

**AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE
AGAINST HEALTH WORKERS.
IT'S NEVER OK**

Healthcare workers want to help others when they're at their most vulnerable. But we are facing a serious issue in our healthcare sector. Workers are regularly confronted with violence and aggression – from patients and residents, visiting friends and family, even bystanders. The people who behave this way are not just those under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or those who are not of full capacity of mind. Often it's everyday people who find themselves in a stressful situation.

Up to **95%**
**of our healthcare workers
have experienced
verbal or physical assault.**

No matter what the situation,
violence and aggression against
healthcare workers is never OK.
Let's work together to prevent and
reduce violence and aggression in
the healthcare sector.

Start a conversation in your
workplace about prevention
strategies. Talk to your colleagues,
managers and staff about violence
and aggression in your workplace,
and how it could be better
prevented and managed.

For tools and resources for your
workplace, visit

worksafe.vic.gov.au/itsneverok

What is occupational violence and aggression?

Most of us understand that extreme acts of violence are unacceptable.

Not everyone realises there is a scale of violence and aggression. Isolated incidents can have a cumulative effect, and a significant impact on mental and physical wellbeing, some examples include:

- aggressive gestures or expressions such as eye rolling and sneering
- verbal abuse such as yelling, swearing and name calling
- intimidating physical behaviour such as standing in a healthcare worker's personal space or standing over them

- Physical assault such as biting, spitting, scratching, pushing, shoving, tripping and grabbing
- extreme acts of violence and aggression such as hitting, punching, strangulation, kicking, personal threats, threats with weapons, sexual assault

Being exposed to these incidents repetitively can have a cumulative and significant ongoing effect on wellbeing. If you are a healthcare worker and any of these happen to you, report it to your employer. Serious incidents should be reported to the police.



HEALTHCARE WORKERS

As a healthcare worker your focus should be on assisting those in need.

You should never feel that violence and aggression is 'part of the job' even when it's committed by people whose clinical condition may be affecting their judgement. There are preventative actions that can be taken to reduce the risk of violence and aggression in your workplace. Make sure you know what to do when you witness or experience these behaviours.

Report all incidents of violence and aggression

Incidents of violence and aggression are currently chronically under-reported. No matter what the situation, it's important to report violence and aggression so your employer knows about it and can take steps to better prevent and manage it in the future. Your employer can also provide you and your colleagues with appropriate support. The process for reporting health and safety incidents can vary between workplaces – talk to your manager today to confirm the reporting process at your site.



HEALTHCARE MANAGEMENT

Prevention and management of violence and aggression requires active engagement from all levels of the organisation.

Violence and aggression should never be seen as 'part of the job' for any healthcare worker, even when it's committed by people whose clinical condition may be affecting their judgement. You can take steps to prevent or minimise an incident.

Organisation leaders and managers can have a powerful influence in developing a positive safety culture where priority is placed on the health, safety, and wellbeing of employees.

**As a senior leader
you should
demonstrate a
commitment to
promoting a culture
where violence and
aggression is not
accepted as 'part of
the job', some
examples include:**



- setting health and safety objectives and accountabilities
- ensuring effective health and safety systems are in place to identify and control risk
- allocating resources to prevention and management
- developing and promoting health and safety policy and key initiatives
- having clear policies and procedures for reporting
- encouraging reporting and acting on these reports
- investigating incidents and reviewing risk control measures
- consulting and supporting employees
- monitoring and reporting on performance outcomes; acting on issues and opportunities, and
- asking questions about violence and aggression prevention systems in your workplace.

As a direct manager, you should:

- identify violence and aggression risks in your work area
- implement controls to eliminate or reduce these risks
- encourage reporting and act on these reports
- investigate incidents and review existing controls
- consult and support employees
- promote a culture that does not accept violence and aggression, and
- seek assistance where necessary for you to do your part.

Encourage staff to report incidents of violence and aggression

Staff who have been affected by a violent or aggressive incident in the workplace may feel it's a waste of time reporting incidents because nothing will be done.

It is critical to engage your staff, so they know:

- why they need to report incidents
- the reporting policies and procedures at their worksite
- they will be supported when they report
- what will happen after they report, and the feedback they can expect to receive, and
- their reporting has contributed to positive changes to reduce future risks.

If you are affected by occupational violence and aggression, you should seek support from your manager or your workplace Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider.

If you or anyone you know needs help, you can call Lifeline on 13 11 14.

worksafe.vic.gov.au/itsneverok

