support needs, I need details of the types of behaviour changes you have noticed' – this tells the recipient what they need to do and offers positive feedback at the same time.

If a colleague gives you feedback and you are unsure what they are saying, ask them to clarify what they mean or to provide specific examples of the performance, actions or behaviour they are commenting on.

**Be constructive**

Avoid purely critical or negative, and never give feedback as a way of humiliating or belittling your co-workers. Try to make positive comments before providing feedback about what they need to improve.

Constructive feedback allows the recipient to feel supported and respected. Always try to convey that you respect and value the person and are sensitive to their goals and needs. If a co-worker makes comments that are personal, you have the right to tell them that you will only accept feedback that focuses on your skills and performance and if it is given in a respectful manner.

**Ensure feedback is timely**

Try to give feedback as soon as possible following the time the behaviour or work practice you are discussing occurred. It is not helpful to say, 'Mrs Jones told me last month that you never follow up or get back to her about other services that she is eligible for. It's too late now because she has left.'

It is always better to point out problems or oversights at the time they occur so the feedback recipient can correct the issue themselves, or make sure they do not repeat the same mistake

**Be clear and direct**

Some people are uncomfortable giving feedback so they 'beat around the bush' and do not state exactly what they mean. This is very confusing for everyone. Work out what you want to say before you say it and give your feedback in a clear and concise way so the recipient can easily understand what you mean.

If you are not sure what someone means when they are giving you feedback, ask questions until you do understand. Seek clarification and examples of the behaviour or practice so you know what areas you need to improve.

**Example**

**Focus on behaviours and actions, not personalities**

Never make personal criticisms of a co-worker. If you need to provide feedback, focus on behaviours or actions, rather than making personal remarks or attacking on the basis of a personal characteristic.

For example, avoid saying, 'You're so full of yourself. You think you have a right to talk over everyone else all the time'. Instead, you could suggest that while it is important to make contributions, it is also important to listen to others.

**Be fair**

Always ensure you give feedback that is fair and balanced. For example, do not give feedback if you do not know all the facts of a situation, as you could blame someone for something that was beyond their control.

Always ensure you take into consideration other factors that may have influenced work performance. For example, a worker may not have been able to do everything they were supposed to do on a particular day because a number of colleagues called in sick that day.

**Encourage open, two-way communication**

Communication is based on sending, receiving and interpreting messages. We have all been in situations where we have said something only to realise that the person we are speaking to has interpreted the message in a completely different way from what we intended.

When giving feedback, choose your words carefully and give the feedback recipient an opportunity to respond to what you have said. If the recipient does not have a chance to talk about or clarify feedback, they may become resentful and feel they have been unfairly criticised.

## Practice task 5

1. Identify three benefits of seeking, receiving and acting on performance appraisals.

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2. What is the difference between asking for feedback about a process and asking for feedback about your leadership or communication style?

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3. Provide two examples of ways that a supervisor failing to maintain professional boundaries can hamper the performance of other workers.

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4. Identify three sources of information about the limitations of your work role.

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**Click to complete Practice task 5**

# 1F Plan to identify and develop proposals to support areas of need within the organisation

The factors that impact on stress, burnout and general wellbeing in the workplace can be different for each organisation, work team and individual. Therefore, it is essential that you consult the people who are likely to be affected before attempting to devise a plan or strategies to address these issues. You could conduct a stress audit of your work team to find out what particular aspects of the work situation they find difficult. This can be conducted as a formal survey, or informally in focus groups, or discussions between workers and supervisors. Information that has been collected from incident report forms, debriefings and from monitoring staff wellbeing, staff absences and turnover, should be used when planning the support of areas of need within the organisation.



## Identify areas of need for support

As a supervisor, you should identify potential risks for your workers, and then in consultation with them develop proposals that will help to support them to avoid psychological injury. You should also be prepared to facilitate recovery and rehabilitation where necessary.

To identify areas of need in your organisation, you should review the primary areas of stress in the workplace identified by the HSE Management Standards. You should also be aware of the areas of risk that are particularly relevant to those working in the health and community services areas, and the resources that will help you decide how your colleagues might be affected.



## Identify potential risks

Use the Management Standards approach to examine the six areas of work where staff employee wellbeing may be at risk.

Evaluate the risks while considering the following points.

### Who might be harmed and how

#### Consult:

- ▶ staff surveys
- ▶ sickness absence data
- ▶ staff turnover rates
- ▶ exit interviews
- ▶ number of referrals for health
- ▶ information from staff forums.

### Evaluate the risks

#### The following may assist when evaluating risks:

- ▶ Identify priority areas.
- ▶ Check priority areas with your colleagues.
- ▶ Work with your colleagues to decide how to address the issues.
- ▶ Consider focus groups to discuss specific issues.
- ▶ Draw up suggested action plans from discussions.

## Industry-specific risks

Those working in the health and community services sector are particularly vulnerable to psychological injury as a result of excessive stress, grief and loss, and violent or threatening behaviour. The terms compassion fatigue, vicarious traumatisation, secondary traumatic stress and burnout or PTSD (Post traumatic stress disorder) are often used interchangeably to refer to occupational hazards for those working in the health and human services area, particularly when exposed to details of trauma. When assessing the risk to your colleagues and planning appropriate interventions to support them, it is important to be aware of the differences between these conditions.

## Excessive stress

Stress itself is not an illness. Sometimes this natural response to demands or pressure helps to enhance our performance. However, some kinds of stress can lead to psychological injury, such as burnout with serious consequences for work performance and individual wellbeing. Constant demands and expectations that exceed our skills and abilities and overwhelm our needs and coping mechanisms can lead to poor mental or physical health.

The Comcare publication *Working Well* (2008) describes two types of potentially harmful stress.



**Chronic stress**

Chronic stress arises from a cumulative reaction to a build-up of pressure over time; for example, as a result of increased workload, increased hours, role conflict, job insecurity, interpersonal conflict and lack of support. It can wear people down and eventually overwhelms the individual's ability to cope.



**Acute stress**

Acute stress refers to a sudden onset injury that usually involves a rapid response to an abrupt, single, easily identified cause (such as conflict in the workplace).

## Vicarious or secondary trauma

Professionals working with people who have experienced profound trauma and injustice can experience distress that is often described as vicarious trauma or secondary trauma. The term 'secondary traumatic stress' is more often used to refer to the stress experienced by those in a significant relationship with a person who has been directly affected by traumatic events.



General feelings of despair or exhaustion may be considered normal reactions from those working in emotionally challenging situations. Supportive interventions, such as structured debriefing or resilience training, may often assist. But workers who are experiencing overwhelming, intrusive thoughts about abuse, or experiencing anxiety, panic attacks, intense distress, or perhaps deliberately avoiding trauma-related content in their work should be referred to professional trauma specialists.

You can read more at: <http://aspirelr.link/confronting-vicarious-trauma>.

## Burnout

Burnout is defined in Comcare's publication *Working Well* as a 'syndrome of complete physical and emotional exhaustion'. It is characterised by 'pessimism, paranoia, rigidity, diminished sense of humour, increased physical complaints, self-medication and social withdrawal, and may be associated with excessive and prolonged stress.'

According to Professor Jennifer Middleton, burnout occurs in organisations where there are high demands and low personal rewards, and is precipitated by increased workload and institutional stress, rather than trauma. In the Spring 2015 edition of *New Journal of Geriatric Care Management*, she argues that though the only real solution for burnout is to leave the workplace, there effective interventions are possible for those experiencing secondary trauma.

Here Professor Jennifer Middleton compares burnout and secondary trauma.



### Secondary trauma

- ▶ May occur either as a result of a single exposure or traumatic event
- ▶ May contribute to burnout
- ▶ Has a faster recovery rate
- ▶ Affects the individual worker
- ▶ Comes from the helper's relationship with a traumatised individual
- ▶ Steps can be taken to reduce secondary trauma (e.g. intentional self-care strategies)
- ▶ Often be addressed and treated while staff remain on the job



### Burnout

- ▶ A process that develops over time
- ▶ May have various causes
- ▶ Can occur independently of or with secondary trauma
- ▶ Often an organisational problem, not individual, but can be both
- ▶ Systematic factors, like poor supervision or lack of resources often contribute
- ▶ Organisations can take steps to reduce burnout (e.g. re-organise work, encourage staff leave)
- ▶ The cure may be to quit the job

Source: Middleton, J (2015) 'Addressing Secondary Trauma and Compassion Fatigue in Work with Older Veterans: An Ethical Imperative', *New Journal of Geriatric Care Management* Spring 2015.

## Plan emotional resilience training

As the incidence of burnout is particularly high in workers in the health and community services sector, governments and professional organisations now recognise an urgent need to educate staff about methods of emotional resilience and harm prevention strategies.

Here are some useful resources to help you propose education and training solutions.

### Stress and burnout: a prevention handbook

- ▶ Australia's National Research Centre on the Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) workplace has identified the key factors that are likely to impact stress and burnout for AOD workers and also describes practical strategies to alleviate or prevent these conditions.
- ▶ You can read more about this at: <http://aspirelr.link/stress-and-burnout>.

### Burnout self-care kit

- ▶ The NSW government's Family and Community Services department has devised a burnout self-care kit for support workers subject to high levels of prolonged stress, such as those involved in case management and support of homeless people.

## Grief and loss

Grief and loss will affect everyone at some stage, so it is important to know how to respond when colleagues are affected. Staff who work in areas where they encounter deaths of people they have provided care for, such as elderly people, benefit from training in coping with grief and loss. You can't predict who will be affected or when, but understanding how to respond and what kind of support you can give will prepare you for the unexpected. Being prepared for grief and bereavement can help all members of your team.



The Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement has some useful guidelines on how to be compassionate when dealing with employees who are suffering grief and loss as well as on how to prepare a bereavement policy.

You can read more about how to provide support for grief and loss at: <http://aspirelr.link/bereavement-support-standards>.

## Support grieving colleagues

Grief and bereavement can only really be alleviated over time, and the amount of time necessary will vary depending on the circumstances and people involved.

The Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement gives the following advice for supporting colleagues suffering grief or loss.

### Support for people experiencing grief

- ▶ Try to be encouraging on a daily basis.
- ▶ Remember that even walking through the door can be a huge effort for a bereaved person.
- ▶ Acknowledge and encourage the person in their efforts to readjust to the workplace.
- ▶ Provide ongoing support and encourage your colleagues to do the same.

## Plan long-term support for grief and loss

Offering support to a colleague immediately after a death is important, but long-term support is also essential. Regularly scheduled training in coping with grief associated with the death of people who use your services may be appropriate in some community and aged care services. Further ways to support staff include organising access to specialist palliative care workers and training staff in supporting the families of person who is dying or who has died. Your work team will also need to be strong and understanding.

Grief and loss is unpredictable, so it is helpful if you have a well thought-out policy in place for offering support in the case of staff who have experienced the death of a family member.

When preparing a bereavement policy, here are some questions to consider.

Some questions to ask when planning bereavement policy:

- ▶ What can/are you prepared to offer a bereaved colleague?
- ▶ What arrangements are there for compassionate leave?
- ▶ Can employees use other forms of leave (e.g. personal/sick leave, annual, long service, unpaid) if required?
- ▶ Can you be flexible? Can colleagues donate leave to a bereaved colleague?
- ▶ Can you make provisions for extended leave?
- ▶ Is the policy written in a clear and accessible way for staff?
- ▶ How can you meet the practical needs of bereaved staff?
- ▶ Do you offer an EAP (Employee Assistance Program)?

## Develop a prevention plan

Any plan to prevent and eliminate violence and aggression in the workplace should be developed in consultation with workers as well as health and safety representatives. All staff should be aware of policies for prevention and management of violence and aggression, and the need to follow them.

Steps in developing a plan to manage violence and aggression:

- ▶ Consult with workers and health and safety representatives.
- ▶ Manage the hazard.
- ▶ Provide procedures for responding to incidents.
- ▶ Provide information and training.
- ▶ Monitor the effectiveness of action taken.

## Plan to prevent violence and aggression

Violence and aggression can affect the safety and health of workers, so should be treated like any other hazard. Planning should involve processes that account for both prevention and a systematic response to violence and aggression when it does occur. The WA government's Department of Commerce has developed a Code of Practice designed to help employers and employees identify and deal with violence, aggression and bullying in the workplace.

The following advice is provided in its publication *Violence Aggression and Bullying at work* (2010).

### Prevention

- ▶ Consult with workers and safety representatives.
- ▶ Develop a prevention plan.
- ▶ Manage the hazard.
- ▶ Provide information and training.
- ▶ Monitor effectiveness of action taken.

### Responding to incidents

- ▶ Plan responses.
- ▶ Respond immediately.
- ▶ Implement a recovery and review phase.
- ▶ Create emergency procedures.

## Manage hazards of violence and aggression

Here are the steps recommended by the Western Australian government for managing the risk of violence and aggression in the workplace.

### Identify the hazard

- ▶ There are a number of ways to identify potential situations that may cause an injury or harm:
  - Talk to people who have experience with workplace violence and aggression, and encourage workers to communicate their feelings concerning workplace violence and aggression.
  - Conduct surveys (in confidence) – ask about incidents that have caused discomfort and situations that had the potential to become more violent.
  - Establish an incident reporting system if there is not one already in place.
  - Review incidents, disputes and grievances.
  - Identify potential triggers for violence and aggression.
  - Review working arrangements; for example, working alone, contact with public, working after hours.

### Assess the risk

- ▶ Look at the chance or likelihood of violence or aggression occurring and if it does occur, the extent of any harm or injury. What consequences might there be?

### Control the risk

- ▶ Take action to prevent the injury and psychological harm that can result from violence and aggression.

### Provide information and training

- ▶ Make information on workplace violence and aggression available to all workers in languages other than English where appropriate. Ensure they are aware of legislation processes and procedures relating to violence, aggression and bullying. Make sure they have safety training appropriate to their work roles and safety concerns as PART (Professional Assault Response Training) or behaviour intervention planning.

### Monitor the effectiveness of action taken

- ▶ Hazard management should be ongoing, and actions and policies should be constantly reviewed to take note of new hazards and changing conditions.

Source: *Violence, Aggression and Bullying at Work* (2010), [www.commerce.wa.gov.au](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au)

## Develop action plans

Once you have identified potential risks, evaluated the likely harm and discussed your findings with your colleagues, it is time to record them and develop and implement plans of action. When drawing up your action plans, consider how you intend to evaluate each action and how you will know whether it has been successful.

Responses to identified risk include:

- ▶ giving specific groups more control over aspects of their work
- ▶ improving communication between groups and management
- ▶ providing development opportunities for interpersonal skills
- ▶ analysing tasks or review jobs using the Management Standards framework
- ▶ updating a policy or procedure that has failings.

## Write proposals

When risk analysis and reviews of incidents and staff wellbeing indicate the need for additional support within an organisation, evidence needs to be provided to muster support and funding for training or changes.

The format of the proposal may include information in differing amounts of detail, depending on the forum in which it is being examined. If it is for external consideration, statements linking the proposal with the mission of the organisation may be necessary; however, it would not be necessary for a managers' meeting. The organisation may have a template document for certain kinds of proposals.

Here are some elements generally incorporated into written proposals.

### Elements of a written proposal

- ▶ A description of the situation or issue
- ▶ Proposed solutions
- ▶ Steps involved in implementing these solutions
- ▶ Benefits of making these changes
- ▶ Potential obstacles



2. What data would indicate that potential burnout is an area of need in the organisation, and would you include data for your conclusions?

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3. List two possible solutions to this issue that would be appropriate for your workplace.

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4. Issues around grief and loss are common in the care sector. If staff in an aged care home were struggling with dealing with the deaths of aged care residents, what would you propose to support this area of need?

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5. Identify two ways an organisation could support workers who have a demonstrated need for support in dealing with violent or threatening behaviour.

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**Click to complete Practice task 6**

## Summary

1. Work problems have a huge influence on mental health and wellbeing. These can be strongly influenced by supervisors who know how to offer appropriate support.
2. Threats to physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing in the workplace could lead to psychological injury if not addressed. Supervisors must recognise signs that a worker is unwell, not working safely or at risk of physical, psychological or emotional harm.
3. A supportive leader is aware of best practice standards for avoiding or dealing with psychological injury and mental health issues, concentrates on reducing stress and frustration in the workplace and demonstrates behaviour that expresses concern for colleagues and an interest in their individual needs.
4. Being able to work effectively with diverse colleagues requires acknowledgement, acceptance, valuing individual differences and learning to see things from different perspectives.
5. Supervisors should model behaviour that reflects legislative and ethical standards, non-discriminatory practice and an understanding of the nature of diversity in the workplace.
6. Knowing when and how to refer to professional and personal standards relevant to your role and workplace can help both you and your staff avoid stress.
7. Many of the factors that contribute to work-related stress and psychological injury are due to poor people management practices. Major factors likely to cause stress in the workplace if not well managed are demands, control, support, relationships, role and change.
8. Practising critical reflection and self-evaluation strategies sharpens self-awareness. Regularly seek constructive feedback in a number of ways and take appropriate action in response.
9. Plans and strategies to address areas of need for support should be drafted in consultation with all staff. Proposals for actions plans should be based on informed understanding of the risks and evidence for hazards in your workplace and best practice methods for addressing the specific issues identified.

# Learning checkpoint 1

## Monitor welfare of colleagues

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in monitoring the welfare of colleagues.

### Part A

1. List behaviours that indicate that an individual worker may be experiencing significant issues.

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2. Provide three examples of good management practice at the organisational level for the prevention and management of psychological injury.

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3. When responding to stress-related issues of people you supervise, what are three communication skills you should use to identify the cause of the issue?

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4. Describe two key features of a workplace that embraces diversity.

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5. Participating in your own performance appraisal with a supervisor can assist you to review your skills and development needs. Identify three areas in which a performance appraisal can provide feedback.

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6. If you were seeking feedback from staff you have supported, what three areas should you consider asking about?

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7. Provide two tips for acting on performance feedback.

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8. List two documents or other resources that can provide you with information and clarity about your work role and professional boundaries.

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9. Who or what is responsible for managing stress and wellbeing in the workplace?

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10. What is an employee's performance likely to be measured against during a performance appraisal? What opportunity does a performance appraisal present to address employee wellbeing?

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11. Which legal and ethical considerations may apply when a worker with supervisory responsibilities is engaged in performance appraisal?

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## Part B

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

### Case study

A worker, Jill, has been supporting a client called Ellie who has complex issues including mental health, AOD issues and serious financial concerns for six months. Jill seeks supervision following a particularly stressful event, when Ellie threatened Jill with a knife.

When debriefing Jill, you recognise symptoms of burnout, excessive stress and possibly depression. She also talks about her difficulty in dealing with her brother who died earlier in the year.

1. What are two signs of burnout?

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2. Given what you know about burnout, what factors may have led to Jill developing this condition?

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3. What are possible consequences of Jill experiencing chronic excessive stress?  
What kind of stress did she experience during the critical incident with Ellie?

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4. How can an organisation prepare to meet the needs of staff members who experience grief and loss?

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5. When a worker is subject to violent or threatening behaviour, what are two actions that should follow from the incident? Identify a reporting requirement and a support measure.

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6. Risk assessment and subsequent planning are actions an organisation can take to support and protect the wellbeing of workers and people with support needs. List two actions the organisation can take to assess risks in relation to providing support to Ellie.

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7. Identify stages of a risk assessment process the organisation can undertake to plan support for staff who work with Ellie.

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8. When debriefing Jill after the incident, what would you be aiming to do before the two of you made decisions about resolving Jill's long-term issues?

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## Topic 2

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 2A Plan, prepare and conduct debriefing**
- 2B Schedule debriefing as soon as possible after an incident**
- 2C Conduct debriefing in a safe environment and facilitate open discussion**
- 2D Use debriefing techniques to encourage exploration and reflection**
- 2E Use questioning to encourage colleagues to explore and acknowledge concerns**
- 2F Identify and respond to indicators of risk**
- 2G Document and report outcomes of debriefings**
- 2H Identify, respond, support and refer colleagues**

## Conduct structured debriefings following an incident

Critical incidents sometimes occur in the workplace. There may be an accident, the sudden death of a person or rapid workplace change. Incidents like these cause stress that has the potential to affect the whole work team. To minimise the psychological effects of such events and to help staff avoid the possibility of prolonged trauma, many organisations offer carefully structured debriefing sessions.

Debriefing sessions are usually group sessions offered soon after a critical incident. The primary aim of debriefing sessions are to give people the opportunity to clarify what happened, share concerns and to unload stress and anxiety. It is important that people running a debriefing session have the skills to conduct the session in a sensitive and in a way that is helpful to the participants.

## 2A Plan, prepare and conduct debriefing

Debriefing sessions must be planned and prepared in line with organisational protocols. Organisation policies and procedures should clearly outline that debriefing is available to staff, and in what circumstances and by whom debriefing will be offered.

Supervisors must be familiar with and ready to provide debriefing when required as critical incidents can happen without leaving time to plan. Delivery of a debriefing session should be run as soon as possible after the event.



### Debrief in health and community services

Health and community service work often means involvement with people with support needs, some of which can be complex and some people may exhibit behaviours of concern. Incidents and situations can occur in this sector that can be stressful and at times frightening. These incidents can occur in an office space or in the “field”, which is often the workplace of the community sector employee.

Organisations must have policies that outline the course of action required when staff have been involved in or witnessed an event that is stressful to them. Procedures outline the step-by-step process to allow workers to discuss the events of such an incident and to receive support in overcoming any emotional or physical trauma they may have experienced.

#### Debriefing may be required in the following circumstances

- ▶ A colleague experiences personal trauma that affects staff
- ▶ A colleague attempts self-harm
- ▶ A colleague is involved in an accident
- ▶ A colleague is injured by another person
- ▶ A colleague dies at work or after an illness
- ▶ In an emergency situation, such as bomb threat or fire

### Provide debriefing

Behaviour or an incident that has resulted in either injury or high levels of emotional stress can be traumatic for staff and anyone else who has witnessed an incident. Debriefing sessions are designed to prevent normal stress reactions from becoming long-term or leading to mental illness. It is normal to react emotionally to a critical incident. This may involve recurrent thoughts about the event, feeling uneasy or anxious, mood changes, restlessness, feeling tired and disturbed sleep.

Workers affected by traumatic events should be given the opportunity to participate in debriefing sessions to help them understand what has happened, to explore and acknowledge their emotions and concerns in a safe, supportive and confidential setting, and to learn and plan for the future.

## Understand debriefing

Policies and procedures relevant to community services sector should specify that debriefing is available to staff. The type of debriefing will depend on the context and purpose, and the organisations can benefit from a well-conducted debriefing session due to the reflection and review of events it requires. It can be used to review training, policies and procedures and how employees view the supportive culture of the organisation. Here are three forms of debriefing and their benefits to staff and the organisation.

### Educational debriefing

Debriefing may be used to assist learning by offering the opportunity for a person to reflect on the way a situation unfolded or the circumstances that led to an incident. This would occur after an event as an opportunity for review what happened, so the person can learn from their mistakes or recognise what they did that assisted others of perhaps “defused” an escalating situation.

### Operational debriefing

It can be valuable to review the organisation’s performance in situations where it has been required to respond to a critical incident. It may also be used to review the training provided to staff and reflect on their skills in responding to a critical incident. From a review such as this, changes may be made to organisational policies or procedures.

### Psychological debriefing

This type of debriefing is used to mitigate severe stress after involvement in a critical incident. In a structured session, the person/s can speak about the events of an incident and receive support and acknowledgment of the stress it created to assist the person to overcome or manage emotional or physical trauma.

## Policies and resources related to crisis procedures

Some organisational policies and procedures are designed to avert crisis before it happens. This may be through identifying a risk before a crisis occurs, or by organising timely assistance to prevent crisis. There will be procedures outlining the steps to be taken in case an urgent or emergency situation, such as a person who needs urgent medical or psychiatric assistance. There may be another set of procedures for staff that relate to dealing with the complex needs of the people they support. Staff should have access to these policies and procedures, and regular training is important to reinforce the responses required in times of emergency.

If an emergency does occur, an organisation may use a series of alarms to communicate with staff and manage



staff responses. A Code Blue incident, for example, could require an immediate response. It is possible to signal phases of emergency management, such as 'stand by' and 'stand down'.

Procedures should be reviewed regularly as a part of the organisation's continuous improvement and adherence to workplace health and safety legislation. If in a drill or in a real scenario, the procedures are not followed, or following them does not avert a critical incident, this should be examined and reviewed as a requirement of the risk assessment and review process of workplace health and safety.

## Organisational protocols for debriefing

Any debriefing process you provide should align with organisational protocols. A protocol is the accepted code of procedure or behaviour for an organisation. One such protocol is the induction process for new staff. As a part of an induction to a workplace, new employees should have the relevant policies explained and hard copies provided or direction given to electronic versions.

A policy with information on debriefing would have details on:

- ▶ the types of occasions when debriefing is required
- ▶ when debriefing should occur
- ▶ the purpose, benefits and potential outcomes of sessions
- ▶ the model of debriefing to follow
- ▶ who will provide debriefing and their contact details
- ▶ how to provide debriefing (phone, face-to-face, individual or group)
- ▶ the training required by the person providing debriefing
- ▶ the budget for debriefing sessions
- ▶ how to make referrals if further support is required, and where referrals should be made.

## Debrief after an incident

In the community services sector, serious incidents must be reviewed as soon as possible after they have occurred. Reviews are essential so the service can look at ways to prevent the incident recurring and manage the behaviour or reactions of staff better in the future. A review may identify safety issues and crisis procedures that need to be improved.

It is important to gather feedback from everyone involved. Each person should receive support and be given the opportunity to talk through the impact of what has happened in structured debriefing sessions. After this has taken place, a review can be prepared that documents the incident without names or blame.

Reviewing an incident allows management to summarise, evaluate and clarify what happened and make adjustments to organisational policies and procedures as required.

A review of an incident should include a discussion of:

- ▶ what happened
- ▶ how the situation developed
- ▶ the behaviour associated with the incident

- ▶ whether the strategies used to stop the behaviour were effective or require improvement
- ▶ the impact of the incident on the individual and others
- ▶ how well did the organisational procedures work
- ▶ improvements that can be made when managing similar incidents.

## Conduct a debrief

Debriefing sessions can be conducted by the organisation itself in a peer-to-peer support model or a staff team model. Staff must be trained and skilled in managing the sensitivities and support required of staff in what could have been a stressful and highly emotional situation. Some larger organisations may employ experts outside of their workplace to come and run debriefing sessions. These are more likely to be professionals with skills and experience in these situations. The model used will depend on the critical incident and the requirements of staff determined by the management of the organisation.

Here is more information on different types of debriefing.

### External provider model

- ▶ Debriefing sessions are provided by trained health professionals who specialise in debriefing and counselling.
- ▶ The service is paid for by the organisation.
- ▶ The support offered by the practitioners should align with organisational policies and procedures.

### Staff debriefing team model

- ▶ Debriefing is conducted by other staff members that have been trained to debrief.
- ▶ Staff debriefing needs to ensure confidentiality and should be conducted in a safe environment.
- ▶ The person conducting the debriefing in this model must be aware of the limits of their skills and refer to professionals as required.

### Peer support model

- ▶ Peer support is offered by the staff with training, who conducts debriefing under the supervision of more experienced trained debriefers.
- ▶ Peer support may be offered in conjunction with other support.
- ▶ The person conducting the debriefing in this model must be aware of the limits of their skills and refer to professionals as required.

## Psychological debriefing models

Some organisations offer debriefing training to staff so that they have employees prepared and trained to offer debriefing sessions as required. There will be courses available to upskill staff and provide them with the knowledge and skills in conducting a session at the workplace with their peers. Training is offered in various forms, but

courses conducted by professional counsellors are common. Often there will be professionals that already work within an organisation and part of their role is to step up and offer debriefing sessions to staff when required.

Psychological debriefing is used to mitigate severe stress after involvement in a critical incident. In a structured session, the events of an incident are discussed and the group receives support and acknowledgment of the stress it created. This often assists in overcoming or managing the stress.

All forms of psychological debriefing typically consist of four components.

### Essential components of psychological debriefing

- ▶ Educating individuals about stress reactions and how to cope with them
- ▶ Assuring participants that stress reactions are normal
- ▶ Helping affected persons to process and share their emotions
- ▶ Providing information about and opportunity for further intervention if needed

## Types of debriefing models

There will be a variety of models and debriefing techniques used across the sector. This will be determined by the training and skills and professional backgrounds of the facilitators. Two debriefing models are listed here with an explanation of the techniques used.

### Psychological First Aid (PFA)

According to the WHO, a Psychological First Aid intervention:

- ▶ provides practical care and support that does not intrude
- ▶ assesses needs and concerns
- ▶ helps people to address basic needs (e.g. food, water, information)
- ▶ listens to people, but does not pressure them to talk; instead it comforts people and helps them feel calm
- ▶ helps people connect to information, services and social supports
- ▶ protects people from further harm
- ▶ differs from psychological debriefing in that it does not necessarily involve a detailed discussion of the event that caused the distress
- ▶ listens to people's stories but does not pressure them to relate their feelings or reactions to an event
- ▶ is not something that only professionals can do, as it is not professional counselling.

### Critical Incident Stress Debriefing model (CISD)

- ▶ CISD is characterised as a supportive discussion of a traumatic event (frequently called a critical incident), where the aim is to reduce distress and restore group cohesion and team performance. It does not involve psychotherapy. CISD can be integrated into policies and procedures so that support is encouraged and discussed at all levels of the organisation. CISD may be used following disasters, or to address the stress caused by the death of a colleague or friend. It has also been used to address stress caused by organisational change. Mitchell's model (by Jeffrey T. Mitchell) has informed many debriefing policies in Australian organisations, including those used by the Department of Human Services.

## Treatment and management of serious psychological injury

In the case of trauma where the person/s have experienced a deeply distressing or disturbing experience, a professional with clinical experience must be involved as the skills required to deal with the trauma go well beyond the skills of debriefing. Some people who have seen or taken part in a serious incident may develop acute critical incident stress or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These cases need special treatment by professional mental health specialists. If not attended to, stress and burnout also can result in injury that requires professional treatment.



You can read more about PTSD at the following site:  
<http://aspirelr.link/beyond-blue-ptsd>

## Best practice policies and procedures

Preparing for possible critical incidents before they happen is fundamental to supporting workers and helping them to recover from critical events. The development of policies and procedures for managing psychological injury is an important part of being prepared for incidents that affect workers. Debriefing services can be detailed and outlined in these documents and the information shared with staff. Here are three suggestions of ways to prepare for possible critical incidents.

### Develop appropriate policies and procedures

- ▶ The Mental Health Coordination Council (MHCC) of New South Wales supports community-based organisations to deliver services to people with mental health issues. They have examples of policies and procedures and templates for risk management workplace stressors and sample emergency and critical incident policy and procedures with a section on debriefing.
- ▶ Online information titled 'Psychological Injury Management Guide (PIMG)' can be found at: <http://aspirelr.link/psych-injury-management-guide>.

## Plan and explain debriefing process

- ▶ Having debriefing policies and processes in place and understood by all staff before a potentially difficult event means workers will feel more supported. The debriefing process you provide should align with organisational protocols. During training and staff induction sessions, clearly explain the debriefing processes applicable in your workplace, and when and how workers can or should access them.

## Assess work environment and prepare self and colleagues

- ▶ The Government of Victoria's Better Health channel has a page called 'Workplace safety – coping with a critical incident' that outlines information on the following areas of debriefing:
  - Exposure to a critical incident can lead to a stress response
  - Critical incident stress management
  - Preparing workers for a possible critical incident
  - Demobilisation
  - Defusing
  - Debriefing
  - Follow-up support
  - Where to get help
  - Things to remember

For more information, visit: <http://aspirelr.link/coping-critical-incident>

### Example

#### Structured debriefing for incidents not involving trauma

Workers at a community organisation witnessed a person with a severe mental illness attack one of their staff. The manager knows that this critical incident goes beyond the professional skills and natural coping abilities of his team. He arranges a debriefing session to be conducted by a health professional trained to deal with circumstances such as this. He rings a local counselling and psychology practice to see if they can arrange a person to speak with staff.



## Practice task 7

1. Name two kinds of incident that might occur in your workplace, for which debriefing might be considered helpful.

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2. What kind of debriefing should be offered to those who have been affected by the incidents you named in Question 1?

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3. Who can offer debriefing for an organisation?

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4. What four components do most debriefing sessions include?

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5. What is the best way to prepare for a critical incident debriefing?

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**Click to complete Practice task 7**

## 2B Schedule debriefing as soon as possible after an incident

Managers need to react immediately after an incident to ensure staff receive support as soon as possible. Early intervention is more likely to reduce the long-term effects that may result from an incident. Support from management and other staff needs to be provided straight away and everyone involved needs to be given the opportunity to discuss the event and reflect on the impact.

Structured psychological debriefing should not be offered in the immediate aftermath of a crisis. People are often still in shock and unable to fully comprehend and understand the incident. Other interventions, such as defusing, may be more appropriate depending on the severity of the incident and where it occurred.



### Timing of a debrief

Psychological debriefing aims to prevent protracted stress and is best carried out within three to seven days of a critical incident. Debriefing is not designed to address the immediate emotional reactions to a crisis situation and should not be offered before those affected have been stabilised and regained some control. At this stage, people may not retain much of what is said and it is unlikely they are able to integrate the experience and evaluate their reactions. In serious cases other forms of psychological support may be required, especially in the aftermath of a serious incident.

The following interventions are appropriate at different stages after a crisis, as shown here.

#### Demobilisation

Demobilisation is a structured intervention intended to assist staff to transition from a state of high arousal to a more normal one. It should be conducted by a person not immediately affected by the incident. It aims to restore normal functioning to the organisational, and determine care and support for staff affected by the event.

#### Defusing

Defusing is a structured session held before people leave the scene of a crisis. It is conducted where the incident is particularly distressing, complex or prolonged and where there is high risk of traumatic stress.

#### Debriefing

Debriefing assists in integrating stressful experiences and dealing with normal reactions. Therefore, it is not appropriate to undertake it immediately after a serious incident.

**Example**

**Schedule a session as soon as possible**

The management team of a small organisation have met to discuss the needs of the staff and the support they will provide following an incident at work that affected several of their employees. They review the critical incident policy and decide that the debriefing meeting should be arranged for two days' time. One of the managers will organise the details and contact each staff member with an individual invitation and explanation of the benefits of attending.



## Practice task 8

1. Why is it considered important to offer debriefing sessions soon after a crisis?

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2. What is the difference between defusing and debriefing, and when would it be appropriate to organise each of these interventions?

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**Click to complete Practice task 8**

## 2C Conduct debriefing in a safe environment and facilitate open discussion

Psychological debriefings are designed to the opportunity for those affected by a crisis to express their emotions and share their experiences of stress and anxiety without fear of blame, threats or punishment because of their actions or reactions. The role and behaviour of a group debriefing leader is crucial in establishing a safe and supportive environment that will encourage open discussion.

### Create a safe environment

Facilitators can help to create a safe environment for open discussion by explaining at the outset of the session the aims and purpose of the debriefing. Guidelines for communication and procedures should be established clearly at the beginning of the session. The first thing to do is establish a relationship of trust and support, as well as confidentiality. People participating need to feel they can trust the facilitator and that what they say and hear about the experience will be kept in context in the session and will not be quoted outside of the session. Facilitators should be mindful of keeping facts and feelings separate, and respecting emotions at all times.



### Facilitate open discussion

Though debriefing may be a standard procedure after a critical incident, it should not be compulsory. People affected should feel free to attend or not attend a session as they should only participate at their will. Leaders of debriefing sessions can create confidence and try to encourage full participation. Explaining the structure to be followed at the outset of the session can be helpful. In addition, they should develop and practise communication skills that will allow them to adhere to the following rules. They can insist on applying the explained rules for the session in a firm but friendly way.

Facilitators of debriefing should:

- ▶ encourage talk about facts first
- ▶ facilitate acknowledgement of feelings, irrespective of facts
- ▶ recognise the different ways of responding to crisis
- ▶ ensure that when participants speak of the possible mistakes or misunderstandings surrounding the event, that they feel safe to do so with no blame
- ▶ provide a venue that is free from distraction and interruption
- ▶ ensure confidentiality of participants and proceedings.

## Qualities of a person debriefing a group

Although debriefing is not therapy and debriefers do not need to be mental health practitioners or professional counselors, they should do some training. Many in-house debriefing training occurs by sitting in and observing sessions with more experienced facilitators. Many training courses offer opportunities for scenarios and practice in simulated sessions.

A person conducting a debriefing should be able to provide a safe, trusting atmosphere and demonstrate an empathic understanding of what people have experienced. They also need the communication and leadership skills to guide the discussion and allow every person to feel they have been given the opportunity to contribute. Debriefers should respect what is said by participants, be open and honest and have the capacity to observe what is happening in the group dynamic while giving their attention to one person.



## Maintain a safe environment

Heated discussion or conflict can develop within a debriefing session due to the nature of the stressful situation that has occurred and the emotions that may be elevated. The facilitator needs to be able to allow feelings to be expressed and for everyone to be heard and give their account. It is important that one person is not allowed to dominate or intimidate others into not participating. Every person attending should be able to get some benefit from the session. Using active and reflective listening communication techniques helps maintain a respectful relationship between participants.

Active listening means paying close attention and focusing on not only hearing what a person is saying, but observing and interpreting what is being communicated, both verbally and nonverbally. It involves responding to the speaker to clarify information and paraphrasing what the person has said to encourage the speaker to continue.

Here are some useful phrases that can be used to clarify information and understanding.

Useful phrases for clarification	
▶ Do you mean ...	▶ From your point of view ...
▶ Let me see if I understand ...	▶ I wonder if ...
▶ Correct me if I am wrong ...	▶ Do you mean ...
▶ As I hear it ...	▶ Let me see if I understand ...

**Example**

**Manage a safe environment**

Gloria is about to begin a debriefing session with staff who have experienced a distressing event where another employee had a heart attack and was taken away in an ambulance from the workplace. She has subsequently died in hospital.

Gloria has arranged for a quiet room and explained ahead of time the benefits of the session, should they choose to attend. Most of the group arrives at the designated time and Gloria begins with some information about how the session will run. This includes an introduction where she states upfront that she empathises with the group. She then reinforces that anything discussed during the session will be kept confidential and will not be used in the report that is reviewing workplace safety procedures.



## Practice task 9

1. List two things a leader can do to create a safe environment for a group debriefing session.

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2. How can active listening assist in a debriefing session to maintain an atmosphere where everyone is being heard?

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**Click to complete Practice task 9**

# 2D Use debriefing techniques to encourage exploration and reflection

Debriefing techniques used will vary according to the group dynamics, the training and experience of the person running the session, and the severity of the effects on the participants in the group. Debriefing is not counselling, but does allow for people to go over events as they occurred and reflect on the event now it has passed and see it in perspective. This sets the path for recovery.



The facilitator needs to provide opportunities during a debriefing session for reflection and exploration of emotions. Reflection requires consideration and thought and depending on the time allowed for a session, the group should be able to leave with strategies for further exploration and reflection if required. Appropriate communication techniques need to be used to ensure they acknowledge individual emotional issues when they do arise. Suggestions of further support mechanisms, such as the peer group or family and friends, should be encouraged.

## Reflect on emotions

Reflection and exploration of emotions may require people to look at the coping strategies they have been using and reflect if these are helpful to them.

Here is more information about ways of coping with emotions after an incident.

### Switching off emotions

Debriefing can help with assisting a person to recognise helping strategies for coping and finding perspective on the incident. Some people use coping strategies, such as switching off their emotions and keeping busy so they don't have to think about what has happened. These strategies may only delay the problems and stress till later, and don't help to deal with the issues while they have the opportunity. Avoiding thinking about the event and the consequences means they are not reflecting on the emotions that may have arisen as a result of the event. These are not helpful in finding perspective and understanding how stress is a normal human reaction.

### Emotions and reflections

Discussion of emotional issues may be difficult for some people, especially when they are asked to communicate in a way they are not used to in front of people they work with. Reflection strategies allow the person to think and take time to understand and comprehend the incident in their own time. Strategies may include assigning homework tasks, such as questions they can ask themselves about their thoughts on the incident. This can be done in private, as not everyone will want to share their emotions and feelings publicly. The facilitator can follow up on a one-on-one basis as required to check on their progress and offer further support as required.

**Example**

**Encourage reflection in debriefing**

Abdul is not keen to join the group debriefing session. He doesn't see that it will benefit him, as he believes he can deal with the situation and what happened on his own. Abdul can see that several of his peers are still visibly upset days after the incident. He believes the best way for him to cope is to not think about the event and block out what he witnessed. Abdul absorbs himself in his work tasks so he doesn't have to speak to his workmates. He takes his lunch at his desk so he can avoid the questioning and sympathy of others.



## Practice task 10

1. Why is it important to provide time for reflection on emotions after an incident?

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2. Explain the coping strategy that may be described as people 'turning off' their emotions.

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**Click to complete Practice task 10**

## 2E Use questioning to encourage colleagues to explore and acknowledge concerns

Communication is based on sending, receiving and interpreting messages. The communication and facilitation skills of a person running a debriefing session need to be highly developed. The specific questions asked of the group will depend on the kind of incident, the context in which it occurred and how long or how many sessions will take place.

Debriefing sessions are designed to explore responses to the following broad questions:

- ▶ What happened?
- ▶ How do people feel about the event?
- ▶ What does the organisation or team need to do next?

These general questions concern facts, but allow time to explore emotions and acknowledge concerns they may have about the event or incident. The role of the facilitator is to help participants explore these, but at the same time keep them separate.



### Questioning that encourages exploration

The questioning techniques used in a debriefing session need to encourage people to speak freely and explore their concerns in a safe environment where they know that confidentiality will be respected. Participants need to feel they can acknowledge their concerns in front of others and not be embarrassed, or feel that they are in some way the only one to feel this way. The supportive environment is established by the facilitator who questions the group and poses strategies that encourages people to explore their feelings.

Here are some things to consider when debriefing a group and using a range of communication techniques when questioning.

#### 'I' statements

- ▶ When you use the word 'I', you are taking ownership of what you say and send a clear message about personal responsibility. The use of 'I' helps you communicate in a direct and active way, and allows you to clearly state what you feel or think about a situation.

#### Active listening

- ▶ Active listening involves focusing all your attention on what another person is saying. Avoid interrupting until they have finished what they want to say. Ask questions or paraphrase what the speaker has said to clarify and check your understanding.

### Body language

- ▶ Observing a person's body language should give you an indication of how they are feeling and their level of comfort. If their body language reflects that they are upset by what you are saying, you may need to pause or change the way you are giving the information.

### Respect individual differences, including cultural differences

- ▶ Be aware of individual differences to questioning. For example, some people find it harder to communicate their emotions and feelings. There may also be cultural differences in the protocols of communicating in this way.

### Be supportive and emphasise positives

- ▶ Avoid focusing only on negative aspects of the event for too long or the person's role in the event. Acknowledge that they did well in a difficult situation.

### Choose words carefully

- ▶ Be careful of the words you choose when giving feedback. Do not use negative or critical words to describe performance; for example, use encouraging language that recognises the difficulty of the situation.

## Questioning skills

Questions can be asked and answered in different ways, depending on the situation and kind of responses required. Questioning methods used in a crisis intervention may be different from those used in a debriefing session. Crisis intervention or debriefing for a serious critical incident is more likely to be conducted by a trained health professional with skills in counselling and dealing with these circumstances. Crisis counselling would more likely occur in a one-on-one consultation over several sessions. This could occur over a longer period of time with more time spent questioning and exploring and acknowledging the person's concerns.

Questioning techniques can vary according to the information required. Being able to use a combination of closed and open questions can illicit different information.

Here are some examples of open and closed questions.

### Open-ended questions

- ▶ Open-ended questions usually start with what or how and ask for more clarification or details.
- ▶ Open-ended questions encourage participants to respond with full statements and at deeper levels of meaning and emotional responses. Here are examples:
  - Tell me about ...
  - What will you do?
  - Can you expand on that?
  - How is that different from before?
- ▶ 'Why' questions generally provide the individual with an opening to talk more.

### Closed questions

- ▶ Close-ended questions seek specific, concrete information. They are designed to elicit specific yes or no responses. They usually begin with verbs such as: do; did; does; can; have; had; will; are; is; and was.
- ▶ This type of questioning can be used to obtain specific information that will help make a fast assessment of what is occurring.

## Encourage exploration and acknowledgement

In some circumstances the participants may not feel comfortable talking about their reactions and emotions, perhaps because they feel ashamed or angry, or are in fear that they have done the wrong thing and will be accountable for what happened. It is important to understand that the reactions people have are individual and will be based on their life experience and background up until the incident.



Those with a personal history of trauma, losses or personal issues may feel particularly vulnerable when faced with certain kinds of incident and the debriefing may make them feel vulnerable and on-the-spot, which can be extra stressful for them. Debriefing questioning should not focus on individual emotions for too long, but allow the person to acknowledge that they exist and that they are likely to be shared with others who experienced the same incident.

## A questioning framework

Here is an outline of a questioning framework that could be used when conducting a debriefing session.

### Facts

- ▶ What do we know about what happened?
- ▶ What were the first signs?

### Feelings

- ▶ How do you feel about the events that happened?
- ▶ What emotional impact did it have on you?
- ▶ What was your emotional state at the time of the incident?

### Future planning

- ▶ What would you like to see happen next?
- ▶ What ongoing support do you feel would be useful?

**Example**

**Questioning to encourage discussion of concerns**

Katherine is a facilitator of a debriefing session for a small group of staff who witnessed a critical incident outside their workplace. She is using the questioning framework to ask questions of the group that include the following questions in the following areas.

Determining some facts:

- ▶ What do we know about what happened?
- ▶ What were the first signs?
- ▶ Did any of you know the person in the incident?
- ▶ Where were you in the office when you witnessed the attack?

Identify feelings:

- ▶ How do you feel about the events that happened?
- ▶ What emotional impact did it have on you at the time?
- ▶ What are you feeling about the incident now?

Planning for future strategies:

- ▶ What would you like to see happen next?
- ▶ What ongoing support do you feel would be useful?

## Practice task 11

1. Identify three communication strategies that can be used when questioning in a debriefing session.

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2. Provide two examples of open-ended questions.

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**Click to complete Practice task 11**

## 2F Identify and respond to indicators of risk

Employers and workers have legal and ethical obligations to ensure safety of staff and the people they provide services to. Assessment and reporting of the risks of incidents that can lead to psychological injury or trauma in the workplace is essential. Anticipating incidents and providing training in strategies for managing behaviours of concern, or for responding appropriately when crises do occur, are important components of risk management.

Risks may exist in the following areas:

- ▶ Medical; for example, risk of a medical emergency
- ▶ Behavioural; for example, risks associated with a behaviour of concern
- ▶ Environmental; for example, work health and safety risks, such as fire

### Preparation and training

The more preparation employees are given on how to respond in an emergency, the better the outcome is likely to be. Preparation may involve training, providing workers with resources such as personal protective equipment (PPE), or first aid kit and ensuring workers have immediate access to emergency contact details. They should also be aware of and have access to policies that cover incidents and procedures for what actions must be taken during these incidents.

Follow these steps to ensure workers are well-equipped to respond in emergencies.

<b>Preparations for response</b>
Conduct risk assessments decisively.
Evaluate situations.
Minimise risk.
Act appropriately.

### Conduct risk assessments

Risk assessments can determine the type and scale of risk that is likely to occur, and should be conducted frequently in a workplace. In the community service sector, the workplace can be in an office or out in the community facility, such as a hall, sporting complex, or in a person's home. Each time a new environment or setting is used for a service provision, a risk assessment should be undertaken.

Workers should also conduct risk assessments to evaluate the level of risk of the activity or program or intervention they are undertaking. The level of risk should then be ranked. Scales of risk include: high (possible injury) moderate (people might sustain injuries) and low (possibility of minor injury).

A risk assessment means that the organisation and the staff can be fully aware of the risks they are undertaking and plan to manage that risk. An organisation will have procedures in place to and be prepared to respond as required. This applies to responses required in case of emergency or a critical incident.

If a person has epilepsy, a risk assessment can determine:

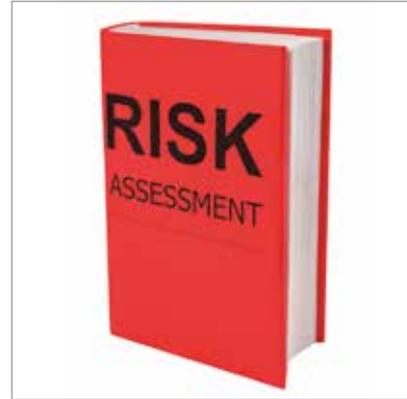
- ▶ how frequently epilepsy episodes occur
- ▶ the severity of epilepsy episodes
- ▶ how epilepsy can be managed to prevent episodes occurring
- ▶ whether staff have the necessary skills to deal with an episode; e.g. first aid training
- ▶ the correct emergency response, should an episode occur.

## Manage significant risks

The main aim of risk assessment and controlling the hazards in the workplace is to manage risks and be prepared in case they occur.

If an incident does occur, then debriefing after the event can be used to reduce the severity of consequences of exposure to stress and psychological harm. By debriefing workers effectively after incidents, the possibility of prolonged trauma may be reduced. The educational benefit of debriefing is

that organisations can learn from the incident and identify possible improvements to policies and procedures. After a debriefing session, an organisation may be able to improve the way workers act under those conditions in the future.



## Follow policies and procedures

You can help maintain the safety of yourself, your colleagues and people with support needs by following your organisation's work health and safety (WHS) procedures and other relevant policies.

The same mechanisms for reporting physical hazards and injuries apply to psychological hazards and injuries. Your organisation should also have specific mention of psychological injury, which might occur after a critical incident.

The following table provides the name of the health and safety legislation and the regulator responsible for its implementation in each state and territory, as at the time of publication.

The Commonwealth regulator, which implements the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth), is Comcare, which can be accessed at: <http://aspirelr.link/comcare>.

Region	Health and safety legislation	WHS regulator
Australian Capital Territory	<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (ACT)</i>	WorkSafe ACT <a href="http://aspirelr.link/worksafe-act">http://aspirelr.link/worksafe-act</a>
New South Wales	<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)</i>	SafeWork NSW <a href="http://aspirelr.link/safework-nsw">http://aspirelr.link/safework-nsw</a>
Northern Territory	<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NT)</i>	NT WorkSafe <a href="http://aspirelr.link/worksafe-nt">http://aspirelr.link/worksafe-nt</a>
Queensland	<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)</i>	Workplace Health and Safety Queensland <a href="http://aspirelr.link/worksafe-qld">http://aspirelr.link/worksafe-qld</a>
South Australia	<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA)</i>	SafeWork SA <a href="http://aspirelr.link/safework-sa">http://aspirelr.link/safework-sa</a>
Tasmania	<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (Tas.)</i>	WorkSafe Tasmania <a href="http://aspirelr.link/worksafe-tas">http://aspirelr.link/worksafe-tas</a>
Victoria	<i>Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)</i>	WorkSafe Victoria <a href="http://aspirelr.link/worksafe-vic">http://aspirelr.link/worksafe-vic</a>
Western Australia	<i>Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984 (WA)</i>	WorkSafe WA <a href="http://aspirelr.link/worksafe-wa">http://aspirelr.link/worksafe-wa</a>

**Example**

**Respond to risk**

Sven is the workplace health and safety officer for a not-for-profit community services organisation. He is training staff on workplace health and safety and explaining their rights for safety in the workplace. He has just explained that psychological stress at work is considered in the same way as physical injury in the workplace. He refers them to the current Act for their state and outlines the details of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth)* that came into effect at the start of 2012. This legislation was developed by the Commonwealth government to harmonise work health and safety laws across Australia.

Its aims are to:

- ▶ protect the health and safety of workers
- ▶ improve safety outcomes in workplaces
- ▶ reduce compliance costs for business
- ▶ improve efficiency for regulatory agencies.

## Practice task 12

1. Explain the value of a risk assessment.

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2. What is the role of workplace health and safety regulators in each state and territory? Give an example of one regulator in Australia.

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**Click to complete Practice task 12**

# 2G Document and report outcomes of debriefings

Organisations have various requirements for the storage of records and documents. When a debriefing exercise has been completed, staff may be asked if they are willing to contribute to a review of the organisation's performance in the aftermath of an incident. The outcomes of a review may indicate areas for improvement. The performance of how the organisations assisted and supported staff or areas in training might become obvious if staff were not equipped with skills to be able to deal with critical incidents. As a result of a review or evaluation, the policies and procedures should be reviewed and updated to reflect the improvements required in managing workplace safety.



## Requirements for reporting

WHS legislation requires reporting of all incidents or emergencies. The *Work Health and Safety Act (2011)* provides details of which incidents are serious and therefore 'notifiable' by the organisation or a person with identified responsibility to notify. The WHS regulator organisation can provide assistance on this as required.

Once completed, records should be stored in accordance with the organisation's administrative record-keeping guidelines. These should include rules around confidentiality and limits to access to confidential information to protect a person's privacy. Electronic or digital storage generally offers password protection. There are community service standards and organisational policies that will describe the need and process to maintain confidentiality and privacy.

Keeping records of attendance during debriefing is necessary, but confidentiality and freedom to speak freely is essential in the process and the details of the session of what was discussed would generally not be recorded.



## Prepare a report

As with other reports in the community services sector, reports should be brief and use clear, concise and factual language and meet organisational guidelines for style and safe storage. The writing should be objective and non-judgemental.

Here is an example of the type of information you may find in a supervision report completed after an emergency incident.

<b>Incident details</b>	
<b>Date of report:</b> 7 March 2016	
<b>Name of supervisor:</b> Jay Lindsay	<b>Signature:</b> <i>Jay Lindsay</i>
<b>Person being supervised:</b> Benjamin Suaeb	<b>Signature:</b> <i>Benjamin Suaeb</i>
<b>Reason for supervision:</b> Individual had a cardiac arrest	
<p><b>Incident description</b></p> <p>The individual presented with pain in the chest and arm at 5.00 pm on 5 March. Seconds later, he collapsed to the floor. Benjamin immediately called 000 and provided details of whereabouts and occurrence. Benjamin practised first aid until the ambulance arrived. He also phoned the supervisor on call. The individual was transported to hospital, and Benjamin filed an incident report. Benjamin continued to support other individuals at the residence.</p>	
<p><b>Relevant policies and procedures</b></p> <p>Emergency procedures were correctly followed.</p>	
<p><b>Relevant training</b></p> <p>Benjamin practised first aid. He has current first-aid training.</p>	
<p><b>Concerns or issues</b></p> <p>Benjamin had not been involved in an emergency procedure until this time and was very nervous. He didn't phone the supervisor as soon as he could have, to obtain backup support. Following the event, Benjamin was very shaky, and he called in sick the following day.</p> <p>Benjamin was concerned that the activities scheduled for the people with support needs were too strenuous and may have triggered the cardiac arrest; this was not the doctor's opinion.</p>	
<p><b>Future actions</b></p> <p>Benjamin's knowledge of emergency procedures and first aid is sound. Benjamin will be offered a professional debriefing session with the local contractor. His supervisor will monitor his wellbeing and follow up on debriefing sessions as required by Benjamin.</p>	

## Behaviours of concern

All community services organisations are required by law to keep detailed and accurate records about the people they provide care and support to and the services they provide. WHS legislation requires that formal incident reports are completed when behaviour has resulted in an injury or potential injury to a person, or when property is damaged. Reporting ensures that all staff will be aware of the behaviours associated with the incident and the triggers that may have caused the reaction or behaviour, and knowing this can improve the safety and wellbeing of people with support needs and staff. Your organisation will have specific requirements for reporting incidents, involving behaviours of concern, in line with federal and state WHS legislation.

Here are some considerations regarding reporting such incidents.

### How to report

- ▶ Your organisation’s policies and procedures provide guidelines about what records you need to keep, what information you need to record and how to write records. Incidents may need to be completed and stored electronically, as well as in hard-copy. Organisational records should be password-protected. Incidents involving a fatality or serious assault or injury, sexual abuse or child abuse are reportable. Refer to organisational guidelines or external guidelines for how and when these incidents should be reported.

### What should be recorded?

- ▶ Your organisation’s policies and procedures provide guidelines about what records you need to keep, what information you need to record and how to write records. All information must be factual and refer to only what has been observed. When reporting behaviours of concern, it is important that you accurately document what has taken place and what actions you have taken to manage it.

### What are incident reports?

- ▶ Incident reports are formal legal documents that must be completed under WHS legislation when behaviour has resulted in an injury to a person, or could have resulted in an injury. They may be used in a court of law as evidence in a case resulting from a work-related injury or death. An incident report can help demonstrate whether or not an organisation or worker has followed correct procedures and maintained their duty of care. Organisations usually provide incident forms to be filled in when required.

### Example

#### Review incidents involving behaviours of concern

When reporting the outcomes of a debriefing session, Greta understands that she must file the information on the organisation’s intranet in a secure folder that only a few of the staff can access. The password-protected folder holds several confidential documents that are records of debriefing exercises. The names have been removed, but the time and date of the session is included and also a brief overview of the outcomes. The details of the discussion are not included in the document.



## Practice task 13

1. When and why should an incident report be completed in response to the behaviour of a person receiving support from an organisation?

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2. Senior management asks you to write a report about an incident; explaining the reasons for the incident, the staff involved, names of those who attended debriefing sessions and a summary of the issues discussed in the sessions. What should you do?

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3. How can the confidentiality of digital records be maintained?

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**Click to complete Practice task 13**

## 2H Identify, respond, support and refer colleagues

One important responsibility of an organisation is to support staff through routine and unexpected critical incidents that occur in the course of their work. Managers and supervisors should have the skills and training required for dealing with stress that affects staff. This can range from conflict between two colleagues through to referring and supporting staff that are traumatised by a violent incident.

Debriefing following an incident is intended to address concerns regarding a specific event. Sometimes a supervisor may identify the need to follow up and offer further support to address individual issues. However, when the psychological distress experienced by a person is more acute and long-lasting, then different support strategies are required, such as a referral.

### Referrals

In the case of trauma where the person/s has experienced a deeply distressing or disturbing experience, a professional must replace the debriefing facilitator because the skills required are beyond the scope of the training of the person. The skills required to deal with trauma go well beyond the skills of debriefing. Some people who have seen or taken part in a serious incident may develop acute critical incident stress or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These cases need special treatment by professional mental health specialists.

It may be difficult to identify a person who is not coping well after debriefing or after a period of time. Some people may be able to hide their stress and when asked. Some people act vague because they do not want to appear weak because have not yet 'gotten over it'. Signs that might be visibly obvious in a person might include difficulty concentrating, hyper-vigilance, and exaggerated startle responses. In their interactions at work you may notice avoidance of activities, places, loss of interest in normal activities or irritability.



It is the organisation's responsibility to refer the person for professional treatment. The first step in conducting a referral is determining the appropriate place to refer the person for support. An organisation may have skilled professionals within the organisation, or a referral may need to be provided for an outside practitioner. The manager or supervisor should make arrangements suitable for the person; for example, by finding a practitioner close to their work or home. The supervisor should follow up and not just 'hand over' the responsibility to others. The psychological wellbeing of the person still remains the organisation's responsibility and under their duty of care responsibility.

### Referral agencies

Here are the types of people you may wish to refer an individual to following a distressing or disturbing experience.

### Support networks

- ▶ Many workplaces have staff members who help others when they need advice or support. These individuals offer their time to any staff member who needs help in recovery from an incident. The service is confidential and may provide referrals to appropriate health professionals if necessary.

### Counselling

- ▶ Counsellors are trained to listen and help people identify options for dealing with stress and other difficult situations and incidents in their life.

### Psychology

- ▶ Psychology services may be required by workers who have been unable to return to work after an incident and who have had to make major changes in their lives as a result of the incident. Psychologists provide emotional and psychological support to individuals. This service needs referral from a medical practitioner.

### Doctors

- ▶ A worker may require a referral to a doctor if there has been a physical injury or emotional harm.

## Employee assistance programs

Many organisations offer a program called an employee assistance program (EAP). EAPs provide confidential online or face-to-face counselling to support employee's wellbeing. These programs are often operated through the human resources department and include services not required on an everyday basis, but can be accessed as required by an external organisation. Counselling and conflict resolution services are commonly available in an EAP. The organisation funds these services and the assistance is confidential.

Some individuals have pre-existing vulnerabilities or other problems that may surface as a result of an incident and become aggravated by it. These problems should not be dealt with in debriefing sessions, but referred to suitable trained mental health professionals. Where signs emerge of more serious risk of prolonged reaction to trauma, clinical referrals to mental health and trauma specialists may be required.

Clinical referrals should be considered when:

- ▶ a debriefing has not led to a reduction of stress reactions
- ▶ new symptoms appear after debriefing
- ▶ continuing high levels of anxiety or distress are evident
- ▶ a person demonstrates fear of the workplace or inability to function effectively
- ▶ a colleague experiences continued disruption of home life due to the incident
- ▶ a colleague exhibits bitterness, cynicism or low morale.

## Support at work

Supervisors may encourage internal support for staff that have experienced a stressful event. Participation needs to be voluntary by both parties, but it can be an effective way for a following up and continuing to monitor the mental wellbeing of a staff member.

Other staff may be willing to offer practical support to the person by listening and encouraging the person to talk about the incident, if they find it helpful. There may be a staff member who has had a similar experience or who has years of service and can offer helpful insights.

This type of internal support needs to be:

- ▶ respectful of the needs of the person
- ▶ sensitive to the other support that may be occurring
- ▶ respectful of the person's need to be alone.

## Dispute resolution

Effective conflict or dispute resolution can help maintain good relationships in the workplace if issues are dealt with early on. It is better if a conflict does not escalate into a dispute. A dispute exists when one or more people disagree about something and matters remain unresolved.

Your colleagues are likely be more cooperative and productive if they know that their grievances will be taken seriously, and there is the opportunity for an independent party to assist if conflict cannot be addressed satisfactorily and any resolved in the workplace. Resolution is more likely to occur if it is dealt with quickly (so it is not left to escalate), fairly and sensitively.

Dispute resolution refers to the processes by which disputes are brought to an end. This can occur by means of three different kinds of outcomes, as shown here.

### A negotiated outcome

- ▶ The parties concerned sort out things between themselves.

### A mediated outcome

- ▶ The parties use the services of an independent mediator to help them arrive at their own agreement.

### An arbitrated or adjudicated outcome

- ▶ An independent arbitrator or court determines how the dispute is to be resolved, and makes a binding decision or order to this effect.

## Policies on dispute resolution

An organisation's dispute resolution policy is an important document to access when a conflict or dispute needs to be resolved. Follow this policy when addressing conflict or disagreement. When best practice dispute resolution procedures are followed, both parties are given the opportunity to explain what their needs are and how they think these can be addressed.

Most organisations have a dispute resolution or grievance policy that outlines the following matters.

<b>Contents of dispute resolution policy</b>	
▶	Steps for resolving conflict
▶	Who conflict should be reported to, such as the dispute resolution officer
▶	How report/s should be made
▶	The time line for reporting
▶	Potential outcomes of dispute resolution

## Fair Work

The *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) requires that all modern awards and enterprise agreements set out a procedure for resolving disputes between employers and employees about any matter arising under the modern award and the National Employment Standards (NES). A dispute resolution clause in an enterprise agreement must set out a procedure that requires or allows either the Fair Work Commission or some other independent person to settle the dispute. It also allows for the representation of employees covered by the agreement when there is a dispute; for example, by another employee or a union.

You can read more about this process at: <http://aspirelr.link/fair-work-ombudsman>.

These are suggested by the Fair Work Ombudsman, and are to be used when a dispute resolution clause in a modern award with the following stages.

### Dispute resolution process

- 1 Employee meets with supervisor**  
Employee/s meet with their direct supervisor to discuss the grievance
- 2 Employee meets with senior management**  
Failing resolution, the matter is discussed further with more senior management
- 3 Employee meets with senior national officer within the organisation**  
Failing resolution, the matter is discussed at the most senior levels.
- The matter is referred to the Fair Work Commission**  
Where the dispute remains unresolved, the parties may jointly or individually refer the matter to the Fair Work Commission. The employer or employee may appoint another person, organisation or association to represent them during this process.

## A dispute resolution policy

Here is an example of a dispute resolution policy from the community services sector. These policies are sometimes known as a grievance policy or dispute settlement policy.

### Dispute resolution policy

#### Purpose and scope

The purpose of this dispute resolution policy is to ensure all parties involved have the opportunity to resolve the dispute with as few consequences as possible. The policy is intended to be fair and protect all person's interests and rights.

This policy sets out the dispute resolution procedures, which should occur if disputes arise within the organisation. The policy applies to all workers, supervisors, volunteers and individuals who use the service.

#### Obligations and good practice

Disputes will be resolved in accordance with the organisation's responsibilities and obligations and with good industry practice, including accordance with:

- ▶ relevant legislation and regulations, such as the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth)
- ▶ the code of conduct
- ▶ the ethical framework
- ▶ relevant government policy
- ▶ the requirements of industry and practice standards and principles.

#### Definition of 'dispute'

A dispute exists if:

- ▶ two or more persons have difficulty working together due to conflict or grievances
- ▶ the situation affects the persons' ability to work and perform their duties effectively.

#### Procedure for informal dispute resolution

- ▶ Ensure workers are trained in communication, conflict resolution and interpersonal skills.
- ▶ Parties should act in good faith to resolve the dispute before further action is required.
- ▶ Attempt informal resolution. If required, a supervisor or manager may mediate the dispute.
- ▶ Document the dispute if further action is required. Parties must each make an objective statement and sign the statement for accountability.
- ▶ Consult the supervisor or manager if attempted resolution is unsuccessful.

#### Procedure for formal dispute resolution

- ▶ An independent, qualified mediator will be appointed.
- ▶ Parties will cooperate with the mediator, and provide all reasonable requested assistance.
- ▶ The supervisor will oversee the process.
- ▶ If the dispute cannot be resolved internally, the relevant government department will be contacted; alternatively the Ombudsman.



4. What information might be included in an organisations dispute resolution policy?

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**Click to complete Practice task 14**

## Summary

1. Debriefing sessions must be planned and prepared for in line with organisational protocols.
2. Policies and procedures relevant to community services sector should specify that debriefing is available to staff.
3. Debriefing sessions can be conducted by the organisation itself, or experts outside of the workplace may come and run debriefing sessions.
4. Trauma from serious incidents requires special treatment by professional mental health specialists. If not attended to, stress and burnout also can result in injury that requires professional treatment.
5. The development of policies and procedures for managing psychological injury is an important part of preparation for incidents that affect workers. Debriefing services can be detailed and outlined in these documents.
6. Debriefing gives participants the opportunity to discover that their reactions and emotional responses to a crisis were not uncommon.
7. Managers need to react immediately after an incident to ensure staff receive support as soon as possible.
8. Facilitators can help to create a safe environment for open discussion by explaining the aims and purpose of the debriefing at the outset of the session.
9. Debriefing techniques used will vary according to the group dynamics, the training and experience of the person running the session, and the severity of the effects on the participants in the group.
10. Debriefing gives participants the opportunity to discover that their reactions and emotional responses to a crisis were not uncommon.
11. A risk assessment means that the organisation and the staff can be fully aware of the risks they are undertaking and plan to manage that risk.
12. The *WHS Act* provides details of which incidents are serious and therefore 'notifiable' by the organisation or a person with identified responsibility to notify.
13. Incidents of concern must be reviewed and reported, but psychological debriefing sessions should be confidential.
14. In the case of trauma where the person/s has experienced a deeply distressing or disturbing experience, a professional must replace the debriefing facilitator and the person must be referred.
15. Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) provide confidential online or face-to-face counselling to support employee wellbeing.
16. An organisation's dispute resolution policy is an important document to access when a conflict or dispute needs to be resolved.

# Learning checkpoint 2

## Conduct structured debriefings following an incident

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in conducting structured debriefings following an incident.

### Part A

1. When planning, preparing and conducting debriefing sessions, what guidance do organisational standards and procedures provide?

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2. Other than the benefits to staff, what might be the benefits of debriefing to an organisation?

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3. Why is confidentiality important during a debriefing, and how can this be maintained?

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## Part B

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

### Case study

A person with support needs is physically abusive towards a support worker, Helga. The attack occurs in the person's home while Helga was on an assessment visit. Helga has a bruise on her arm, and is visibly upset several days after the attack. The supervisor offers her a debriefing session with the organisation's counsellor.

1. Describe the workplace health and safety requirements and actions the organisation should take to support Helga after an event like this.

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2. When is the best time for a debriefing session to be conducted?

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3. Describe the environment you would organise for the debriefing.

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4. What approach should be taken for encouraging Helga to reflect on her emotions?

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5. What documents would provide guidance on how the incident should be reported, and what legislation would they reflect?

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6. Under what circumstances would Helga require referral to an employee assistance program?

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