

CHCCCS020

Respond effectively to behaviours of concern

Release 1



Learner guide

CHCCCS020

Respond effectively to behaviours of concern

Release 1

Learner guide

Aspire Version 1.1



Copyright Warning

This product is copyrighted to
Aspire Training & Consulting
(ABN 51 054 306 428).

Aspire Training & Consulting owns all copyright to its products. Except as permitted by the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth) or unless you have obtained the specific written permission of Aspire Training & Consulting, you must not:

- reproduce or photocopy this product in whole or in part
- publish this product in whole or in part
- cause this product in whole or in part to be transmitted
- store this product in whole or in part in a retrieval system including a computer
- record this product in whole or in part either electronically or mechanically
- resell this product in whole or in part.

Aspire Training & Consulting:

- invests significant time and resources in creating its original products
- protects its copyright material
- will enforce its rights in copyright material
- reserves its legal rights to claim its loss and damage or an account of profits made resulting from infringements of its copyright.

Aspire is committed to developing quality resources that meet the needs of our customers. However, occasionally Aspire finds, or is notified of, errors. Please refer to our website at www.aspirelr.com.au to see if there are any updates that may be relevant to you.

Every effort has been made to ensure the information in this book is accurate; however, the author and publisher accept no responsibility for any loss, damage or injury arising from such information.

Except where an information source is acknowledged, the names and details of individuals and organisations used in examples are fictitious and have been devised for learning purposes only. Any similarity to actual people or organisations is unintentional.

All websites referred to in this unit were accessed and deemed appropriate at time of publication.

Aspire Training & Consulting apologises unreservedly for any copyright infringement that may have occurred and invites copyright owners to contact Aspire so any violation may be rectified.

CHCCCS020 Respond effectively to behaviours of concern Release 1

© 2017 Aspire Training & Consulting
Level 1, 464 St Kilda Road
MELBOURNE VIC 3004 AUSTRALIA
Phone (03) 9820 1300

First published April 2017

Cover design Rewind Creative

Printer Doculink Australia Pty Ltd, 1d/28 Rogers Street,
Port Melbourne VIC 3207

e-ISBN 978-1-76059-805-1 (PDF version)

ISBN 978-1-76059-803-7

Contact details

Participant

Name:

Start date:

Phone number:

Email:

Work location

Name:

Address:

Postal address:

Workplace supervisor name:

Phone number:

Fax:

Email:

Registered Training Organisation (RTO)

Name:

Address:

Postal address (if different):

Phone number:

Fax:

RTO contact name:

Mobile:

Email:

Contents

Before you begin	vii
Topic 1 Identify behaviour and plan response	1
1A Identify behaviours of concern in line with work role and organisational policies and procedures	2
1B Identify appropriate response to potential instances of behaviours of concern	6
1C Ensure planned responses maximise the availability of other appropriate staff and resources	11
1D Give priority to safety of yourself and others in responding to behaviours of concern	17
Summary	21
Learning checkpoint 1: Identify behaviour and plan response	22
Topic 2 Apply response	25
2A Ensure response reflects organisational policies and procedures	26
2B Seek assistance as required:	31
2C Deal with behaviours of concern promptly, firmly and diplomatically in accordance with organisational policy and procedure	35
2D Use communication effectively to achieve the desired outcomes	41
2E Select appropriate strategies to suit particular instances of behaviours of concern	50
Summary	59
Learning checkpoint 2: Apply response	60
Topic 3 Report and review incidents	63
3A Report incidents according to organisation policies and procedures	64
3B Review incidents with appropriate staff and offer suggestions appropriate to your area of responsibility	70
3C Access and participate in available debriefing mechanisms and associated support and/or development activities	74
3D Seek advice and assistance from legitimate sources as and when appropriate	79
Summary	83
Learning checkpoint 3: Report and review incidents	84

Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *CHCCCS020 Respond effectively to behaviours of concern*, Release 1. 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.

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.

Feature of the learner guide	How you can use each feature
Learning content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 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.
Examples and case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 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. ▶ Case studies highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.
Practice tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Practice tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which practice tasks to complete.
Video clips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 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: www.aspirelr.com.au/help <div data-bbox="1163 1328 1353 1610" style="text-align: right;">   <p style="font-size: small; margin-top: 5px;">V1234</p> </div>
Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.
Learning checkpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 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.

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

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

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: Identify behaviour and plan response	1A Identify behaviours of concern in line with work role and organisational policies and procedures	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1B Identify appropriate response to potential instances of behaviours of concern	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1C Ensure planned responses maximise the availability of other appropriate staff and resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1D Give priority to safety of yourself and others in responding to behaviours of concern	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 2: Apply response	2A Ensure response reflects organisational policies and procedures	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2B Seek assistance as required	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2C Deal with behaviours of concern promptly, firmly and diplomatically in accordance with organisational policy and procedure	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2D Use communication effectively to achieve the desired outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2E Select appropriate strategies to suit particular instances of behaviours of concern	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident

Topic	Key outcomes	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 3: Report and review incidents	3A Report incidents according to organisation policies and procedures	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3B Review incidents with appropriate staff and offer suggestions appropriate to your area of responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3C Access and participate in available debriefing mechanisms and associated support and/or development activities	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3D Seek advice and assistance from legitimate sources as and when appropriate	<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 Identify behaviours of concern in line with work role and organisational policies and procedures**
- 1B Identify appropriate response to potential instances of behaviours of concern**
- 1C Ensure planned responses maximise the availability of other appropriate staff and resources**
- 1D Give priority to safety of yourself and others in responding to behaviours of concern**

Identify behaviour and plan response

Behaviours of concern are any behaviours that have the potential to cause harm or to make people feel uncomfortable, frightened or unsafe. It is important to keep in mind that these behaviours are often a form of communication. The individual exhibiting these behaviours of concern may not know how to communicate their feelings or needs in any other way. Community services workers must be able to identify and plan appropriate responses to behaviours of concern in line with organisational policies and procedures and their own level of authority. This helps ensure they meet duty-of-care and safety obligations and address the person's behaviours and needs according to planned responses.

1A Identify behaviours of concern in line with work role and organisational policies and procedures

Everyone who works with people should have a basic understanding of how to identify and respond to behaviours of concern. This applies to community services workers as well as people working in a range of other roles.

In the past, behaviours of concern were often referred to as difficult or challenging behaviours. They can include a range of behaviours that are not appropriate in a particular situation or indicate that an individual is experiencing problems related to their physical or mental health, the environment or how they communicate with or relate to others.



Behaviours of concern

There are several main behaviours of concern that you may observe in people you work with.

Some behaviours of concern that you may encounter are shown below.

Aggression

- ▶ Aggression is any behaviour or action that another person finds offensive or intimidating. It can be either physical or verbal.
- ▶ Physical aggression may cause physical harm and may occur because an individual is angry, frustrated or attempting to meet specific needs through aggressive behaviour. It includes pushing, shoving, hitting, biting and other physically intimidating or aggressive acts.
- ▶ Verbal aggression may stem from anger or an attempt to control others through belittling, frightening or insulting them (see verbal offensiveness).

Confusion

- ▶ People experiencing confusion or other cognitive impairments may have difficulty thinking clearly and understanding what is happening around them.
- ▶ Confusion or cognitive impairment may be associated with dementia, but can also be a result of other conditions such as dehydration, infections or reactions to medications. People experiencing confusion may appear to be forgetful, puzzled, bewildered, uncertain, angry, upset or distressed.

Intoxication

- ▶ Intoxication occurs when a person has a high level of alcohol or drugs in their system. Sometimes, intoxication may put an individual at risk of harming themselves or others.
- ▶ An intoxicated person may engage in unpredictable or uncharacteristic behaviour, such as having sudden mood swings, slurring their speech, being confused and unable to think clearly, aggressiveness, rudeness and lack of balance and coordination.

Intrusive behaviour

- ▶ Intrusive behaviour involves a lack of respect for other people's privacy or personal space.
- ▶ Examples of intrusive behaviour include listening in to other people's private conversations, entering other people's rooms without invitation, going through other people's belongings, showing excessive and unwelcome interest in other people's private lives, and being overly familiar.

Manipulation

- ▶ Manipulative behaviour is when a person tries to control others; for example, to make them feel guilty or responsible for things they have done themselves.
- ▶ It may involve lying or distorting facts, getting others to do things for them, 'playing the victim', using emotional blackmail, managing people and situations to meet their own needs.

Noisiness

- ▶ People may be loud and noisy for a number of reasons including anger, intoxication and mental health conditions.
- ▶ Noisiness can be very disruptive and upsetting to others. Noisy behaviour may include yelling, shouting, loud laughing, banging or kicking walls or furniture.

Self-destructive

- ▶ Self-destructive behaviour occurs when people attempt to harm themselves. It may be a result of poor self-esteem, strong feelings of anxiety or depression, a response to a traumatic event or self-punishment.
- ▶ Examples of self-destructive behaviour include self-harming through cutting, biting or other acts of physical harm, refusing to eat or drink, substance abuse, suicide attempts and extreme lack of self-care.

Verbal offensiveness

- ▶ Verbal offensiveness does not cause physical harm, but is often frightening and emotionally stressful for the recipient.
- ▶ It can be used to manipulate and control others. It includes yelling, shouting, name calling, using abusive language and making threats.

Wandering

- ▶ Wandering involves a person roaming outside their home or care facility. It is usually associated with dementia and may be more common at certain times of day such as dusk or sundown.
- ▶ Wandering may place a person at risk of harm as the individual is often confused and may not know where they are or where they are going. Examples of wandering include going into other people's rooms or homes, getting lost, trying to escape care facilities and searching through other people's belongings.

Work within your work role

All community services workers will have a position description document that clearly defines their role and responsibilities. The organisation's policies and procedures will also set out what workers should and should not do. This will assist you in your role and provide a boundary for tasks you should do and those tasks that need to be referred or are outside of your job role.

A clear understanding of the limits and responsibilities of your job role reduces the risk of misunderstandings. By clarifying your job role you are setting and promoting healthy and safe boundaries that will ensure an honest and professional relationship with the people you are supporting and those of your colleagues.

Workers can find information about the boundaries of their work role by:

- ▶ undertaking orientation when commencing a new role
- ▶ reading their position description
- ▶ reading their workplace policies and procedures
- ▶ reading the person's care plan or other documentation
- ▶ talking to their supervisor.

Example

Identify behaviours of concern in line with work role and organisation policies and procedures



Judy is new to her role as a case worker in the mental health sector. When she applied for the position, the tasks of her role were discussed and Judy's application required her to give evidence of previous work she had done in each of the areas indicated. This means that Judy has some understanding of the tasks of her role and the skills and knowledge required of her. Judy was offered the job.

At the induction, her supervisor discusses with her the job description and Judy's role in terms of the hierarchy and management within the organisation. This gives Judy a clear understanding of who she reports to and where she should ask for information, support and advice if she should require it. The supervisor makes the boundaries of her role clear and specifies when she should seek advice from her supervisor. Judy has been given copies of the organisation's policies and procedures and must sign a form to confirm she has read and understood them. Her supervisor will meet with her in a week to see if she has any questions or needs clarity.

Judy is looking forward to her new role.

Practice task 1

1. What are behaviours of concern?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. What are three examples of behaviours of concern?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. Why is it important to understand your work role?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Click to complete Practice task 1

1B Identify appropriate response to potential instances of behaviours of concern

Community services workers must be able to identify the appropriate responses to potential behaviours of concern in line with organisation policies and procedures. This enables them to ensure they meet duty-of-care and safety obligations and address the person's behaviours and needs according to planned responses.



Guidelines for responding appropriately

Responding appropriately to behaviours of concern requires knowledge of what is expected of you based on your organisation's policies and procedures and your job description. It is very important that you follow these guidelines to ensure you meet your duty-of-care and ethical obligations, and maintain the safety of yourself, the person and anyone else present.

Listed below is the type of information that is provided in organisational guidelines for identifying and responding to behaviours of concern.

Organisational information for identifying and responding to behaviours of concern

- ▶ Identifying behaviours and incidents that may be cause for concern
- ▶ Communicating with and calming people who are engaged in behaviours of concern to prevent further escalation of the situation
- ▶ Using safe procedures
- ▶ Being ethical and treating the individual with respect and dignity
- ▶ Being culturally sensitive
- ▶ Seeking assistance and support as necessary
- ▶ Reporting and recording the incident in an accurate and fair manner

Identify potential behaviours of concern

If a person is demonstrating a behaviour of concern, you may be expected to direct others and act decisively to prevent further conflict. This may involve removing the person from the area or using strategies to prevent escalation of the behaviour. Always ensure that you have a clear understanding of what is expected of you and seek clarification from your supervisor if you are unsure.

Remain alert at all times to possible instances of behaviours of concern. You may be able to prevent many incidents from occurring by carefully observing and monitoring

individuals in your care, ensuring their needs are being addressed and that they are comfortable and relaxed. If a person suddenly starts behaving in a difficult manner, you need to think and act quickly.

Actions for diverting aggressive behaviour include:

- ▶ Remaining calm
- ▶ Requesting that others who are present move away
- ▶ Showing a willingness to listen
- ▶ Giving the person the time and space to calm down

Procedures for responding appropriately

Organisational policies and procedures will provide guidance on how to respond appropriately to potential instances of behaviours of concern.

Below are some suggested responses.

Stay calm

The person's behaviour may escalate if you appear anxious, frightened, angry or upset and the situation may worsen.

When you are calm you can more easily help calm someone who is confused, angry or upset.

Avoid quick movements or gestures that may seem threatening to the individual.

Observe the situation

Observing the situation will help you understand what is happening.

Avoid jumping to conclusions that may be incorrect and unfair.

Remain objective and, if possible, gather information.

Respond appropriately

Past experience and knowledge of an individual will help you respond to their individual needs and de-escalate or divert any characteristic behaviours of concern.

Be prepared

If the person is unknown to you, be prepared for unpredictable behaviour.

Reassure the person you are there to help.

Be observant and note their body language.

Make security a priority and do not approach closely until you are sure it is safe to do so.

Stay safe

Keeping yourself, the person and others safe is a priority.

Clear the area of other people if the behaviour is disruptive or could cause harm.

If possible, take the individual to a quiet, safe room, but leave the door open and ensure a clear exit path.

Communicate

The way you communicate with the person will impact how calm, safe and supported they feel.

Speak slowly and clearly to reassure the person.

Seek assistance

There are situations you will not be able to manage on your own.

Use an alarm if necessary to obtain assistance from other staff.

Follow procedures

It is important to always follow your organisation's policies and procedures, including work health and safety (WHS) guidelines, at all times to ensure you respond in a safe and appropriate manner that meets duty-of-care obligations.

Organisational policies and procedures may include operational guidelines for handling incidents and/or cases involving behaviours of concern, staff debriefing following an incident, incident reporting and documentation.

Duty of care

Duty of care is a legal requirement of your job. You must take reasonable steps to avoid acts or omissions that may cause harm to others – especially people in your care. You can meet your duty-of-care obligations by ensuring everything you do is carried out safely and correctly according to organisation policies and procedures.

Duty of care falls under the tort of negligence.

Organisations and workers are expected to provide services to people in a manner that is safe and protects them from foreseeable harm. Workers and service providers who fail to take reasonable steps to assess possible risks to people's safety and fail to act to prevent foreseeable harm may be in breach of their duty-of-care obligations. Taking reasonable care means acting in a manner that a reasonable person would be expected to act in a similar situation.



Duty of care obligations

You may be found negligent and in breach of your duty of care if you do not take reasonable steps to protect a person from harm when it is reasonably foreseeable. Similarly, you are also in breach if you do not provide an appropriate standard of care; do not maintain and respect confidentiality and privacy; do not respond to complaints or needs; do not adhere to organisation policies, procedures and codes of conduct or ethics; and do not report and record information accurately and in a timely manner. It is also a breach if you undertake activities that are not part of your job and you are not qualified to do.

Here are important points to remember in addressing your duty-of-care obligations when responding to incidents involving behaviours of concern.

Addressing your duty-of-care obligations

- ▶ Follow planned responses to behaviours of concern so they are addressed in an appropriate and safe manner.
- ▶ Make the safety of yourself and others a priority.
- ▶ Report and record any incidents or behaviours of concern in line with organisation guidelines; for example, filling in incident reports and noting them in person case notes.
- ▶ Report and record any changes in person behaviour immediately so the behaviour can be monitored and planned responses can be developed if necessary.

Human rights

Human rights recognise the value of every person, regardless of background, where we live, what we look like, what we think or what we believe. They are based on principles of equality and respect, shared across cultures, religions and philosophies. They are about being treated fairly, treating others fairly and having the ability to make genuine choices in our daily lives. Respect for human rights underpins the values and principles of the community services and should be applied by all workers when supporting people including those with behaviours of concern.

The Australian Government supports and respects many of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights developed by the United Nations.

Human rights Treaties supported by Australia:

- ▶ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- ▶ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- ▶ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- ▶ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- ▶ Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- ▶ Convention on the Rights of the Child
- ▶ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- ▶ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Example

Identify appropriate response to potential instances of behaviours of concern

Joel is 18 years old and is in a wheelchair due to a physical disability. He attends a living skills program so he can learn to live independently in his own unit. Joel engages in some behaviour that makes it difficult for him to get along with others; for example, he becomes very angry and shouts at people if he does not get his own way.

One day, Joel throws a plate of spaghetti bolognese at Ali, a worker, because he wants something else for lunch. Other people are upset by Joel's behaviour and frightened that he might hurt them. Ali is annoyed at having spaghetti all over him but he calmly explains to Joel that this is not appropriate behaviour, that he needs to consider other people's feelings and to tell staff if something is upsetting him, rather than just shouting or throwing things.

continued ...

Example

... continued

Ali speaks to the centre's behaviour management consultant about Joel's behaviour. The consultant, Don, tells Ali that he did the right thing in this situation by explaining to Joel why his behaviour was inappropriate and suggesting an alternative, more appropriate behaviour. Other workers and Joel's parents also adopt these strategies so Joel is constantly reminded that he needs to stop and think before acting on impulse. Joel enjoys these activities and soon becomes very good at identifying and displaying appropriate behaviours that are more considerate of others.

Practice task 2

1. How could you prevent some behaviours of concern from escalating?

.....

.....

.....

2. How can organisational policies and procedures assist you to respond?

.....

.....

.....

3. What is duty of care?

.....

.....

.....

4. What is the principle of human rights as it applies to people in the community services sector?

.....

.....

.....

Click to complete Practice task 2

1C Ensure planned responses maximise the availability of other appropriate staff and resources

Planned responses to incidents of behaviours of concern are responses that organisations develop to address individual person behaviours and needs, and to ensure all workers understand what is expected of them. For example, there are likely to be many occasions when you need to take a person to a quiet space to allow them to calm down or collect their thoughts. As part of this process you may offer snacks or diversional activities or games, you may require the help of colleagues to gather appropriate resources or attend to other people who may have been involved in an incident. In crisis situations, you may need to call an ambulance, the police or a mental health team who can provide needed medication or take a person to hospital.



In carrying out planned responses, you usually need to draw on the support of others such as co-workers, health professionals and family members. To achieve appropriate outcomes, you also need to utilise a range of resources such as information resources, physical spaces, equipment and diversional activities.

Appropriate resources

It is important to know who you can call on for help and what resources are most appropriate. In many incidents involving behaviours of concern, you will need to work as part of a team to achieve appropriate outcomes. Planned responses may be based on established organisation procedures, knowledge of individual people and underlying causes, and your own ability and experience.

Failure to effectively utilise other people or resources may result in:

- ▶ problems managing the situation
- ▶ escalation of the behaviour
- ▶ injury or harm to people
- ▶ people's loss of confidence in you
- ▶ loss of confidence in your own skills and abilities
- ▶ not meeting duty-of-care and safety requirements
- ▶ not obtaining specialist or emergency care or advice that could have readily resolved the situation.

Organisational procedures

Organisations have a range of procedures that will help you respond appropriately to incidents of behaviours of concern. These include written policies and guidelines that outline planned responses to common behaviours, as well as specific procedures outlined in person care or support plans and progress notes.

By following your organisation's policies and procedures, you ensure that you meet your duty-of-care, ethical and safety obligations and, at the same time, help address the person's individual needs and ensure their comfort and security.

Below are two examples of information that are prepared as part of established organisational procedures.

Individual care or support plans

- ▶ Community services organisations have a legal obligation to develop individual care or support plans for each person. These plans provide detailed information about each person's individual needs including their health and dietary requirements, personal preferences and cultural and religious background. The plan should also include information about any types of behaviour that may be a cause for concern and how the behaviour can be best addressed by staff. It is important that you familiarise yourself with each person's care or support plan and suggested approaches to monitoring and managing behaviours of concern.

Case or progress notes

- ▶ As part of an organisation's established procedures, workers are required to keep case or progress notes for each person. This ensures any incidents or behaviours of concern are noted so that all workers are aware of and can monitor further developments. A person's progress notes also help supervisors and team members plan appropriate responses to new or unusual behaviours as they arise.

Communicate to get needs met

Most behaviours of concern can be understood as a form of communication. A particular behaviour may be an attempt to have a specific need addressed, particularly when an individual has difficulty verbalising or articulating any problems they are experiencing. For example, a person who feels they are not being listened to or understood may begin to shout in an aggressive way.

Many behaviours of concern also occur in response to a trigger. A trigger is an event or circumstance that may set off a particular behaviour. Any known triggers should be noted in a person's care or support plan along with strategies for reducing exposure to the trigger. For example, if an individual tends to engage in intrusive behaviour when they are bored, their care or support plan should provide suggestions for keeping the individual engaged and occupied in an activity they enjoy.

Here are examples of triggers and what triggers can arise from.

Triggers

- ▶ Physical health problems such as an illness that causes pain or discomfort
- ▶ Emotional or mental health concerns such as anxiety, depression, grief and boredom
- ▶ Environmental issues such as extreme temperatures, unfamiliar surroundings or noise

What triggers arise from

- ▶ Particular activities that the individual finds difficult or upsetting
- ▶ Communication problems such as difficulty getting others to understand them, which cause frustration

Anticipate a response

As you gain experience, you will find you can more easily identify what a person is attempting to communicate through their behaviour and prevent the escalation of behaviour through appropriate planned responses.

The skills and abilities listed below will help you respond quickly and appropriately to behaviours of concern.

Foresee and respond quickly and effectively to contingencies

- ▶ An incident involving a behaviour of concern can set off a chain of reactions and events; for example, other people may become angry and aggressive.
- ▶ Try to anticipate a range of possibilities and take action to de-escalate the situation; for example, separating people and requesting help from other staff to calm and divert different groups of people.

Think and respond quickly and strategically

- ▶ Once you are aware of a possible incident or behaviour of concern, you need to assess the situation quickly and make decisions about appropriate responses based on your training and experience.

Remain calm and positive in adversity

- ▶ Incidents and behaviours of concern, such as when a person is angry, stressed, intoxicated or disoriented, are stressful for everyone around them, including workers.
- ▶ You can help alleviate everyone's stress by remaining calm and positive and taking planned and decisive action.

Use problem-solving skills

- ▶ Good problem-solving skills are based on common sense and the ability to use a step-by-step approach to define a problem, identify possible solutions and choose a course of action that best meets the needs of those involved.
- ▶ Problem-solving skills are also helpful in choosing and utilising available resources and prioritising your workload.

Work with others and display empathy with people and relatives

- ▶ In most cases, you will work as part of a team when responding to behaviours of concern. You will achieve the best results for people and others if you can do this in a cooperative and supportive manner.
- ▶ It is also important that you can empathise with the people and their relatives who may feel overwhelmed, misunderstood, distressed or unable to cope.

Availability of appropriate staff and resources

It is important to be aware of the resources available to support you when managing behaviours of concern. Always draw on the help and support of other appropriate people when necessary.

Human resources include your supervisor, team members and co-workers, health professionals, security officers, the police, other residents and neighbours, and family members and friends.

For example, if a person has wandered away, you must inform your supervisor immediately and alert other staff, security personnel and possibly the police. You should also contact family members to obtain any information and assistance you can from them.



Resources available to assist

People who are agitated, angry or distressed usually feel more comfortable if they are taken to a quiet room where any external stimulation is reduced and they have a chance to regain a sense of calm. Those whose behaviour may be a result of lack of stimulation or boredom may prefer to have other people around and to be offered activities to keep them occupied and engaged.

Listed below is a range of other resources that may help when responding to incidents or behaviours of concern.

Resources that may help when responding to incidents or behaviours of concern include:

- ▶ a quiet room or space where the individual can be away from others
- ▶ medical supplies such as bandages if someone is injured
- ▶ equipment to clean up broken glass or other rubbish
- ▶ personal items such as photos that can help distract people and calm them down
- ▶ cards or games to distract and occupy the person
- ▶ preferred music
- ▶ cups of tea/coffee and snacks
- ▶ family contact details
- ▶ the person's care or support plan.

Issues requiring referrals to health professionals

Some people may require referral to health professionals to address changing needs or emerging health concerns. Always try to be alert to any changes in a person's general health, sensory function, habits, mental alertness and moods that may require professional assessment and treatment.

Once the person has been referred to a health professional for specialist assessment or treatment, make sure you understand and follow the instructions and guidance they have provided for the person's care.

To make effective referrals you should follow your organisation guidelines for making referrals, ensure you are familiar with or can access information about appropriate service providers, explain the referral process to the person and provide choices where appropriate and follow up to check the referral is meeting the person’s needs.

Example

Ensure planned responses maximise the availability of other appropriate staff and resources

Here is an example of an organisation’s list of professionals to contact when particular health issues in people arise.

Health issue	Health professional
General health concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Doctor ▶ Medical centre
Vision or hearing problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Optometrist ▶ Audiologist
Tooth loss or pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Dentist
Increasing confusion or memory problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Doctor ▶ Geriatrician ▶ Neurologist or psychiatrist
Irrational thoughts or extreme mood swings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Psychiatrist ▶ Mental health team
Substance abuse including misuse of prescription drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Alcohol and other drug service ▶ AOD or addiction specialist
Depression or anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Doctor ▶ Psychologist ▶ Counsellor
Grief and trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Doctor ▶ Grief and trauma counsellor ▶ Psychologist
Incontinence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Doctor ▶ Nurse
Falls in own home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Doctor ▶ Physiotherapist ▶ Occupational therapist to assess home and recommend aids such as wall rails and other mobility aids in home
Inappropriate behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Behaviour management specialist ▶ Psychologist

Practice task 3

1. What needs to be considered in planned responses to behaviours of concern?

.....

.....

.....

2. Why is it important to follow the organisation's policies and procedures when planning responses to behaviour of concerns?

.....

.....

.....

3. What is a trigger?

.....

4. How can problem solving be useful in anticipating a response before a behaviour develops?

.....

.....

.....

5. List two examples of resources that may help.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

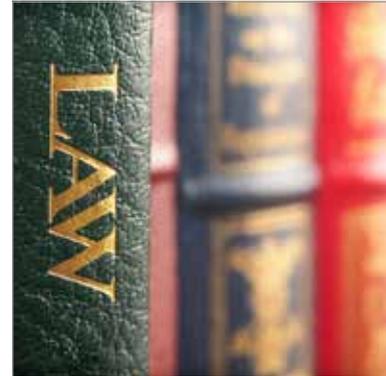
Click to complete Practice task 3

1D Give priority to safety of yourself and others in responding to behaviours of concern

Maintaining the safety of people, yourself and others is a major priority in responding to behaviours of concern. You can do this by following your organisation's work health and safety (WHS) procedures and other relevant policies.

WHS laws are designed to keep workers and others safe while at work or carrying out their jobs in the community. These laws are reflected in organisation safety policies and procedures.

Each state and territory has their own WHS legislation. Since 2014, federal and state/territory WHS laws have undergone a harmonisation process to ensure greater consistency in safety legislation across Australia, although Victoria and Western Australia continue to enforce their existing health and safety legislation.



Employers have a responsibility under WHS legislation to provide a safe workplace.

Minimise risk to staff and people

Your organisation will have specific procedures in place to manage behaviours of concern. These strategies should be reviewed regularly to minimise risks to staff and people. Workers also have responsibilities under WHS legislation.

Listed below are the employer and worker responsibilities in safely managing behaviours of concern.

Employer responsibilities

- ▶ Regularly reviewing people's care and support plans to ensure their current needs are being identified and addressed
- ▶ Ensuring workers undertake tasks in pairs when providing services to people with high-risk behaviour
- ▶ Providing training so all workers know how to respond to behaviours of concern
- ▶ Providing guidelines for documenting behaviours of concern
- ▶ Ensuring an emergency response procedure is in place to handle life-threatening situations
- ▶ Investigating reports of behaviours of concern, especially aggressive and self-harming behaviours
- ▶ Implementing appropriate behaviour-management strategies
- ▶ Providing duress alarms to staff to use in case of emergencies
- ▶ Ensuring there are procedures in place to monitor and maintain safety equipment such as duress alarms and mobile phones
- ▶ Providing opportunities for workers to debrief after critical or stressful incidents

Worker responsibilities

- ▶ Minimising risks by following organisation policies and procedures
- ▶ Performing tasks in a manner that does not place themselves or others at risk
- ▶ Working within their area of responsibility as outlined in their job description
- ▶ Avoiding attempting tasks or activities they are not trained or qualified to undertake
- ▶ Attending training related to WHS issues
- ▶ Familiarising themselves with workplace safety policies and common signs and symbols
- ▶ Ensuring personal safety equipment such as mobile phones are kept charged and easily accessible
- ▶ Using planned strategies when responding to behaviours of concern

Safely manage behaviours of concern

When you observe behaviour that may cause harm or disturb and upset people, you have a responsibility to take action. The most important objective should be to keep everyone safe from injury, harm or excessive stress.

If you have not had much experience in dealing with situations like this, call for help immediately.

Options to safely respond to behaviours of concern:

- ▶ Make sure you are familiar with person care or support plans.
- ▶ Learn to respond in a calm and controlled manner to incidents of concern.
- ▶ Speak clearly, move slowly and avoid standing directly in front of someone as they may perceive this as threatening.
- ▶ Make sure you leave yourself an escape route and never allow yourself to be cornered.
- ▶ Learn from and seek support from experienced workers.

Be prepared to manage behaviours of concern

Always be alert and prepared. Read the person's care or support plan and their daily records so you can anticipate possible behaviours of concern. For example, a person's care plan may state that a person is likely to become disorientated, confused and upset if there is any change to their routine. Their records or progress notes may report the beginning of new behaviours such as wandering or self-harming that all workers need to monitor.

One of the most potentially difficult behaviours of concern you will have to deal with is threatening and aggressive behaviour. This behaviour is alarming because it has the potential to escalate quickly and may result in harm to one or more people.

In cases where a person becomes aggressive or violent, the first priority is to assess your safety before attempting to defuse the behaviour.

Here are a number of strategies that can be used to defuse aggressive behaviour. Also listed are actions that should be avoided.

What to do	What not to do
▶ Be calm, respectful and empathetic.	▶ Do not show fear or alarm.
▶ Use effective communication and speak in a controlled and even tone.	▶ Do not appear stressed or angry.
▶ Maintain a positive and reassuring demeanour.	▶ Do not make demands or order the person around.
▶ Explain what you would like the person to do in a gentle manner.	▶ Do not argue with the person or refuse to listen to them.
▶ Give the person time to speak and listen attentively.	▶ Do not try to grab a knife or a stick from someone who is behaving aggressively.
▶ Remove any weapons or dangerous implements if it is safe to do so.	▶ Do not humiliate or embarrass the person.
▶ Take the person to a quiet, safe area away from other people.	▶ Do not try to manage the situation in full view of others.
▶ Offer choices and diversional activities.	▶ Do not try to force the person to do something they don't want to do.
▶ Call for support from co-workers, police or the person's family if the situation is beyond your control.	▶ Do not try to manage on your own.

Example

Give priority to safety of self and others in responding to behaviours of concern

Brian works in a community mental health service. His role involves visiting people in their home and supporting them to build independent and fulfilling lives. One of the people, Peter, has substance abuse issues as well as mental health concerns. These issues and Peter's tendency to forget to take his medication often leads to incidents and behaviours of concern. Brian knows Peter well and can usually manage to de-escalate any aggression or other difficult behaviours, but he is always careful to follow safety guidelines and not to take any risks.



Before visiting Peter, Brian reviews his case notes to see if any other workers have reported incidents or changes in behaviour. He then rings Peter to confirm his visit and assess whether Peter is showing any signs of aggression, paranoia, hostility or substance abuse. If Peter responds in a way that indicates he is in a disturbed or intoxicated state, Brian discusses the situation with his supervisor and requests that another staff member accompany him.

On most occasions, Peter is pleased to see Brian and there are no problems. Knowing and following his organisation's workplace safety policies helps Brian feel more secure in his role and in his ability to meet his duty-of-care and safety obligations in keeping himself, the person and others safe.

Practice task 4

1. Provide two examples of workers' responsibilities for workplace health and safety.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Give two examples of options for responding to behaviours of concern.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. List two strategies that can be used to defuse aggressive behaviour.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Click to complete Practice task 4

Summary

1. It is important to keep in mind that behaviours of concern are often a form of communication.
2. Community services workers must be able to identify and plan appropriate responses to behaviours of concern in line with organisational policies and procedures and their own level of authority.
3. A clear understanding of the limits and responsibilities of your job role reduces the risk of misunderstandings.
4. Responding appropriately to behaviours of concern requires knowledge of what is expected of you based on your organisation's policies and procedures and your job description.
5. Remain alert at all times to possible instances of behaviours of concern.
6. You must take reasonable steps to avoid acts or omissions that may cause harm to others, especially people in your care.
7. It is important to know who you can call on for help and what resources are most appropriate.
8. As you gain experience, you will find you can more easily identify what a person is attempting to communicate through their behaviour and prevent the escalation of behaviour through appropriate planned responses.
9. People may require referral to health professionals to address changing needs or emerging health concerns.
10. Workers also have responsibilities under legislation for workplace health and safety.
11. When you observe behaviour that may cause harm or disturb and upset people, you have a responsibility to take action.

Learning checkpoint 1

Identify behaviour and plan response

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in identifying behaviour and planning a response.

Part A

1. How would you describe 'behaviours of concern'?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. How is a position description helpful in working with people with behaviours of concern?

.....

.....

.....

3. Explain how behaviours of concern can be a form of communication.

.....

.....

.....

4. Give two examples of how you would safely respond to behaviours of concern.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Part B

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

Case study

Renee works in the leisure and health sector as a recreation officer. On Tuesdays, she has a group of adults from the local aged care residence come for an exercise class. There are a number of people with dementia who become confused when they arrive and don't understand where they are. Others tend to wander off and want to leave the room. Renee has a number of strategies that she discussed with the support workers from the beginning. Renee visited the aged care centre and gained some understanding of the clients and dementia. She has previous work experience with older groups with dementia and this has assisted in her planning.

1. What particular behaviours of concern does Renee see in her group each week?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. What appropriate resources does Renee use to assist in the management of the behaviours in her group?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. What does Renee need to consider in terms of the client's duty of care?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



Topic 2

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 2A Ensure response reflects organisational policies and procedures**
- 2B Seek assistance as required**
- 2C Deal with behaviours of concern promptly, firmly and diplomatically in accordance with organisational policy and procedure**
- 2D Use communication effectively to achieve the desired outcomes**
- 2E Select appropriate strategies to suit particular instances of behaviours of concern**

Apply response

Your organisation will have specific policies and procedures for applying responses to behaviours of concern. It is important that you are familiar with these and follow them as closely as possible. This helps ensure you meet your legal and ethical obligations, and that everyone within the organisation uses a consistent approach based on established procedures that seek to maintain the safety of everyone who may be present or involved. These workplace policies and procedures provide information about when to seek assistance, what strategies to use for different types of behaviour, how to communicate with an individual engaging in a behaviour of concern and when to implement emergency response procedures.

2A Ensure response reflects organisational policies and procedures

Every community services organisation has a legal and ethical obligation to provide high quality care to people and to have policies and procedures that document how this will be achieved. You have a responsibility to understand all your organisation's policies and procedures and to apply them in your work.

It is important to follow your organisation's policies and procedures for managing behaviours of concern.

By following your organisation's policies and procedures, you ensure that you:

- ▶ apply correct and consistent procedures as required by your organisation
- ▶ know what to do and can act quickly, effectively and strategically
- ▶ seek assistance from the appropriate personnel when necessary
- ▶ meet your duty-of-care and other legal and ethical obligations
- ▶ communicate in a way that helps achieve desired outcomes
- ▶ help maintain the safety of yourself, the people and anyone else present
- ▶ work in a way that is respectful of the individual's rights, needs and dignity
- ▶ report the incident according to organisation guidelines.

Policies and procedures

Policies and procedures are based on legal and regulatory requirements and industry standards. They provide rules, guidelines and instructions to help you do your work correctly.

All workers should be introduced to their workplace policies and procedures as part of their induction process when they first start a job. They are expected to familiarise themselves with every policy and procedure and apply them in their daily work.

If you fail to follow organisation policies and procedures, you may be at risk of not meeting your legal and ethical responsibilities, including duty of care, and not providing services to people according to the organisation's goals and objectives. This may have serious consequences, especially for people and their families who may find they are not receiving the care and support they require and have a right to.

Below is an explanation of the main purpose of policies and procedures.

Policies

Policies are rules or guidelines about areas of service delivery. They inform workers and people about the organisation's values and practices in specific areas, provide consistency of approach across the organisation and ensure workers know what they have to do to comply with organisation standards and their legal obligations.

Common policies within community services organisations include privacy and confidentiality, work health and safety (WHS), equal employment opportunity, anti-discrimination, access and equity and managing critical incidents and behaviours of concern.

Procedures

Procedures provide step-by-step instructions for carrying out specific tasks. They ensure that tasks are carried out in a consistent way and to a specified standard, that workers have specific guidelines to follow and that everyone knows what to do in cases of emergency.

Common procedures include grievance or complaints procedures, evacuation procedures, manual-handling procedures, report-writing procedures, incident-reporting procedures and specific responses to different types of behaviours of concern.

Principles of community service

When responding to behaviours of concern, you also need to keep in mind a range of workplace policies and procedures, such as adhering to WHS laws and policies for safeguarding the safety of yourself and others. In addition to this, respecting people rights as outlined in legislation, industry standards and organisation rights statements and policies is also important. Other things to keep in mind include maintaining people's confidentiality and privacy as required by privacy legislation, principles and policies, avoiding any form of discrimination as required by anti-discrimination legislation and organisation policies, and reporting incidents clearly and accurately.

Other community services principles relevant to managing incidents of behaviours of concern are described below.

Community services principles relevant to managing incidents of behaviours of concern

Be respectful and avoid embarrassing or humiliating a person because of a particular behaviour.

Show empathy and try to see things from the perspective of the people engaging in the behaviour and those affected by it.

Be aware that the people may be trying to express a particular need or problem through their behaviour.

Be non-judgmental and do not form negative opinions of people because of their behaviour or expect them to conform to your own values and beliefs.

Specific policies and procedures

A typical policy for managing behaviours of concern provides an overview of how the organisation addresses these behaviours and the values and standards they adhere to in developing planned responses.

You will find many examples of policies and procedures for responding to behaviours of concern on the internet. You may need to search for terms such as 'challenging behaviour' or 'difficult behaviour' as well as 'behaviours of concern' to find relevant policies.

Although many areas of community services have a similar approach to managing behaviours of concern, it is important that you follow the specific guidelines of your organisation and do not assume that what you did in a previous position for another organisation can be applied in your current situation.

Four main sections of a typical organisational policy

- 1 Purpose and scope**

Defines typical behaviours of concern that people may engage in and the standards used in determining appropriate responses; for example, the National Standards for Disability Services. This section should also refer to principles the organisation follows; for example, the need to develop a detailed understanding of each person and their past experiences and the need to tailor individual responses that are carefully planned and documented according to individual needs and preferences.
- 2 Procedures for responding**

Outlines specific actions that staff should follow such as monitoring behaviours, seeking assistance, using diversional strategies and implementing emergency response procedures when necessary.
- 3 Commitment to investigating reports**

States the organisation's commitment to investigating all reports of incidents or behaviours of concern, how these are to be documented and how responses are developed.
- 4 Policy review**

Refers to how the policy will be reviewed and the circumstances under which a review may be necessary, such as a change of legislation or industry policy.

Maintain policies and procedures

If you are in any doubt about how you should respond to incidents or behaviours of concern, or you are having difficulty applying planned responses with a specific person, seek assistance from your supervisor.

Similarly, if you notice that a policy or procedure for managing behaviours seems out of date or is not being followed correctly, raise the matter with your supervisor. Your supervisor can then check the guidelines to update it or suggest a formal review. They may also want to suggest further training for staff in correct procedures. Policies need to be useful and relevant to current circumstances.



Your organisation should provide regular training in responding to behaviours of concern, specific procedures and guidelines for responding to different types of behaviour such as aggression, wandering and self-harming, and individual people care or support plans that outline the specific behaviours a person may engage in and the organisation's planned response in dealing with the individual's behaviour.

Example

Ensure response reflects organisational policies and procedures

Here is an example of an organisational procedure for responding to verbal aggression.

Observe

- ▶ Determine whether the behaviour is actually verbal aggression or if the people is simply talking loudly, colourfully or in a somewhat angry way.
- ▶ Verbal aggression is characterised by an attempt to threaten, control or frighten others. It may include yelling, shouting, abusive and threatening language and name-calling.

Take action if necessary

- ▶ Remember that all interventions must take the individual into account and treat them with respect and dignity.
- ▶ Stay calm and do not argue with the individual.
- ▶ Take the people to a quiet area or alternatively ask others to leave the immediate area.
- ▶ Allow the people time and space to calm down. You may do this by encouraging them to talk calmly about what has happened and listening with attention, and offering diversional activities such as a cup of tea, quiet music or other activities that may help them settle down.
- ▶ Call your supervisor or seek another person’s help if the aggression continues or escalates.

Document what has taken place

It is important to note:

- ▶ what happened
- ▶ when it happened
- ▶ who was involved
- ▶ why you think it happened
- ▶ if there were any specific triggers involved.

Practice task 5

1. Why is it important to follow an organisation’s policies and procedures?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. What problems can occur if policies and procedures are not adhered to?

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. Explain, using examples, some principles of the community services sector.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. What are the main parts/sections of a common organisational policy?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

5. What should be done to maintain a policy so it continues to be useful and valid?

.....

.....

.....

Click to complete Practice task 5

2B Seek assistance as required

In many cases you will be able to manage common behaviours of concern on your own. At other times, especially if the behaviour may risk injury or harm to people or appears to be escalating, you should seek assistance immediately.

Your workplace policies and procedures and common sense will indicate when you need to ask for assistance in responding to behaviours of concern.

Obtain assistance when:

- ▶ the situation is not safe and the behaviour may cause harm to you, the individual or others
- ▶ the behaviour is escalating and the person is not responding to the usual strategies
- ▶ you are doing a community visit to a person who is reportedly engaging in behaviours of concern
- ▶ you need help to respond to more than one person involved in the incident
- ▶ you do not feel confident in managing the situation yourself
- ▶ you need advice from your supervisor or someone who can provide specific information
- ▶ you need the assistance of emergency services such as police or an ambulance.

Manage incidents on your own

You will usually be able to deal with situations on your own in circumstances where the behaviour only requires monitoring rather than intervention; for example, if a person appears a bit moody or irritable. Another circumstance is where you regularly work with the people and are familiar with their behaviour patterns and the planned responses to behaviours of concern outlined in their care and support plan.

It may also be appropriate to manage an incident on your own if you know what might trigger particular behaviours for a person (for example, boredom or loud noises) and how you may be able to reduce exposure to triggers by offering diversional activities or taking the people to another room. Your level of responsibility in the organisation may also dictate whether you can individually respond appropriately to the behaviour.

The following information outlines a list of appropriate personnel from whom you may need to seek assistance.

Supervisors

Supervisors can:

- ▶ provide support and guidance
- ▶ arrange additional help
- ▶ give you feedback
- ▶ suggest options and alternative strategies
- ▶ provide debriefing after critical incidents.

Other workers

Other workers, especially experienced workers, can:

- ▶ provide advice and support
- ▶ assist you to gather resources and appropriate help
- ▶ provide back-up when you need it.

Behaviour management specialists

Your organisation may employ a behaviour management specialist or psychologist who can:

- ▶ provide advice about how to respond to behaviours of concern
- ▶ help you understand unusual or atypical behaviours
- ▶ assist in developing planned responses.

Diversional therapists

Many aged care and disability services employ diversional therapists who can:

- ▶ suggest activities to divert behaviours of concern
- ▶ provide resources to help with behaviours of concern.

Medical staff

Medical staff such as doctors, nurses or paramedics should be called to attend to an incident where an injury has occurred and medical attention is required. They can:

- ▶ provide medication to alleviate pain or stress
- ▶ suggest further medical treatment.

Health and safety officers

Health and safety officers can help:

- ▶ take appropriate action to deal with hazards caused by an incident, such as spilt liquid or broken windows or furniture
- ▶ provide information and advice on emergency procedures.

Security officers

Security officers can help:

- ▶ locate a person who is missing or wandering
- ▶ respond to someone who is engaging in threatening or aggressive behaviour.

Ambulance

Call for an ambulance immediately if someone has seriously injured themselves and needs to be taken to hospital.

Police

You may need to call the police if someone is at risk of harming themselves or others.

How to seek help

Most community services organisations require staff to carry personal alarms or mobile phones at all times so they can obtain help when they need it. It is very important that you follow organisational procedures for maintaining this equipment; for example, keeping your phone charged and checking that batteries in your personal alarm are working.

Always make sure you have a mobile phone when visiting people in their home and check that it is charged before leaving your office.

If you work in a facility that has security cameras and screens, make sure you regularly check the screens so you can provide assistance to other staff if you notice that they are dealing with an incident or behaviour of concern.

There are a number of suggested ways to seek assistance if you are involved in responding to an incident of concern.

Ways you may be able to seek assistance

- ▶ Calling out to another staff member who may be nearby
- ▶ Asking a person to get another staff member or your supervisor
- ▶ Using a duress or personal alarm
- ▶ Using a telephone or mobile phone
- ▶ Alerting others via CCTV or security screens
- ▶ Going directly to the person you want help from if it is possible to leave the situation for a short time

Example

Seek assistance as required



Marjorie works in an alcohol and other drugs (AOD) treatment service. She is busy writing up her progress notes while monitoring some of the people in the recreation area. She looks up to see that two young men have started a physical confrontation. Other people quickly join in the brawl, egging the two men on and starting their own fights. Marjorie realises she cannot handle this situation on her own and sets off the duress alarm under her desk. When help is slow in coming, she presses the speed dial button for her supervisor, Donald, on her phone. Donald answers immediately and Marjorie quickly fills him in on what is happening. Donald advises Marjorie to stay calm and safe while he sends in other staff to help. Other workers, including security personnel, arrive and break up the fights. The resident medical workers also come in to treat the resulting injuries.

Practice task 6

1. What are some examples of times when you should seek assistance?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. What are examples of circumstances that do not require assistance?

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. Give two examples of appropriate personnel that can assist you and what role they perform.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. What are some ways to seek help while at work?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Click to complete Practice task 6

2C Deal with behaviours of concern promptly, firmly and diplomatically in accordance with organisational policy and procedure

To manage incidents involving behaviours of concern effectively, you should try to deal with them as promptly and purposefully as possible. This helps prevent the behaviour from escalating and reduces the possibility of harm or stress to the individual and others.

Your main priority in responding to behaviours of concern quickly and effectively is to follow your organisation guidelines for preventing or minimising the behaviour. One of your key roles in preventing or minimising behaviour will be to carefully monitor your own service area.



Monitor your own service area

By continually monitoring what is going on in your service area, you may be able to prevent behaviours of concern before they happen.

Below is an outline of some strategies for monitoring people behaviour and levels of satisfaction.

Observation

By observing the people in your area, you are more likely to notice:

- ▶ unusual behaviours
- ▶ triggers that may set off particular behaviours
- ▶ someone who is about to engage in a common behaviour of concern; for example, you may see a person who has a habit of wandering start to look restless or move toward an exit point.

Careful observation helps you take appropriate action before a person becomes involved in an incident. Where you are concerned about a particular behaviour, record the behaviour in the person's progress notes or a behaviour observation chart.

Checking people records

Checking people records allows you to see what other workers have reported about a person and whether they have noted any instances of unusual or difficult behaviour.

Face-to-face communication

By talking to all the people in your area, even if it is only a quick chat, you will gain an idea of who may be feeling well and who may be feeling out of sorts. This helps maintain a connection with people and shows empathy for their needs and concerns. In this way you may be able to address any issues before they become a problem or result in a behaviour of concern.

Feedback

Regularly requesting feedback from people and family members will alert you to any concerns they may have about the service or the care the individual is receiving.

You can request feedback directly from people and their families or suggest they use specific forms to provide feedback.

Complaints

People have a legal and ethical right to make a complaint if they are concerned with any aspect of a service. Make sure you inform people how they can make complaints. You may need to:

- ▶ explain what forms can be used to document complaints
- ▶ inform people that they will not receive any adverse treatment by making complaints and that people complaints can help the organisation improve the service
- ▶ assist people to fill in forms.

A high number of complaints in your organisation may indicate a low level of people satisfaction with the service or some aspects of the service.

Remain alert and respond promptly

It is important to act quickly to manage the situation as soon as you are aware that a person's behaviour may be cause for concern. By taking prompt action, you may be able to prevent the behaviour from developing into an incident that causes stress or harm to the people or others.

Act quickly to manage behaviours of concern by following your organisation's planned responses, as shown below.

Following a prompt and planned response

Assess the situation quickly and decide on appropriate action.

Consider safety issues and take steps to maintain safety of everyone involved.

Stay calm and focused.

Put into action your organisation's planned responses.

Obtain assistance if necessary to manage the situation.

Use problem-solving skills

When you see someone engaged in a behaviour of concern, you should immediately think of what resources you can draw on to manage the situation. Part of responding promptly and thinking strategically involves having the ability to use problem-solving skills. In a crisis situation or an incident involving behaviours of concern, this involves thinking quickly to decide what you should do first. Always keep in mind that your first priority in any situation that may result in harm



to people is your own safety and that of others. If a person is being very noisy and disrupting others, you should quickly think of people, resources and activities to help you divert the behaviour and minimise the noise. If a person is acting in an aggressive or threatening way towards you or other people, request that others leave the area and make sure you have a way of exiting the situation quickly if necessary.

Stay calm and positive

As mentioned, it is very important to remain calm and act in a positive and confident way when responding to behaviours of concern.

When you are calm, you can more easily think clearly and assess the situation, calm others, remember what you should do and act decisively and confidently.

You act in a positive way when you refuse to be upset or intimidated by a particular behaviour or situation. Your posture and speech should convey confidence and a focus on what can be done to resolve the issue rather than concentrating on the problems or negatives of a particular situation.

You can help yourself remain calm by:

- ▶ taking deep breaths
- ▶ speaking slowly and clearly
- ▶ focusing on the people involved and the situation at hand
- ▶ being confident in your knowledge and ability to implement planned responses.

Be firm and diplomatic

The way you present yourself and how you speak is very important when dealing with behaviours of concern. By being firm, you show you are in control of the situation and know what needs to be done to manage the behaviour, including making it clear why the behaviour is inappropriate. However, it is also necessary to be diplomatic so you do not humiliate or embarrass the people concerned. Many people may not be aware that their behaviour is offensive to others. If you are not diplomatic, you may alienate the individual, which could cause upset and further behavioural problems.

Below are some steps you can follow to be firm and diplomatic.

Be decisive

Be clear and decisive about what should happen.

Explain

Explain why behaviour is inappropriate or a cause for concern.

Take care

Take care not to do or say anything that may cause offence or appear rude.

Be respectful

Be respectful of the people involved and be sensitive to their needs.

Display empathy

Empathy is the ability to see things from the others' point of view, including people and family members. It is important to keep in mind that when a person is engaging in a behaviour of concern, they may be feeling stressed, confused or frightened. People often use behaviour to communicate emotions that they are not able to put into words or deal with through other means. When you show understanding and empathy, you help validate what the people is feeling and assist them to process and verbalise their feelings. This, in turn, helps them feel calmer and may prevent the behaviour escalating into a more serious incident.



Consider cultural differences

Make sure you take into account cultural differences in the way you interact with people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. It is important that people understand what you are doing and that you are trying to keep them safe.

Below are some mechanisms you can employ to take into account cultural differences.

Mechanisms for accommodating cultural differences

- ▶ Speak clearly in a way that people who do not speak English fluently can easily understand.
- ▶ Explain what you are doing.
- ▶ Avoid raising your voice or shouting at people when trying to make yourself understood.
- ▶ Be careful about the way you touch people, as some forms of touch may be offensive to different cultural groups.

- ▶ Be respectful of beliefs, attitudes and values that may be different from your own.
- ▶ Seek assistance from someone who can speak the person’s language and understands their cultural background if necessary.

Example

Deal with behaviours of concern promptly, firmly and diplomatically



Mario is an older man who receives home care services. He has been lonely since his wife Mariella died and enjoys the company of the community services workers who visit him.

One day, Rowena, a carer, is helping Mario put his shopping away. Mario pats her backside and tells her she is a fine looking woman. Rowena pauses for a moment to think whether she will let this behaviour go this time or whether she should take action to prevent it happening again. She decides on the latter and tells Mario politely, but firmly, to stop touching her. She explains that this type of behaviour makes her feel very uncomfortable and it is inappropriate. She says she is trying to do her work in a professional manner, but this is difficult if Mario does not respect the person/worker relationship.

Mario says he is just being friendly and didn’t mean any harm. Rowena tells him that she is happy to continue working with him as long as he does not behave that way again or make any other inappropriate comments or gestures. Mario agrees and tells her he will be good in future.

Rowena documents the incident so that other workers will be alert to this behaviour and know how she responded to it.

Practice task 7

1. Explain observation as a strategy for monitoring people behaviour and level of satisfaction.

.....

.....

.....

2. What are some things to remember when trying to keep calm?

.....

.....

.....

3. How can being firm and diplomatic help in a situation?

.....

.....

.....

4. What are some steps to follow for being firm and diplomatic?

.....

.....

.....

.....

5. What is empathy and how can it assist in dealing with behaviours of concern?

.....

.....

.....

.....

6. What are some examples of ways to accommodate cultural differences?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Click to complete Practice task 7

2D Use communication effectively to achieve the desired outcomes

The way you communicate with people engaging in behaviours of concern can influence the outcome of the incident. It is important that you communicate in a calm and controlled way that is reassuring to the individual and anyone else who is present.

In any incident involving behaviours of concern, you need to obtain information and give instructions clearly and quickly. Everyone involved in the situation needs to know what to do and should follow the advice and information they are given.



Remember that the purpose of communication when dealing with people who exhibit behaviours of concern is to resolve the situation as quickly and safely as you can. Do not say or do anything that may upset the people further, confuse them or make them feel unsupported and isolated. Effective communication can be verbal, nonverbal or written.

Verbal communication

Verbal communication includes speaking and listening. In an everyday interaction with a person, you have time to communicate in a leisurely way without having a particular outcome in mind. You can spend more time listening and checking that you understand what a person is telling you. In an incident involving behaviours of concern, the way you communicate needs to be more direct and purposeful. Your goal should be to calm the people down, obtain any necessary information and provide clear instructions about what you want everyone present to do.

Below are communication strategies that you should try to use in an incident involving behaviours of concern.

Speaking in a calm and positive way

Speaking in a calm and positive way will:

- ▶ help convey that you feel calm and in control
- ▶ reassure and calm the people who is engaging in the behaviour
- ▶ enable you to keep an even tone as opposed to speaking too quickly or loudly.

Speaking clearly and firmly

It is important that you speak clearly and firmly so that:

- ▶ everyone can understand you
- ▶ you convey instructions clearly
- ▶ you sound authoritative.

Short, firm instructions may be easier to follow for someone who is upset or distressed; for example, 'Come with me. I'll take you to your room'. Avoid shouting at people as this may cause more stress and aggravate the situation.

Provide clear information

You need to provide clear information so that others:

- ▶ know what to do and what is expected of them
- ▶ understand what is happening
- ▶ understand why a behaviour is inappropriate or a cause for concern
- ▶ can understand what has happened if they did not witness the incident.

Keep in mind a person's special needs

Always adjust your communication style to suit a person's needs. For example, you may need to use basic sign language to communicate with someone who has a hearing impairment or use communication boards with people who are unable to speak clearly.

It may be necessary to speak slowly and clearly using simple words with some people to ensure they understand your meaning. This may apply to people who have dementia or an intellectual disability. You may also need to touch them on the arm or shoulder gently to gain their attention first. It is also important that you clearly explain to these people what you are doing and why you are doing it.

Take into account cultural and linguistic diversity

People from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds may have specific communication needs. It is important that you address these so the individual understands what is happening and what is required of them. For example, you may need to:

- ▶ use an interpreter or find someone who can speak the person's language to relay instructions clearly
- ▶ speak clearly using words that are easy to understand
- ▶ physically demonstrate what you require
- ▶ seek advice or assistance from a cultural liaison officer or ethno-specific service
- ▶ provide written information in the person's own language.

It is also important that you show respect for different values, beliefs and attitudes at all times.

Ask the right questions

You may need to gather some information from a person involved in behaviours of concern. Keep your questions short and to the point; for example, 'Are you in pain?' or 'Would you like to go somewhere quiet?'

Do not ask too many questions at once. Wait until the people has calmed down before requesting more information about what happened or trying to explain why they should avoid a particular behaviour.

Questions may be either closed or open. A closed question usually seeks a specific response with a yes or no answer; for example, 'Are you feeling depressed?'

An open question attempts to seek more information; for example, 'Tell me, how do you feel when you are depressed?'

Listen attentively

When you do get an opportunity to talk about the person's behaviour with them, make sure you listen attentively to what they say. This will help you:

- ▶ understand why they engage in the behaviour
- ▶ show the people that you want to help
- ▶ gain the trust of the person.

Listen carefully when you are given instructions. Your ability to interpret and follow instructions accurately is important in resolving problems and managing behaviours of concern.

Do not argue

Arguing with the people is likely to cause more problems. Be aware they may try to start an argument with you, but you can avoid this by not answering back and focusing on calming them down.

Avoid being critical or judgmental

Avoid negative personal remarks or criticism as this may make the people feel isolated and judged. For example, do not say things like, 'Stop being an idiot' or 'Pull yourself together'.

Paraphrase

You may need to give clear instructions during an incident involving a behaviour of concern, but you may also need to receive and apply instructions you are given. For example, you may need to ask your supervisor or a health professional for advice. It is important that you listen carefully and clarify any information you do not understand.

Two communication strategies you can use to clarify instructions are to ask questions and to use paraphrasing. Paraphrasing involves repeating back to the speaker in your own words what you think they have said. You may begin paraphrasing by saying something like 'Do you mean ...?' or 'Okay, so you want me to ...?'



Nonverbal communication

Nonverbal communication makes up a far greater proportion of how we send and receive information than most people realise. Nonverbal communication includes the way you move your body, the gestures you make with your hands and arms and your facial expressions. It also includes making eye contact with the person you are speaking to, how close you approach the person you are speaking to and the use of touch. Words are important, but the way you look and move while you are talking is just as important.

Always try to make sure that your nonverbal communication is consistent with what you are saying. If you are using words to calm a person, your gestures, facial expressions,

tone of voice and posture should reflect your words. If you seem tense or frightened, the individual may interpret this to mean you are not sure what you are doing and lack confidence. This is likely to further unsettle them.

Below are some nonverbal behaviours to be aware of that may block communication.

Nonverbal behaviours that may block communication

- ▶ Frowning or appearing tense and angry
- ▶ Using gestures that may appear threatening, such as raising your hand or shaking your fist
- ▶ Crossing your arms in front of you, as this creates a physical or postural barrier
- ▶ Maintaining eye contact in a way that is intense or threatening
- ▶ Turning your back on the person as this may seem like lack of interest or rejection

Impacts of nonverbal communication

When communicating with someone who is engaging in a behaviour of concern, observe the effects of what you are saying and doing on them.

Being able to interpret other people's body language can help you decide how to manage behaviours of concern. Learn to know the types of body language displayed by the people you work with. You may be able to resolve the behaviour more quickly once you recognise the signs.

Below are examples of how a person's nonverbal communication may reflect their response to what you are communicating; that is, whether it is having a positive or negative impact on them.

Positive impact

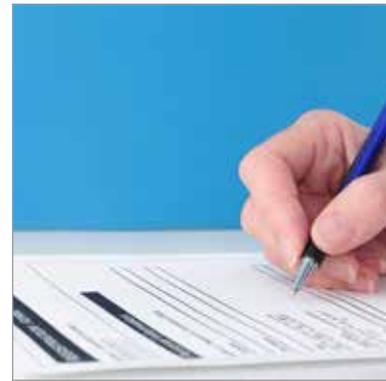
- ▶ Facial expression and posture are relaxed
- ▶ Any gestures are non-threatening and low-key
- ▶ Arms and shoulders appear relaxed
- ▶ Eyes are relaxed and they are able to maintain eye contact without intensity
- ▶ Person may be seated

Negative impact

- ▶ General appearance may be agitated and tense
- ▶ Gestures are threatening, such as shaking a fist, leaning toward you and shouting
- ▶ Arms may be in front of the body and shoulders tensed
- ▶ Eyes are downcast or staring with fixed eye contact
- ▶ Person may be pacing and showing signs of anger or agitation

Written communication

The ability to write clearly and accurately is an important part of your job. As part of your work, you may be required to write people progress or case notes, records and reports, information in forms such as critical incident forms or behaviour observation forms, letters and emails to colleagues and other service providers, and notes or instructions for people .



All written communication should be easy to understand, brief and accurate. When making a written report about an incident involving a person's behaviour, make sure you record the facts of the situation rather than what you think might have happened and make sure you sign and date the document.

The information you provide should include the names of the people involved, what happened, the date and time it happened and the action that was taken.

Literacy and numeracy skills

Besides being able to communicate effectively in both verbal and written form, you need to have the ability to read and understand workplace information and carry out basic numeracy tasks such as addition, subtraction, division and multiplication.

The ability to read and understand written information and workplace symbols and signs is important because it enables you to understand workplace policies and procedures and other written documents, such as your job description and legislation relevant to your role, study to gain specific qualifications, keep up-to-date with developments in your field by reading journals and other current information, and interpret signs and symbols that are used in most workplaces to protect your own safety and that of others.

You can find examples of safety symbols used in Australia, which meet Government standards, on the internet. Common safety symbols that you should be aware of are described here.



A cross to indicate first aid equipment



A skull and cross bones for poison or hazardous substances



A flame to indicate flammable material



A fire extinguisher next to a flame to indicate the location of a fire extinguisher



A phone handset to indicate an emergency telephone



A person losing their balance and falling backwards to indicate a wet or slippery surface



A cigarette surrounded by a red circle and a diagonal red line to indicate a no-smoking area

Numeracy skills

Basic numeracy skills will help you record numerical information, report how many times a person has engaged in a particular behaviour within a given time frame, work out whether reported incidents of behaviours of concern have decreased or increased over a month or other time frame and allow you to estimate or predict how many times a person may engage in a behaviour such as wandering within a particular time frame.



If you do not think you have the literacy and numeracy skills to carry out these tasks, there are a number of ways you can improve your competence. These include asking

a friend to help you improve your skills, finding a literacy or numeracy tutor, obtaining simple texts that can help you improve your skills and using some of the free online programs that provide interactive learning opportunities.

Organisations can assist workers to carry out their reporting requirements by having adequate examples and guidelines in place to assist them with these tasks. They should also provide tools such as dictionaries, calculators and relevant learning materials.

Guidelines for communicating

Below is an extract from an organisation's guidelines for communicating with people who exhibit behaviours of concern.

Active listening

- ▶ Listening actively involves listening with full attention, and focusing on understanding what the person is saying, meaning and experiencing.

Encouragers

- ▶ Encouragers are brief words or nonverbal cues, such as nods, that encourage a person to keep talking without interruption. Verbal encouragers include phrases such as, 'Go on', 'I see' or 'uh ha'.

Paraphrasing

- ▶ Paraphrasing involves reflecting content or restating what the speaker has said to confirm that you understand what they mean. Paraphrasing can also be used to draw attention to a particular concern; for example, 'So you are saying that sometimes you think about self-harming?'

Reflection of feeling

- ▶ Reflecting a person's feelings helps them acknowledge their feelings and examine them. You can reflect a person's feelings by focusing on their emotional state and drawing this to their attention; for example, 'You seem really stressed by what has happened'. Reflecting someone's feelings shows empathy and helps validate what they are feeling and experiencing.

Summarising

- ▶ Summarising involves focusing on the main points of what a person has said over a period of time to draw attention to a particular issue or check that you understand what they are saying. It is a longer version of paraphrasing.

Example

Use communication effectively to achieve the desired outcomes

An excursion is being organised for residents in a care facility. There are only limited places and residents are selected on the basis of whoever puts their name down first. Johanna really wants to go on the excursion, but forgets to put her name down. The list of people going on the excursion is pinned on a noticeboard outside the administration office. Johanna crosses out the name of Mrs Jackson and writes her own name. When asked about the crosses and changes, Mrs Jackson says she was really looking forward to the trip and is disappointed she wasn't chosen. Johanna tells the staff that Mrs Jackson is a silly old thing with a very bad memory and must have forgotten she didn't want to go on the excursion.

The staff decides to monitor the situation and observe Johanna. After a few weeks they have observed several instances where Joanna has manipulated the situation of people to her advantage and says anything to get her own way. The staff speak to Joanna using a calm and firm tone and tell her in clear terms she must change the way she behaves.

Practice task 8

1. What is the purpose of communication?

.....

.....

.....

2. Provide two examples of communication strategies useful when dealing with people involved in inappropriate behaviour.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. What is nonverbal communication?

.....

.....

.....

4. What are some examples of how numeracy is used in the workplace?

.....

.....

.....

.....

5. What are some guidelines to follow for communicating with people who exhibit behaviours of concern?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Click to complete Practice task 8

2E Select appropriate strategies to suit particular instances of behaviours of concern

You need to use appropriate strategies to respond effectively to behaviours of concern. The strategy you use will depend on the type of behaviour the people is engaged in, the person's individual needs and the organisation's recommended approaches.

Appropriate strategies for responding to behaviours of concern include diversional activities, emergency response procedures and referring to appropriate personnel.



Diversional activities

Diversional activities are designed to distract or divert a person from engaging in a particular behaviour. They offer something else to do that may help the individual calm down or become engaged in an activity they enjoy. Many organisations employ diversional therapists who are trained in selecting and providing activities to engage and occupy people, especially in residential, day and respite care services.

Your organisation may recommend a range of diversional activities that you can use in general incidents and with particular people. These will be found in relevant policies and procedures and in the person's own care or support plan.

Below are some examples of diversional activities.

Music

Music can be used to calm people and to help lift their mood.

Activities

It is important to know a person's preferred activities so you can offer these when the person needs distracting and calming. Activities may include playing cards or games, drawing or painting, singing, gardening, looking at their favourite photos or talking with a friend or relative.

Walking

Walking with a staff member or trusted companion may help to remove an individual from a noisy environment and provide an opportunity to talk in a more relaxing environment.

Snack

Many people associate tea in particular with relaxation and a chance to unwind. A favourite snack can give them something to enjoy when they are feeling stressed, upset or confused.

Emergency response procedures

You must always be prepared to implement your organisation's emergency response procedures if a person's behaviour may cause harm to themselves or others.

If you are working in a person's home and an emergency situation arises, use your mobile phone to call your supervisor immediately. In situations where there may be a risk of harm to other people, have them move away from the area and keep yourself safe by not approaching the individual too closely. Continue trying to calm the people and keep yourself safe until help arrives.

Emergency response procedures include:

- ▶ using duress or personal alarms to obtain assistance and alert other staff of the emergency
- ▶ evacuating everyone except essential personnel from a particular area
- ▶ working to calm and support the people involved
- ▶ removing any dangerous implements, such as knives, from an area
- ▶ calling emergency services such as police or ambulance.

Emergency response situations

The situations that may require emergency responses include a person having engaged in self-harming behaviour that has caused them injury or emotional trauma; behaving in a very aggressive manner and threatening to harm others; experiencing an episode of acute mental illness and symptoms such as paranoia and hallucinations, which may cause them to engage in aggressive or dangerous behaviour; and experiencing a drug-induced psychosis.

Your organisation will have specific procedures that you must know and follow in cases of emergency. It is important that you adhere to these procedures as closely as possible and follow all guidelines in maintaining your own safety and that of others, including the people involved in the incident. If you are unsure what your workplace's safety or emergency response procedures are, speak to your supervisor, ask to attend training or read relevant procedure manuals and safety information.

Refer to appropriate personnel

Always keep in mind the need to work in the person's best interests and to seek the specialist help they require to assess and respond to behaviours of concern. You cannot be expected to know everything about how best to address a person's issues and needs, so it is important to seek help from other personnel such as your supervisor and other staff; for example, security officers and professionals who have specialist knowledge, when necessary.

People may engage in behaviours of concern for a number of reasons, including that they have an underlying mental health issue, are ill or in pain. Always consider referring a person to their doctor or other health professional to check for an underlying cause if there is no clear reason why they are behaving in a particular way.

General tips on making appropriate referrals:

- ▶ Keep an up-to-date list or database of services and health professionals that you may be able to use for referrals.
- ▶ Know the hours, eligibility criteria and basic services provided by the services you use on a regular basis.

- ▶ Develop a relationship with people from services you use on a regular basis.
- ▶ Make sure you are always courteous to agency personnel.
- ▶ When making a referral, take into account how easy it is for the people to get to the agency.
- ▶ Follow up on all the referrals you make and be prepared to offer another referral if the first one does not work out.
- ▶ Keep accurate records about all the referrals and follow-up calls you make.
- ▶ Seek permission from the people before making a referral and disclosing any information about them.

Select strategies

The strategies you choose to use in dealing with behaviours of concern may be based on your organisation's procedures and guidelines, the impact the incident is having on others and the nature of the incident. Consider the factors provided below.

Established procedures and guidelines

- ▶ As discussed, it is important to always follow your organisation's procedures and guidelines when dealing with behaviours of concern. This is so you meet the legal and ethical requirements of your work role and maintain your duty of care to the people and anyone else present.

Potential effects on others

- ▶ When deciding what strategies you will use to respond to behaviours of concern, always consider the impact of the behaviour on others. For example, if the people starts being physically or verbally aggressive while other people are present, you must take action to protect the safety and wellbeing of these people. This usually involves asking them to leave the area or taking the individual to a quiet area.

The nature of the incident

The type of behaviour and nature of the incident will influence the strategies you use. For example, you will respond differently to a person with dementia who is showing signs of confusion or being manipulative, than to someone who is being verbally and physically aggressive.

You need to know when to use emergency response procedures to protect an individual or other people from harm and when you need to simply spend time with someone to reassure and settle them. It is important to use the appropriate strategies for the type of behaviour and nature of the incident so that you:

- ▶ minimise or manage the behaviour as quickly as possible and do not waste time using strategies that are not effective
- ▶ ensure the safety of yourself and others
- ▶ obtain specialist assistance where this is required; for example, help from medical and security staff.

Provide a response that is in the person's best interests and protects their privacy and dignity.

Common strategies

Here are some common strategies that you can use to deal with the common behaviours of concern mentioned earlier.

Aggression

When a person is behaving in an aggressive manner, you need to calm the situation as soon as possible.

You should:

- ▶ prioritise the safety of yourself, the people and others
- ▶ speak in a controlled and reassuring tone and avoid gestures that might intimidate or alarm the individual
- ▶ try to divert the aggressive behaviour or distract the people in whatever way seems appropriate at the time; for example, by asking what you can do for them or showing a willingness to listen
- ▶ avoid becoming involved in an argument and do not be critical or show anger
- ▶ clear the area of other people or take the individual to a quiet space if possible
- ▶ inform the people what you intend to do
- ▶ use diversional activities to help calm the person; for example, when they are in the quiet space, offer them a cup of tea or ask if they would like to listen to some favourite music or speak to a relative or friend.

If the people is threatening to harm you or anyone else and their aggression is escalating, follow your organisation's emergency response procedures. This may involve calling the police or ambulance or, if the people has a diagnosed mental illness, an acute care mental health team who can take the people to a hospital emergency department for assessment and treatment.

Confusion or other cognitive impairment

People who are confused or have cognitive impairments may react in many different ways. They may become noisy or violent or appear very withdrawn and bewildered.

You should:

- ▶ calm and comfort the person
- ▶ remind them where they are and take them to a room or space where they feel comfortable
- ▶ provide diversional activities such as a snack time and talk about things they know and are familiar with
- ▶ put an arm on their shoulder if this is appropriate for them
- ▶ remind them that they are safe and reassure them you are there to help them
- ▶ stay with them until they feel secure and safe
- ▶ seek assistance from your supervisor or medical staff if necessary.

Intoxication

An intoxicated person may harm themselves or others. Their behaviour can also be very annoying or frightening for people nearby. You need to handle these situations carefully because an intoxicated person's behaviour can be very unpredictable.

You should:

- ▶ approach them slowly and try to maintain eye contact
- ▶ observe the situation and see whether you need someone else's assistance
- ▶ try to get the individual to a quiet space, but avoid touching them or getting too close
- ▶ speak calmly and let them know what you want them to do
- ▶ use an alarm if the situation looks as if it is getting out of control or the person becomes aggressive.

Intrusive behaviour

A person who is intrusive can cause other people offence. You need to handle the situation sensitively because they may not be aware that they are being intrusive and acting in an inappropriate way. Intrusive behaviour includes going through other people's things or being too interested in their personal lives.

You should:

- ▶ gently steer the people away from the situation where they are engaging in intrusive behaviour
- ▶ change the topic of conversation if the people asks someone else too many personal questions or gossips about others
- ▶ provide diversional activities so the people will not be bored
- ▶ explain why their behaviour causes upset and offence.

Manipulation

Manipulative behaviour is not as noticeable as some other behaviours of concern. You may need to observe this over a period of time. Once you are aware that someone is engaging in manipulative behaviour, monitor what is happening and intervene if necessary to prevent others being manipulated.

You should:

- ▶ learn to recognise an individual's preferred type of manipulative behaviour; for example, getting others to do things for them or spreading false information
- ▶ observe the impact the behaviour has on others
- ▶ be firm but gentle when refusing requests or when intervening and explaining why their behaviour is inappropriate and hurtful to others.

Noisiness

Noisy behaviour can be annoying to other people. Loud or constant noises, crying, sobbing and yelling are all sounds that can disrupt other people.

You should:

- ▶ take the noisy person away from other people
- ▶ assess them for any pain and seek appropriate medical assistance if necessary
- ▶ use diversional tactics to attempt to quieten them; for example, give them a magazine, puzzle or game they enjoy
- ▶ create a calming environment for them by dimming lights, and playing calming background music
- ▶ sit with them and talk quietly about things that interest them.

Self-destructive behaviour

Anyone who engages in self-harm or other self-destructive behaviour must be closely monitored. If a person tries to self-harm, you should:

- ▶ be calm, supportive and reassuring
- ▶ respect the person's privacy and dignity by removing them from a situation where there may be onlookers
- ▶ minimise opportunities for self-harm by removing any items that can be used to cause harm such as knives, ropes, medications or other drugs
- ▶ do not leave the individual alone until the crisis is over
- ▶ activate the person's natural support network; for example, friends and family
- ▶ seek medical or emergency help if necessary.

Verbal offensiveness

Verbal offensiveness can be part of aggression or used on its own. People may use offensive language for a number of reasons including feeling threatened, being in pain or trying to upset or manipulate others.

Offensive and abusive language can cause emotional distress, hurt and fear in others and should not be tolerated.

You should:

- ▶ remain calm and avoid showing anger or that you are upset
- ▶ speak slowly, clearly and firmly
- ▶ request others leave the area or take the individual to a quiet area
- ▶ calm the people by offering diversional activities or trying to engage them in quiet conversation
- ▶ seek assistance if the behaviour escalates.

Wandering

Wandering can be dangerous, especially if the people wanders off in the evening. You need to act as soon as you see them start to wander and then apply strategies to minimise the wandering.

You should:

- ▶ search for the people in all the places they might be
- ▶ notify your supervisor, other staff, security, the police and family members if it is clear the people has disappeared
- ▶ if you find the people about to wander, speak calmly to them and gently guide them back to where they should be
- ▶ offer diversional activities they enjoy
- ▶ monitor them closely
- ▶ ensure the people has regular health checks for their health.

Example

Select appropriate strategies to suit particular instances of behaviours of concern

The following is a summary of the general strategies a worker may use to respond to instances of behaviours of concern:

- ▶ Recognise the behaviour.
- ▶ Take action to minimise or stop the behaviour.
- ▶ Clear the area of onlookers or, if possible, take the people to a quiet area.
- ▶ Calm the situation down by speaking calmly, offering emotional support and, if appropriate, offering diversional activities.
- ▶ Use a duress or personal alarm to obtain assistance if necessary.
- ▶ Notify your supervisor if the situation escalates.
- ▶ Continue attempts to defuse the situation and protect the safety of all concerned.
- ▶ Ring the police if the situation cannot be reasonably controlled by staff.
- ▶ Record what has taken place according to workplace guidelines.
- ▶ Participate in a staff debriefing to talk about what happened and defuse any residual stress.
- ▶ Participate in an incident review.



Practice task 9

1. What are diversional activities? Provide two examples of diversional activities.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. What are two examples of emergency response procedures?

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. What are two general pointers for making referrals?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. List some common strategies that you can use to deal with confusion or other cognitive impairment behaviours.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

5. List some common strategies that you can use to deal with manipulative behaviour.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Click to complete Practice task 9

Summary

1. When applying responses to behaviours of concern, follow your organisation's policies and procedures. This ensures that everyone in the workplace provides a consistent response, follows the correct procedures and maintains the safety of everyone who may be present or involved.
2. In many cases, you will be able to manage common behaviours of concern on your own. At other times, especially if the behaviour may risk injury or harm to people or appears to be escalating, you should seek assistance immediately.
3. You will find specific procedures for responding to behaviours of concern in people care or support plans, or in written organisational guidelines. These will outline the steps you should follow to manage a particular behaviour.
4. You may be required to carry personal alarms or mobile phones at all times to obtain help when you require it. It is very important that you follow organisational procedures for maintaining this equipment; for example, keeping your phone charged and checking that batteries in your personal alarm are working.
5. To manage incidents involving behaviours of concern effectively, try to deal with them as promptly and purposefully as possible. This will help prevent the behaviour from escalating and reduce the possibility of harm or stress to the individual and others.
6. The way you communicate with people engaging in behaviours of concern can influence the outcome of the incident. It is important that you communicate in a calm and controlled way that is reassuring to the individual and anyone else who is present.
7. To respond effectively to behaviours of concern, you need to use appropriate strategies. The strategy you use will depend on the type of behaviour the person is engaged in, the person's individual needs and the organisation's recommended approaches.
8. Appropriate strategies may include diversional activities, emergency response procedures or referral to appropriate personnel, depending on the nature of the incident.

Learning checkpoint 2

Apply response

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in applying responses to behaviours of concern.

Part A

1. When is it appropriate to manage a situation on your own and when should you seek assistance?

.....

.....

2. Give two ways to seek assistance when there is a behaviour of concern that you cannot handle yourself.

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. What are some ways to make sure you are firm and diplomatic in your communication with clients?

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. What are two examples of nonverbal communication from a client that might indicate a positive or negative response to your communication to them?

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 5. What are some examples of emergency responses with people who display behaviours of concern?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Part B

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

Case study

Emily is a new worker at an aged care residential facility. She is being shown around by another worker, Lucy, who has been at the service for some time. They are alerted to an incident of inappropriate behaviour where an older male resident with dementia has exposed himself to some of the other residents in a common room. As they approach the man, Lucy tells him loudly to stop being a dirty old man, pull his pants up and get back to his room. She then spends some time laughing and joking about the incident with some of the other residents.

Emily is confused because she has just read all of the service’s policies and procedures and Lucy’s way of dealing with the incident is not what the guidelines suggest. When she asks Lucy about this, Lucy says that there is no use following policies and procedures with a repeat offender who has dementia and does not really understand what is going on anyway.

- 1. What could be Emily’s response to Lucy’s opinion that policies and procedures don’t matter?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. What community services principles are not being followed in this case study?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



Topic 3

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 3A Report incidents according to organisational policies and procedures**
- 3B Review incidents with appropriate staff and offer suggestions appropriate to your area of responsibility**
- 3C Access and participate in available debriefing mechanisms and associated support and/or development activities**
- 3D Seek advice and assistance from legitimate sources as and when appropriate**

Report and review incidents

Your organisation will have specific requirements for reporting incidents involving behaviours of concern. These will include writing relevant information in the person's case or progress notes and filling in incident forms. It is important that you follow your organisation's policies and procedures and use the correct protocols and forms for making reports.

Workplaces will have specific procedures in place to follow after an incident occurs. These include offering a debriefing session to all staff involved in the incident and reviewing what happened to determine whether improvements can be made in the way staff responded to the incident. Staff should be encouraged to seek advice and assistance from people who can help them understand their people better and help them respond to behaviours of concern more appropriately.

3A Report incidents according to organisation policies and procedures

All person behaviours of concern should be carefully documented following organisational policies and procedures. If the behaviour causes an incident, it should be reported to a supervisor immediately and the appropriate forms filled in.

A behaviour of concern is considered to become an incident when the behaviour results in an injury to the person or other people, or when property is damaged. A near miss is also treated as an incident. A near miss is when the behaviour could have caused injury or damage, but has not done so; for example, if a person throws a vase at someone, but misses their target.



Incidents should be reported to a supervisor face-to-face or by telephone as soon as they occur. Verbal reporting is important so the supervisor is immediately aware of what has happened. It is also important to clearly document what occurred. This ensures that all staff are aware of the behaviours associated with the incident and what triggers may have caused the individual to react or behave the way they did.

Reports are important

All community services organisations are required by law to keep detailed and accurate records about their people and the services they provide to people. Written records help demonstrate that services are provided in accordance with legal requirements and industry standards, show that person's needs are being addressed according to safety and duty-of-care principles and organisation guidelines. Written records can be used in a court of law if there is a negligence claim or other legal issue. They can be used to monitor person progress and make changes to person support or care plans as necessary and provide information about incidents and how they are dealt with.

Consequences of poor or incomplete documentation include:

- ▶ inadequate responses to, and management of, people's behaviours
- ▶ increased risk for staff who are not aware of a change in behaviour that may be a safety risk for themselves or others
- ▶ increased likelihood that a person's behaviour may worsen and cause a serious incident
- ▶ failing to meet safety and duty-of-care obligations to people.

Record incidents

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.

The records may be read by supervisors, healthcare professionals and anyone else who is involved in a person's care. The type of form you use and information required may differ between organisations. Your supervisor is the best person to explain the policies and procedures you have to follow.

Below is the information that is commonly recorded when reporting incidents.

Information required when reporting incidents

- ▶ The type of behaviour that has caused concern
- ▶ Known triggers (if observed)
- ▶ Who was involved
- ▶ The place the behaviour occurred
- ▶ The day and time the behaviour occurred
- ▶ How long the behaviour continued for
- ▶ Strategies used to stop or minimise the behaviour
- ▶ The person's response to the intervention
- ▶ The worker's name and signature

Accurate reports

It is important that you accurately document what has taken place and what actions you have taken to manage an incident. Do not try to guess what has happened or what caused a particular behaviour; your job is to record what you saw, what you heard and what you did. It is the role of your supervisor and other healthcare professionals to identify what may be causing the person's behaviour and how best to respond to it.

Here are some common guidelines for how you should write accurate reports.

Be factual

Keep to the facts.

Don't make guesses or report what you think might have happened.

Be accurate

Document what you have observed and important points of what others have told you.

When recording what a person has said, try to quote them directly and use quotation marks.

Be clear

Provide information that is clear and easy for others to understand.

Record what you saw in the order that it happened.

Be concise

Include all relevant information.

Do not provide information that is not needed.

Only include the most important details.

Make sure you do not leave out important information.

Be timely

Document information as soon as possible after a shift or incident to ensure:

- ▶ you do not forget important details
- ▶ your colleagues are kept up-to-date with any changes in person, behaviours or needs.

Prioritise your workload so you can write reports as soon as possible after working with a person or following an incident.

Write legibly

Write neatly using black or blue ink, not pencil.

Use correct grammar and punctuation.

Correct errors by drawing a line through the error and initialling it; do not use liquid paper.

Date and sign the record

Always include the date, time and your signature.

Check what you have written

Always check what you have written to ensure you have not made any mistakes or left anything out.

Report serious incidents both verbally and in writing

Verbally report an incident involving a behaviour of concern to your supervisor as well as writing a report.

This ensures your supervisor is aware of the incident immediately and can take any necessary follow-up action.

Types of reports

Your workplace policies and procedures manual will outline what records you are required to keep, the documents or forms you should use and how you are to report an incident.

Below are the types of records that you may be required to keep.

Behaviour assessment or observation charts

Sometimes you will need to complete a behaviour assessment chart that allows you to monitor a person’s behaviour over a period of time. These charts help define:

- ▶ what behaviour the person is engaging in over a specific period of time
- ▶ how many times they engage in the behaviour
- ▶ if there are any clear triggers
- ▶ what time the behaviour is most likely to occur
- ▶ what strategies or responses seem to work best.

A person’s care or support plan may be changed on the basis of what is recorded in the behaviour observation chart.

Progress or care notes

- ▶ Progress notes are used by workers to record day-to-day observations and care needs of the person. They may record information about the person’s general wellbeing, any changes in their behaviour or any emerging issues or needs that have been observed.

Incident reports

- ▶ Incident reports are formal documents that are completed when behaviour has resulted in an injury to a person, or a near miss. A near miss is an incident that could have resulted in an injury. WHS laws require that incident reports be completed after an incident occurs.

Example

Report incidents according to organisational policies and procedures

Care note

Date: 13 January 2016

Person receiving care: Cecelia Jackson

Time: 10:30 am

Date of birth: 17 December 1945

Comments:

Visited Mrs Jackson this morning to assist her with personal care and shopping. She appeared to be in a very low mood and did not spend as much time and care with her personal grooming and dress as she usually does. She said she did not feel like shopping today. This is unusual as she usually looks forward to it and especially to having a coffee afterwards.

She mentioned that she didn’t sleep well the night before and that she had been feeling very ‘depressed’ over the last week. She said that she ‘can’t see the point of continuing to live’ and that she often thinks about ‘ending it all’. We discussed my concern about her current state of mind and wellbeing and she mentioned that today is the anniversary of her only son’s death in a car accident.

continued ...

Example

... continued

I asked her if she is thinking about harming herself in any way and she avoided answering the question. I informed her that I did not feel comfortable leaving her alone when she is feeling like this and called my supervisor (Jake Swift) to inform him of my concerns. Jake suggested that I stay with Mrs Jackson until we could locate a family member or friend to come and provide some support for her. I was able to speak to her sister, Mrs Emily Jenkins, who lives nearby and who said she would come straight away. I suggested that Mrs Jackson visit her doctor as soon as possible. Mrs Jenkins said she would arrange this and let me know the outcome. Mrs Jenkins said her sister often still felt very sad at this time, but usually after a few weeks she starts to feel better again.

Practice task 10

1. When does a behaviour of concern become an incident?

.....

.....

.....

2. Why are written records important in the community services sector?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. Provide three examples of information commonly recorded.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. Why is it best practice to write what you saw and not guess what happened or why it occurred?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

5. Explain the purpose of care notes or progress notes.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Click to complete Practice task 10

3B Review incidents with appropriate staff and offer suggestions appropriate to your area of responsibility

It is important that all serious incidents are reviewed as soon as possible after they have occurred. Reviewing an incident related to behaviours of concern allows staff to discuss what happened and plan how to manage any future incidents.

A review of behaviours of concern should include a discussion of what happened, how the situation developed and whether the strategies used to stop the behaviour were effective or require improvement.

Reviews are essential so that the service can look at ways to prevent the incident from recurring and manage the behaviour better in the future. A review may identify safety issues that need to be improved. Reviews also give everyone an opportunity to provide feedback about the incident and evaluate the impact on staff and people receiving care. A serious incident or near miss can make staff and others feel anxious about their safety.



All staff involved in the review should read the reports about the incident so they can discuss what happened and why it happened.

Gather information from others

There are a number of people who can provide information or advice to assist a review of an incident or near miss. It is important to gather information from a range of people to ensure an objective assessment of the situation is carried out and everyone who can provide relevant input is consulted.

Be prepared to describe your part in the incident and what you did to manage the behaviour and respond to the situation. It is important to provide clear information and accurately answer any questions you are asked.

Other people who may be able to provide helpful information for a review include:

- ▶ the person and/or other people involved in the incident
- ▶ witnesses who observed the incident
- ▶ other workers involved in the care or support of the individual
- ▶ health and safety representatives who can assist with reviewing safety issues
- ▶ health professionals and specialist staff who can provide additional insight into the behaviour
- ▶ family members can provide information about why the incident may have occurred.

Understand the situation

A review of an incident should seek to understand why it occurred and examine a number of different aspects of the incident.

Aspects of the incident that need to be examined are explained below.

The behaviour associated with the incident

The review should start with a clear and accurate description of the behaviour the person displayed, including a description of the incident, where and when it took place and how long it lasted. This information should have been clearly documented as required by organisational reporting procedures.

Strategies used to minimise or stop the behaviour

How workers responded to the behaviour is an important element of the review. The review should consider whether the correct procedures were implemented and whether these were effective in stopping or minimising the behaviour.

The impact of the incident on the individual and others

Behaviour that has resulted in an injury or high levels of emotional stress can be traumatic for staff and anyone else who has witnessed the incident. The event may result in workers and others being fearful for their own safety. It can result in stress-related disorders and anxiety attacks, or a range of physical symptoms such as headaches, chest pain, trembling, breathlessness, dizziness and fatigue.

The review of a serious incident should describe these impacts on staff and witnesses as well as any effects on the person who has engaged in the behaviour. It is important to gather feedback from everyone involved and ensure that each person has an opportunity to talk through what has happened and receive the support they need to deal with the impact.

Workers affected by traumatic events should be given the opportunity to participate in debriefing sessions to help them understand what has happened and learn from the experience.

An examination of why the incident occurred

All those involved in the incident should have the opportunity to discuss possible causes and what they think can be done to manage similar situations in the future. Your participation will depend on your level of authority and your degree of involvement with the incident. You and other workers may be asked to suggest possible triggers for the behaviour and what strategies work best in minimising the behaviour.

It is important to consider why the incident occurred and why the person engaged in the behaviour; for example:

- ▶ What happened just before the behaviour?
- ▶ Were there any known triggers involved?
- ▶ Did a worker contribute to the behaviour by doing something or neglecting to do something?
- ▶ What time of day did the incident occur?
- ▶ Could fatigue be a contributing factor?
- ▶ Was there too much noise or stimulation?
- ▶ Was the person in pain?
- ▶ Did a personal event happen recently, such as the death of a friend or relative?

Improvements that can be made when managing similar incidents

It is important that the review considers what was done well in managing the incident and what could be improved. Staff should think of reviews as a way of continually improving their responses and skills in managing incidents.

Possible improvements that may help manage or prevent the occurrence of incidents include:

- ▶ monitoring people's behaviour more closely
- ▶ focusing more on a person's individual needs
- ▶ providing more staff training
- ▶ having extra staff on at certain times of day
- ▶ pairing experienced workers with those who are newer to the job
- ▶ ensuring people have access to a range of activities they find enjoyable and engaging
- ▶ seeking advice and assistance from health professionals, such as doctors and behaviour management specialists, about how best to respond to and prevent similar incidents.

It is important to carefully follow any instructions you are given by your supervisor or health professionals as a result of a review and to clarify anything you are unsure about.

Example

Review incidents and suggested improvements

Below are some key questions to ask when reviewing incidents.

Description of the behaviour

- ▶ What was the behaviour that resulted in a serious incident?
- ▶ How was the behaviour more concerning than usual?
- ▶ When did it take place?
- ▶ How long did it last?
- ▶ Who else was involved in the care of the person at the time of the incident?

Strategies used to minimise or stop the behaviour

- ▶ What did workers do to stop or minimise the behaviour?
- ▶ Who else assisted in minimising the incident?
- ▶ How did the person react to the intervention?
- ▶ What was the impact of the behaviour on the person and on others?
- ▶ What effect did the incident have on those involved?
- ▶ How was the incident handled so that the effect on others was reduced?

Example

Reasons why the incident occurred

- ▶ Was there a trigger?
- ▶ What happened just before the behaviour?
- ▶ Did a worker or any care activities contribute to the incident?
- ▶ Was there anything in the environment that could have caused the behaviour; for example, loud noises, glare or too little activity?
- ▶ Were there any difficulties the worker had in getting support quickly?
- ▶ What did the person do after the incident?

Improvements that could be made to prevent similar incidents

- ▶ What changes might need to be made to the person’s care or support plan?
- ▶ What changes might need to be made to workers’ roles or tasks?
- ▶ Were the workers’ responses calm and supportive?
- ▶ Did the workers’ responses have a positive or negative effect?
- ▶ Did the workers feel experienced enough to manage the incident?
- ▶ What might they do differently next time?
- ▶ Who can provide specialist advice and information in managing the situation?

Practice task 11

1. Why is it important to gather information from a variety of sources?

.....

.....

2. Provide two examples of other people who could provide helpful information.

.....

.....

.....

3. What are the particular aspects of the incident that need to be examined?

.....

.....

.....

Click to complete Practice task 11

3C Access and participate in available debriefing mechanisms and associated support and/or development activities

Organisations must have procedures in place for workers to debrief after an incident where they or others may have experienced harm or stress. Debriefing provides an opportunity for workers to discuss the events of an incident and to receive support in overcoming any emotional or physical trauma they have experienced.

Community services work, especially when working with people who exhibit behaviours of concern, may involve incidents and situations that are stressful and frightening. For example, a person may attempt self-harm, be involved in an accident or be injured by another person, and a worker may be threatened or injured in the course of their work. Incidents like these can cause workers and others to worry about the safety of the people in their care as well as their own safety.

It is important that staff have an opportunity to debrief after these kinds of incidents and that the debriefing session occurs as soon as possible after the incident so workers can quickly recover and resume their duties.

The impact of serious incidents

Some people who have seen or taken part in a serious incident may suffer from critical incident stress or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These conditions are an after-effect of being involved in a traumatic and emotionally painful experience, sometimes where someone may have been injured or killed. Effects can be long-lasting and can lead to major physical and emotional changes in those involved.

Here are typical effects of a critical incident or post-traumatic stress.

Physical effects

- ▶ Feeling sick, loose bowels, increased heart rate, chest pain, breathlessness, dizziness, fatigue, cramps, headaches, chills, sweating or difficulty sleeping

Emotional effects

- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Guilt
- ▶ Fear
- ▶ Panic
- ▶ Disturbed thought
- ▶ Grief
- ▶ Denial or depression

Cognitive effects

- ▶ Memory changes
- ▶ Disorientation
- ▶ Sleep disturbances
- ▶ Hyper-alertness
- ▶ Nightmares or deficits in concentration
- ▶ Problem-solving and judgment

Behavioural effects

- ▶ Withdrawal
- ▶ Avoidance
- ▶ Blaming
- ▶ Restlessness
- ▶ Outbursts
- ▶ Increased consumption of alcohol
- ▶ Alterations in diet

Spiritual effects

- ▶ Questioning of personal faith
- ▶ Anger at God
- ▶ Denial of spiritual needs
- ▶ Negative thought processes focusing on loss rather than positive aspects

The debriefing process

A debriefing session aims to reduce the possibility of workers experiencing severe stress reactions after an incident. They enable the person conducting the session to identify whether workers may be susceptible to ongoing stress reactions and require further professional assistance.

Depending on the severity of the incident, debriefing may be carried out by a supervisor or another qualified staff member.

The debriefing process aims to assist workers to overcome the emotional stress of an incident by giving them an opportunity to talk and express their feelings about what happened, providing appropriate support and feedback, identifying any individual stress reactions as a result of the incident, referring workers who require it to health professionals for extra care, providing information about how to deal with stress reactions and helping protect workers' rights to work in a safe environment.

A typical group debriefing session is conducted in a structured format that allows the participants to share their thoughts and feelings about the incident.

A typical structured group debriefing session addresses:

- ▶ what happened before, during and after the incident
- ▶ what may have caused the incident

- ▶ the impact of the incident on everyone involved
- ▶ what workers can do themselves to reduce the impact of stress
- ▶ when workers might need to seek professional assistance such as seeing a doctor or counsellor to help them deal with trauma or stress
- ▶ what additional support or training may help workers involved in incidents.

Debriefing support

Some workers will require additional support, including professional help, to deal with the impact of a critical incident.

Below are some options for seeking additional support.

Workplace 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 moving on from a serious incident or who is angry about the way an incident was handled. 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 or incidents in their life.

Psychology services

- ▶ 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 the person who is affected. This service needs a 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.

Self-care after an incident

Workers involved in a serious incident need to take extra care to look after their own mental and physical health after the event to avoid ongoing stress-related health problems and burnout.

This may involve taking time out after a stressful period at work, eating well, exercising and getting enough sleep, attending peer or professional support opportunities, talking to their supervisor about any problems they are having and keeping interested in their own life and social activities.



Professional development and training

It is important that workers have the opportunity to participate in regular training sessions to help them respond to serious incidents and behaviours of concern.

Regular training helps workers follow policies and procedures, feel more confident handling incidents, minimise potential injury or harm and understand stress reactions associated with incidents and how to manage these.

Example

Access and participate in available debriefing mechanisms and associated support and/or development activities

Keira is a family support worker who works primarily in the community. One of the people receiving care, Danielle, who has two school-age children, has been struggling with depression. Danielle is receiving treatment and care from her GP, but this does not seem to be working. She often tells Keira that she can't see the point of living and that her children would be better off being adopted by a family who could look after them better than she can. Keira always tries to reassure her that her children love and need her and that she is very important to them.



One day Keira visits Danielle and finds her unconscious. She has slit her wrists. Keira calls for an ambulance immediately and Danielle is taken to hospital. Danielle survives the incident, but Keira is having difficulty coping. She feels that she has somehow let Danielle down and keeps getting flashbacks of seeing Danielle on the floor unconscious with blood everywhere. Whenever she thinks of this, she feels stressed and agitated, her heart begins to race and she feels dizzy and lightheaded.

After the incident, Keira participates in a debriefing session with her supervisor. The supervisor encourages Keira to talk about how she is feeling and about events surrounding the incident. The supervisor reassures Keira that Danielle's actions had nothing to do with her and that she could not have prevented what happened. She reminds Keira that Danielle was receiving appropriate medical treatment. Keira says she knows all this on one level, but still feels very guilty and anxious. Her supervisor suggests that she see may also benefit from attending counselling or seeing a psychologist who specialises in critical incident stress.



v1797

Practice task 12

1. Why is debriefing important in the community services sector?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. What are the aims of the debriefing process?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. What are examples of typical behavioural effects of a critical incident or post-traumatic stress?

.....

.....

.....

4. What can workplace support networks provide in terms of support to workers?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Click to complete Practice task 12

3D Seek advice and assistance from legitimate sources as and when appropriate

Workers should be encouraged to seek advice and assistance in managing behaviours of concern. This help may come from people within the organisation or health and other professionals outside the service.

Legitimate sources are those people who have the authority and expertise to provide advice or assistance to help you deal with a particular issue or provide support in your work with a particular person. They may be directly involved with one of the people or be in a position to offer general information and guidance.

You may find legitimate sources of advice and assistance in your own organisation and externally.

You may need to seek advice and assistance from legitimate sources to:

- ▶ help you respond to a particular situation or issue concerning a person
- ▶ obtain specialised information and advice
- ▶ clarify instructions relating to your duties or a person's care or support plan
- ▶ report unusual behaviour or changes in person behaviour and seek assistance in responding in an appropriate manner
- ▶ gather information from people who know the person best, such as family members
- ▶ determine whether a person needs to be referred to a particular health professional.

Internal sources

There are likely to be a number of people within your own organisation who you can go to for advice and support. You need to know how they can help you and how to access their help.

Below are examples of people you can go to for advice and support.

Supervisors

Your supervisor is usually the first person you should turn to if you are having difficulties in your work, such as working with people who engage in behaviours of concern or responding to incidents.

Other workers

Other workers in your team and organisation can be valuable sources of advice and support. They are likely to have experienced similar problems and difficulties, so will be able to give you suggestions and encouragement.

Health and safety officers

Health and safety officers provide advice on safety issues that staff have concerns about. For example, you may need to talk to them about a piece of equipment that is damaged, a work practice you believe is unsafe or a bullying and harassment issue.

Diversional therapists

Diversional therapists are often employed by residential care facilities. They offer activities that are specifically designed to meet the needs of residents and can suggest activities that may help in managing or diverting behaviours of concern.

External sources

External sources of advice and assistance are usually healthcare or behaviour management specialists who have a relationship with the people or your organisation. Always talk to your supervisor first when you need additional advice, as you may not have the authority to deal directly with some healthcare professionals.

Your supervisor will let you know who you need to discuss a person's behaviour with or who you can seek advice from to improve your skills in managing behaviour. Sometimes you may need to talk to the person's family to obtain additional information about the person. Make sure that in all your interactions with family members you are respectful of their feelings and personal knowledge of a person.

Here are some people who can offer advice or assistance when appropriate.

Family members

A person's family can provide a great deal of information about a person, including the range of behaviours they exhibit, triggers of these behaviours and the most effective ways to deal with them. Family members can also provide information about a person's likes and dislikes and what activities they enjoy.

Doctors

Doctors can provide information on general health and medications, and assist with a range of health concerns such as sleep disturbances and agitated behaviours. They also provide referrals to other services.

Psychiatrists

Psychiatrists or other specialists such as those who specialise in treating dementia. Psychiatrists are medical specialists who specialise in mental health and psychiatric conditions. They can provide advice and information about mental health conditions and psychiatric medications.

Behaviour specialists

Behaviour management specialists are usually psychologists who can provide advice about managing behaviours of concern. Some organisations may employ behaviour management specialists to develop strategies for managing behaviours of concern.

Living skills consultants

Living skills consultants can provide information and advice about skill development for people with disabilities who want to live independently.

Dietitians

Dietitians can provide advice about meal planning and the nutritional needs of people.

Physiotherapists

Physiotherapists provide functional assessments and advice and help develop strategies to assist with mobility, physical skills, strength and motor skills.

Occupational therapists

Occupational therapists provide functional assessments, assist with equipment and aids and provide advice about lifestyle aids.

Financial counsellors

Financial counsellors provide advice and information about budgeting and sources of income for people who have financial difficulties. They may assist with developing budgets and reducing debt.

Specialised help

You may need to refer people to other appropriate services or health professionals when they require ongoing specialised help.

You may continue to work with the person while they are under the care of another service provider or health professional. If the referral source provides instructions related to the care of the person, make sure you follow these carefully. Clarify instructions you have any difficulty understanding or discuss them with your supervisor. Ask questions and make sure you know what is expected of you. If the instructions have been given verbally, you may need to take notes and then record these in the person's file so all workers have access to them.

Failing to understand and follow instructions correctly may result in the person not receiving appropriate care.



Inappropriate sources

Do not seek advice or assistance from sources that do not have the authority to give it. For example, avoid discussing people with your family and friends outside of work. They are not in a position to give you relevant advice and you risk breaching person confidentiality. Do not accept advice or help from co-workers who also do not have the experience or authority to give it.

Similarly, make sure that you do not pass on advice to people if you are not qualified to do so. For example, you may have read about a topic on the internet or have been

given advice personally. If you think that a person is showing symptoms of a medical nature, refer them to their doctor or medical staff rather than checking online or telling them what you think. If you have any doubt about who has the appropriate expertise and knowledge to provide the help you need, ask your supervisor first.

Example

Seek advice and assistance from legitimate sources as and when appropriate



Misbah provides direct care services to people with disabilities in the community. One of the people receiving care, Jai, eats a lot of junk food. He likes high energy drinks, burgers and anything sweet including lollies, cake and ice-cream. Misbah notices that when Jai eats a lot of sweet things and drinks high energy, sugary soft drinks, his behaviour gets much worse. He becomes irritable and angry, and can be aggressive.

Misbah talks to Jai’s family about this and they confirm that they have tried to stop Jai indulging in so many sweet foods because it seems to have a bad effect on him and causes dental problems. Misbah discusses this issue with her supervisor, who suggests she speak to a dietitian at the community health centre to confirm if Jai’s diet may adversely impact his behaviour. The dietitian says that there are number of things in Jai’s diet that may negatively impact his behaviour. Misbah then suggests to Jai and his family that he may benefit from a referral to the dietitian. They all agree and the dietitian develops a dietary plan for Jai, and his family and Misbah help him to implement it.

Practice task 13

1. What would be described as a legitimate source for seeking advice and assistance?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. What does a diversional therapist do?

.....

.....

.....

3. What does a behavioural therapist do?

.....

.....

.....

4. Describe an inappropriate source for advice and assistance.

.....

.....

.....

.....

Click to complete Practice task 13

Summary

1. All person behaviours of concern should be carefully documented following organisational policies and procedures.
2. If the behaviour causes an incident, it should be reported to a supervisor immediately and the appropriate forms filled in.
3. A behaviour may cause an incident when the behaviour results in an injury to the person or another person, or when property is damaged.
4. It is important that all serious incidents are reviewed as soon as possible after they have occurred.
5. Reviewing an incident related to behaviours of concern allows staff to discuss what happened and plan how to manage any future incidents.
6. Reviews should seek to gather information from a range of people to ensure an objective assessment of the situation can be carried out.
7. Organisations must have procedures in place for workers to debrief after a serious incident.
8. Debriefing provides an opportunity for staff to discuss an incident and receive support in overcoming any emotional or physical trauma they have experienced.
9. Workers sometimes need to seek advice and assistance in managing behaviours of concern. This help may come from people within the organisation or health (and other) professionals outside the service.

Learning checkpoint 3

Report and review incidents

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in reporting and reviewing incidents.

1. List the methods and timing of reporting incidents.

.....

.....

2. What types of reports are typically kept on incidents?

.....

3. List some of the other people who can provide helpful information for reviewing an incident.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. What are some questions that may arise from a review to continually improve service to people?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

5. What is critical incident stress or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

6. What are some professional options for additional debriefing support?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

7. Provide some examples of internal workplace sources of advice and support.

.....

.....

8. What are examples of inappropriate sources of advice and support?

.....

.....

