

Psychosocial Safety tip sheet

Psychosocial hazard #12: Violence & Aggression



This hazard includes any incident where a person is abused, threatened, or assaulted at work or while they are carrying out work.

- Violent or aggressive behaviour may include biting, kicking, spitting, throwing objects, using or threatening to use a weapon, verbal abuse and threats, yelling and/or physical intimidation.
- This hazard includes abuse, threats or assaults by workers, clients, patients, students, visitors, volunteers, suppliers, customers or others.

Violence & Aggression can:



Are We OK?

Watch out for:

- Employees who may work alone, and/or in the community, and/or at night.
- Employees who may handle cash, drugs, or valuables.
- Employees who work with people who may be distressed, unwell or angry.
- Employees who may be engaged in enforcement activities (e.g., parking inspectors), delivering bad news to others (e.g., disciplinary decisions), or controlling the behaviour of others (e.g., traffic control).
- Lengthy wait times or processes that may cause frustration and anger.
- Work environments that restrict movement or options for escape.
- Work environments that have low visibility to passers-by.

It looks & sounds like:

- Employees may report or talk about aggressive or heated exchanges with other people.
- Employees may report concerns around their physical safety or the possibility of violence.

Importantly, violence and aggression are sometimes underreported. This may be because:

- It is thought to be 'part of the job' and not something that can be fixed.
- Employees believe that only 'serious incidents' should be reported.
- The employee is concerned that they will be blamed or penalised for the incident.
- The employee 'just wants to forget about it'.

For More Info:

- Visit the [Safe Work Australia Website](#).
- [Preventing and Responding to Occupational Violence handbook](#).
- Contact us on: HealthandWellbeing@griffith.edu.au.

Tips for building psychosocial safety:

- Proactively encourage employees to report all concerns around aggressive or violent behaviour.
- Install physical security measures such as CCTV, anti-jump screens, safe glass and good lighting. Ensure employees can easily and reliably call for help if needed.
- Control access to buildings and vulnerable areas. Ensure workers can see who is coming into the premises and restrict access if necessary.
- Limit the amount of cash, valuables and drugs held in labs and campus buildings.
- Review wait times and processes to reduce likelihood they may contribute to frustration and aggression.
- Use the Remote or Isolated Work tip sheet to ensure employees who may work alone or at night are safe.