

Occupational violence triggers

It is unusual for occupational violence (OV) to occur without some form of trigger or flashpoint. Being aware of the risk factors can assist healthcare services, managers and healthcare workers (workers) to recognise the signs of a potential OV situation. Managers and workers can then, where possible put protective/preventative strategies in place to defuse a situation before escalation or respond appropriately when an OV incident occurs.

OV catalysts and contributing factors

Factors are typically defined as either those relating to the healthcare consumer (consumer) or the healthcare workplace (environment) and they may be independently causative or be part of a bigger underlying issue.

In the healthcare workplace, there can be many types of unacceptable behaviours towards workers, and it is important that they are always reported regardless of whether the incident is intentionally or unintentionally caused.

Environment

Influences the way workers can undertake their healthcare duties and the way in which consumers are able to access healthcare services. Healthcare services are responsible for managing environmental factors that contribute to safe workspaces. Where an environmental factor cannot be controlled, the organisation is responsible for putting risk prevention practices in place.

Common environmental factors:

- Extended wait times.
- Staffing levels.
- Uncomfortable or unsafe waiting spaces.
- Complexity of information provided.
- Restrictions on movement.
- Accessibility of the service.

Societal

Influences the way workers and consumers behave within, and engage with, a healthcare service (and each other). Societal factors can relate to an individual's understanding and interpretation of societal norms (expected and accepted behaviours and attitudes) around OV.

Common societal factors:

- Community perceptions of acceptable behaviours and attitudes.
- Worker's acceptance of OV.
- Service expectations.
- Lack of healthcare service policies and procedures.
- Attitudes towards authority.

Healthcare consumers support people

Support people are often influenced by previous healthcare experience and personal understanding and interpretation of societal factors. They may also be influenced by environmental factors that cause anxiety, stress or confusion. They can be a source of OV or their behaviours and/or actions may contribute to OV being committed by the consumer.

Common support people issues include:

- fear or concern for loved one
- emotional distress
- a lack of understanding of information being provided
- being under the influence of drugs, alcohol or other medications (or a history of)
- having a history of violent behaviour.

Healthcare consumer

A consumers pre-existing or newly acquired clinical condition may influence their behaviour and actions whilst seeking care. They will be responsive to external factors, such as societal, environmental and their support people, which may contribute to OV incidents. Typically, consumers escalate to OV incidents in the presence of stress, anxiety, or confusion.

Common consumer issues include:

- fear or pain
- confusion or misunderstanding of information
- pre-existing clinical conditions such as dementia
- acute mental illness
- head trauma or delirium
- being post-operative
- being under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or other medication (or a history of)
- having a history of violent behaviour
- transfers
- car parking
- accessing the building (especially if there are building or road works around the site/access points)
- inconsistency or conflicting information from workers.

ACT Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land, the Ngunnawal people. ACT Health respects their continuing culture and connections to the land and the unique contributions they make to the life of this area. ACT Health also acknowledges and welcomes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are part of the community we serve.

ACCESSIBILITY

If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like an alternative format, please phone 13 22 81.



If English is not your first language and you need the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), please call 13 14 50.

For further accessibility information, visit: www.health.act.gov.au/accessibility

www.health.act.gov.au | Phone: 132281

© Australian Capital Territory, Canberra