



## Responding to Aggressive Behaviour and Physical Threats Procedure

**Major changes to this document:**  
Added Section 1 – COVID-19 provisions

### 1. COVID-19 provisions

Due to COVID-19 and government physical distancing requirements, it is acknowledged all offices will have less staff working from them.

In the event of an escalation, the most senior staff member in the building needs to be notified of the event and may attend or allocate a trained Team Leader/Client Services staff member to respond.

#### Brisbane Office

Dibley St will ensure the reception team have one staff member working at the reception desk and one staff member working from the small meeting room at all times.

The upstairs office at Dibley St must be locked at all times, during COVID-19 and must have a minimum of 2 people working in the space. If there are not 2 staff working from the office, the staff member must select a desk in the downstairs office.

#### Toowoomba Office

Toowoomba will ensure that one staff member is at reception at all times and there will always be other staff members in the office.

#### Rockhampton Office

Rockhampton will ensure that one staff member is at reception at all times and that another staff member is in the office environment.

#### Townsville & Outreach Offices

If staff are working in outreach sites they will follow the host service procedures. Staff will not work alone in an unlocked building.

### 2. What is the purpose of this procedure?

We are committed to meeting our obligations to provide a safe and healthy workplace for our staff and continually strive to ensure that any risks to the health, safety and well-being of staff are identified and managed appropriately.

However, we also recognise that the nature of any client or customer work environment may, on occasion, lead to our staff being exposed to aggressive behaviours and/or other physical threats.

The purpose of this procedure is to provide the basis of initial training for all staff and volunteers in how to respond to inappropriate and/or aggressive behaviour and/or physical threats in the workplace.

### **3. When does this procedure begin?**

This procedure begins at any time that staff and/or volunteers consider that their health, safety or well-being is at risk due to inappropriate and/or aggressive behaviour or any other type of physical threat occurring at our offices.

### **4. Who is responsible for ensuring that this procedure is followed and reviewed?**

All staff and volunteers are responsible for ensuring that this procedure is followed in the event of a physical threat and/or aggressive behaviour.

The Senior Manager, People is responsible for ensuring that the procedure is reviewed, in collaboration with the Workplace Health and Safety officer (s) and for holding at least one drill per year.

### **5. What are the tasks and activities?**

#### **4.1 Assess the threat**

In the event of a physical threat and/or aggressive behaviour occurring at our offices, staff should assess the degree of threat. If appropriate, staff should attempt to defuse the situation. If staff members are feeling threatened they should activate the duress alarm if practicable (Dibley St and Toowoomba offices only) and follow the duress alarm procedures outlined below (see 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5).

**In any situation where a person exhibits physical violence towards staff or other clients and/or threatens staff with a weapon everyone should immediately leave the area, seek a safe place and call the police.**

#### **4.2 Try to avoid or defuse the situation**

When faced with the possibility of aggressive behaviour or other physical threat in any environment, it is important to remain calm and, where possible, try to avoid or defuse the situation.

Strategies that may be helpful include:

- Identifying people who appear angry, agitated or distressed when they first present to staff and alerting relevant staff members so that support can be provided to both staff and clients where appropriate.
- Be aware that there are many reasons why people become aggressive. It is important for staff to remain non-judgemental and non-threatening and maintain respect for the dignity of the individual.
- Try to remain calm, positive and in control of your own emotions. Listen to what the person is trying to tell you. If known, use their name when speaking to them and try to clarify the message(s) that they are trying to give you.
- Having a calm and supportive reaction can de-escalate a situation. Where there is clearly a problem, e.g. if a person is angry because they have had to wait a long time to see someone, acknowledge this, agree with the person that there is a problem and, if appropriate, apologise for this.
- Do not engage in arguing with people who are verbally aggressive. While controlled dialogue with the person in an attempt to identify the problem should be attempted, people who continue to be verbally aggressive should also be told that their behaviour

is unacceptable. As well, it may be necessary for staff to walk away from someone who is verbally aggressive rather than be drawn into an argument.

- **Staff safety is paramount. In any situation where you feel unsafe, leave the situation, seek a safe place and call for support or assistance.**

If staff feel threatened or require emergency assistance they should activate the duress alarm (where available) and other staff present should follow the procedure outlined below.

### 4.3 Activating the duress alarm

#### 4.3.1 Dibley Street office

- Portable duress alarms are kept at the reception desk.
- Staff must request an alarm from Reception staff prior to meeting with clients or visitors if they have a known history of aggressive or threatening behaviour.
- The duress alarm is activated by pressing the activation button on the unit.
- When activated, the duress alarm will make a high pitched noise and a small light will flash on the wall in the downstairs main office area.
- This noise cannot be heard from the interview rooms, reception area, foyer, community space or carpark.
- Staff responding to a duress alarm must check the reception foyer, meetings rooms and the entire upstairs office area (Youth/UHM/MYVP)



Note that these duress alarms are not connected to any external security monitoring agency or the Police

#### 4.3.2 Toowoomba office

- Fixed duress alarms are located under the reception and intake room desks and under the counter (left-side) of the boardroom.
- Alarms are activated by pressing where indicated.
- When activated, an alarm sounds throughout the office indicating that assistance is required.



#### 4.3.3 Redbank Plains Community Centre

- Portable duress alarms are kept at the reception desk
- Two staff/volunteers must be onsite for the centre to be open to the public
- All staff and volunteers must have their phone on them at all times
- If a person becomes verbally or physically aggressive at the centre, alert the Centre Development Manger and ensure safety of self and others
- If Centre Development Manager is not on site, a staff member or trained volunteer to lead on attempts to de-escalate
- If person is not able to be calmed or are refusing to leave, police to be contacted to assist in de-escalation.

#### 4.3.4 Rockhampton office

Due to the layout of the Rockhampton office, duress alarms are not required as there is clear visibility to all office areas.

### 4.4 Responding to a situation

Senior staff (including volunteers at the Redbank Plains Community Centre) who are trained and experienced in dealing with aggressive and threatening behaviour are responsible for managing the situation, and should:

- Secure the safety of others, including:
  - Remove all staff/visitors from the area
  - Ensure other staff are aware of the situation and do not enter the area where the situation is occurring
  - Ensure all potential factors that may exacerbate the situation are minimised
  - Ensure all doors and exits are secure to prevent the person from entering the office work space
- Endeavour to defuse the situation where appropriate and safe to do so.

Where a situation is unable to be defused and/or the area needs to be evacuated, senior staff are responsible for deciding what further action is required. This might include:

- Requesting additional assistance from other staff
- Calling for external assistance, e.g. police, fire or ambulance (dialling 0-000 from a landline);
- Seeking case and client information from CSNet
- Providing support and assistance to clients and other visitors and ensuring that they are diverted away from the site of the incident
- Evacuating the building (See [Emergency Evacuation Procedure](#))

If injuries have occurred, only attempt to provide assistance where there is no risk – do not place more people in danger.

#### **5.5 When the situation is resolved:**

Senior Staff are responsible for:

- Speaking to any staff involved and, if necessary, arranging for them to receive any necessary support, e.g. medical treatment, counselling, referral to Employee Assistance Service Provider
- Completing and submitting a [Safety Incident Report form](#) (or a [Critical Incident Report Form](#) if involving a client) providing details of the incident and any action taken, which will be forwarded to the Senior Manager, People and CEO for review.

#### **6. When notice has been provided that a threat will be carried out**

If you are notified (e.g. by phone, in writing or in person) that a threat will be carried out at an office, follow the procedure below:

- Alert your Line Manager (LM) and Senior Manager (SM)
- The LM or SM will send an email alert to reception staff stating that if the person who made the threat comes to an office, that they are to contact two staff members (nominated by the LM/SM) to respond
- This email alert should include a copy of the person's photo ID if available to assist Reception staff in identifying the person
- When the person arrives at an office, Reception staff will inform **the nominated response staff** the person is in the office
- The two people nominated, both carrying duress alarms, will see the person together
- Any further threats will be treated seriously and the police will be called if necessary, particularly if the person talks about harming himself or others.

#### **7. What are the outputs or measures for this procedure?**

- Staff and volunteers are made aware of the risk of being subjected to aggressive behaviour and/or physical threats and of what Multicultural Australia and them can do to identify and minimise those risks
- Instances of aggressive behaviour and/or physical threats are responded to quickly and appropriately
- Action taken is reviewed and additional measures put in place to further reduce any identified risks, and
- All incidents are recorded in our Workplace Health and Safety Incident Register and Client Related Critical Incident Register.

## 8. Related documents

- [Workplace Health & Safety Policy](#)
- [Staff Safety Policy](#)
- [Emergency Evacuation Procedure](#)
- [Incident Reporting and Investigation Procedure](#)