

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR TOOLKIT

**TOOL 8**

**Challenging Behaviour,  
Violence and Aggression-  
Post-incident Support Toolkit**



**Government  
of South Australia**

SA Health

## PURPOSE OF TOOLKIT

The intent of this document is to provide SA Health staff with information about how to respond in the event of a Challenging Behaviour, Violence and Aggression (CBVA) incident and the range of supports that are available to both staff and managers.

Each person has a different way of responding to a stressful incident and individual reactions may differ depending on circumstances at the time. We want to ensure that our people are able to confidently respond to a CBVA incident and support the physical and psychological wellbeing of their staff and colleagues.

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# What is an incident of Challenging Behaviour, Violence, and Aggression? (CBVA)

SA Health is committed to providing a safe workplace and protecting our staff from harm. However sometimes challenging behaviour can occur in the workplace, and this can be confronting and stressful. Workplace challenging behaviour, violence, and aggression (CBVA) is defined as actions or incidents that may, or have the potential to, physically or psychologically harm another person, self, or property. CBVA can be intentional/deliberate, or unintentional - for example when associated with delirium, dementia or psychosis.

Examples of CBVA may include, but are not limited to:

- > Physical violence such as biting, hitting, spitting, scratching, kicking, pushing or shoving
- > Throwing objects or damaging property
- > Verbal abuse and threats
- > Using or threatening to use a weapon
- > Sexual harassment or assault
- > CBVA may also occur outside of the workplace such as stalking or harassment via technology and social media

*SA Health has a commitment to ensure a culture where CBVA is not tolerated.*

## Common reactions following a stressful incident

Each person has a different way of responding to a stressful situation that arises in the course of their work. While these are some common reactions, if they continue for over 2 weeks, it may be an indication further support is needed.

Staff are encouraged to check in with their General Practitioner (GP) or contact one of our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) providers for further support. If you do not have a GP, consider: [www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/find-a-professional](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/find-a-professional). Our EAP providers are listed at the end of this document.

<b>FEELING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Irritable or 'on edge'</li> <li>&gt; Fearful, sad or angry</li> <li>&gt; Overwhelmed</li> </ul>
<b>THINKING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Difficulty with attention and concentration</li> <li>&gt; Difficulty making decisions</li> <li>&gt; Worrying more than usual</li> <li>&gt; Unwanted memories or dreams about the event</li> <li>&gt; Constant questioning such as "what if I had done something different?", and "what will happen now?"</li> </ul>
<b>BEHAVIOUR</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Difficulties with sleep</li> <li>&gt; Aggressive behaviour</li> <li>&gt; Detached or withdrawn from others</li> <li>&gt; Loss of sense of purpose at work</li> <li>&gt; Failure to perform work tasks</li> <li>&gt; Poor communication with peers</li> <li>&gt; Increased use of medication, alcohol or illicit substances</li> <li>&gt; Work avoidance/absenteeism</li> <li>&gt; Generally not being themselves</li> </ul>

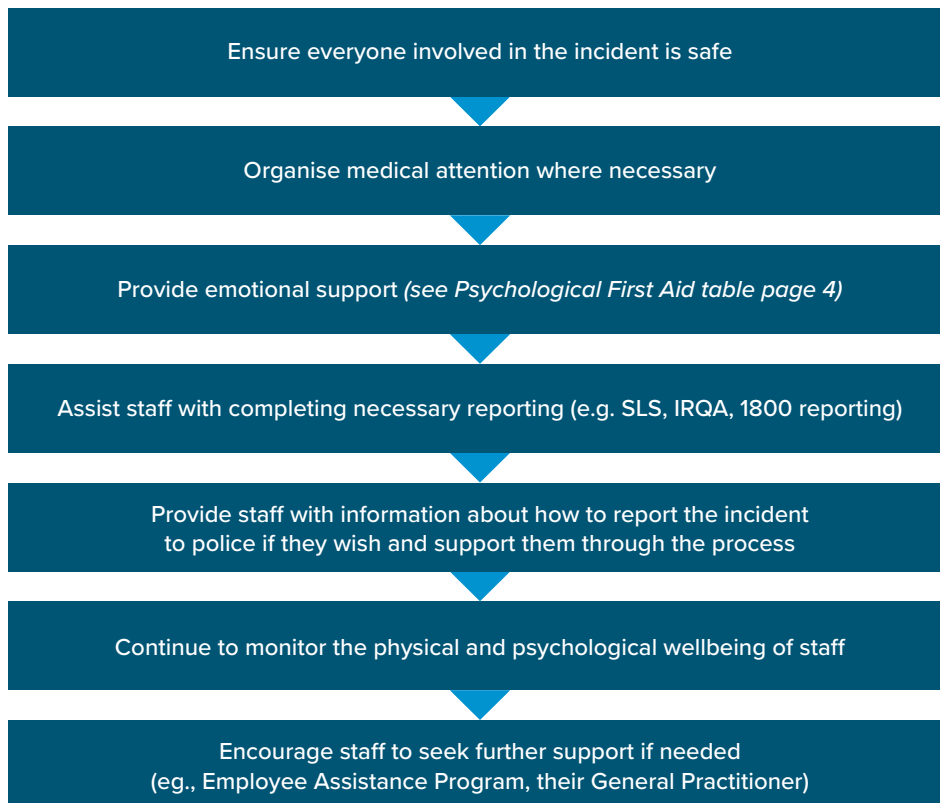
# Psychological first aid

Psychological First Aid (PFA) is an evidence-informed approach to helping people after a traumatic event, critical incident, or any emergency. PFA uses a simple framework to facilitate the natural recovery process from a stressful experience. The table below outlines the principles of PFA and some examples of helpful words to use.

AIMS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID		HELPFUL THINGS TO SAY
<b>Promote safety</b>	Promoting a sense of safety is particularly important following an incident of CBVA. Communicate with your staff or peers the actions or steps that have been undertaken to ensure the threat has been alleviated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; The area is secure now, would you like to find a quiet place to sit?</li> <li>&gt; Is there someone you would like to call?</li> <li>&gt; Let's work out a plan to get you home safely from work.</li> </ul>
<b>Promote calm</b>	You can start to promote a sense of calm by letting your staff or peers know there is no right or wrong way to be feeling. You may also wish to encourage them to practice some strategies to relieve any distress such as slowing their breathing or taking a break.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; It's perfectly normal to be feeling that way after that experience.</li> <li>&gt; Don't feel like you need to put pressure on yourself to get straight back to work.</li> <li>&gt; It might be a good idea to step away for a minute for some fresh air.</li> </ul>
<b>Promote connectedness</b>	You can start to build a sense of connection by reaching out to those affected within the initial moments of a CBVA incident. Encouraging those affected by the incident to connect with their family, friends, or trusted colleagues can also enhance recovery following a stressful or traumatic experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Is there someone at home you would like to call?</li> <li>&gt; Let me know if you would like some support to contact our EAP. It might help just to run over how you're feeling with someone neutral.</li> <li>&gt; Try to check in with your family/friends/support when you get home. You might find it helpful to connect with someone who you feel comfortable with.</li> <li>&gt; If it's okay with you, I'll check in with you again tomorrow to see how you are going.</li> </ul>
<b>Promote self-efficacy</b>	Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to influence important aspects of their life. You can remind your staff or peers about their strengths by encouraging them to take an active part in their recovery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; I can understand that you feel overwhelmed. Is there something you can think of that might help those feelings/thoughts to settle down?</li> <li>&gt; I know there must be competing demands at the moment, would you like to work through a priority list together and see what tasks we might be able to come back to later?</li> </ul>
<b>Promote hope</b>	In the initial days or weeks following a CBVA incident, some people may have difficulties maintaining a positive outlook. You can promote hope by reassuring them their feelings are normal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; You handled the situation very well. I don't think I would have done anything differently.</li> <li>&gt; Maybe we chat further with management about ways we can reduce the risk of similar incidences in the future.</li> </ul>

# Post-incident responsibilities of managers

When notified about a CBVA incident, a manager should:



# Legal issues

There may be instances where your staff may need further support if they are wishing to pursue legal action.

You may be able to assist your staff by:

- > Flexibility in working arrangements to attend appointments, counselling etc.
- > Being a support person, or allocating a support person to attend appointments with the affected worker/s
- > Assisting workers involved in investigations or with document completion
- > A referral to EAP or a Peer Support Person

ACTIONS CHECKLIST	
HEALTHCARE WORKER	MANAGER
<input type="checkbox"/> Seek medical attention if required <input type="checkbox"/> Report the CBVA incident to your manager <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure incident is reported on SLS (or IRQA for SAAS) <input type="checkbox"/> Contact Injury Management Hotline on the day or next business day (tel: 1800 702 264) <input type="checkbox"/> Attend post-incident debrief as required <input type="checkbox"/> Organise EAP as required	<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure everyone involved in the incident is safe <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure medical attention is provided where necessary <input type="checkbox"/> If possible, check in with the person/s affected face-to-face, and in a quiet and private environment <input type="checkbox"/> Provide option to take a break or go home <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss EAP support with worker and arrange services as requested <input type="checkbox"/> When appropriate, ensure staff are provided with FACT SHEET- Challenging Behaviour, Violence, and Aggression Worker Support <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure incident is reported on SLS (or IRQA for SAAS) <input type="checkbox"/> If staff member is injured or unable to complete shift, ensure the Injury Management Hotline is called on the same day or next business day (tel: 1800 702 264) <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure relevant managers/line manager/director are advised of incident <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain regular contact with staff who are off work – checking in on their welfare and wellbeing <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss at relevant staff meetings and/or local Work Health and Safety forums to monitor any outstanding actions or controls of risk <input type="checkbox"/> If the incident was a critical incident, operational debriefing with staff involved is recommended within 48 hours.
<p><i>Staff who work in high risk situations may experience multiple CBVA incidents over the course of their week. While this checklist provides a stepped-out guide on how to support your staff and colleagues, all the steps may not always be required.</i></p>	

For further support please contact:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Our Employee Assistance Program providers               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Please visit our <a href="#">EAP page on the SA Health intranet</a> for further details.</li> </ul> </li> <li>&gt; Your Work Health Safety Consultant who can assist you further, including referral to a Mental Health First Aid accredited staff member</li> <li>&gt; Injury Management Team in your LHN/HS/SAAS</li> <li>&gt; Your line manager</li> <li>&gt; Your local Health &amp; Safety Representative</li> </ul>

# Appendix A

## FACT SHEET- Challenging Behaviour, Violence, and Aggression Worker Support

SA Health is committed to providing a safe workplace and protecting our staff from harm. However sometimes challenging behaviour can occur in the workplace, and this can be confronting and stressful. Workplace challenging behaviour, violence, and aggression (CBVA) is defined as actions or incidents that may, or have the potential to, physically or psychologically harm another person, self, or property. CBVA can be intentional/deliberate, or unintentional - for example when associated with delirium, dementia or psychosis.

<p>Each person has a different way of responding to a stressful situation that arises in the course of their work. For most of us, trying to continue with our usual routine and spending time with close supports will help to promote a natural recovery from a stressful experience.</p> <p>While these are some common reactions, if they continue for over 2 weeks it is a good idea to check in with your manager or your General Practitioner for further support. If you do not have a GP, consider: <a href="http://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/find-a-professional">www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/find-a-professional</a>.</p>		
<b>FEELING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Irritable or 'on edge'</li> <li>&gt; Fearful, sad or angry</li> <li>&gt; Overwhelmed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Feeling detached or withdrawn from others</li> </ul>
<b>THINKING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Difficulty with attention and concentration</li> <li>&gt; Difficulty making decisions</li> <li>&gt; Worrying more than usual</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Unwanted memories or dreams about the event</li> <li>&gt; Constant questioning such as "what if I had done something different?", and "what will happen now?"</li> </ul>
<b>BEHAVIOUR</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Difficulties with sleep</li> <li>&gt; Aggressive behaviour</li> <li>&gt; Loss of sense of purpose at work</li> <li>&gt; Failure to perform work tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Poor communication with peers</li> <li>&gt; Increased use of medication, alcohol or illicit substances</li> <li>&gt; Work avoidance/absenteeism</li> <li>&gt; Generally not being themselves</li> </ul>

If you are concerned about any symptoms following a CBVA incident there is assistance available to support your physical and psychological wellbeing.

ACTIONS CHECKLIST	FOR FURTHER SUPPORT
<input type="checkbox"/> Seek medical attention if required <input type="checkbox"/> Report the CBVA incident to your manager <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure incident is reported on SLS (or IRQA for SAAS) <input type="checkbox"/> Contact Injury Management Hotline on the day or next business day (tel: 1800 702 264) <input type="checkbox"/> Attend post-incident debrief as required <hr/>	<p><a href="#">Where to go for support at work</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Peer Support Person</li> <li>&gt; Your manager</li> <li>&gt; Organisational Development Consultants</li> <li>&gt; Workforce Health Professionals</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Our Employee Assistance Program providers</a></p> <p>Please contact your manager or visit our <a href="#">EAP page on the SA Health intranet</a> for further details.</p>

### Worker support pursuing legal action

Sometimes incidents of CBVA can fall within the scope of state or federal laws and you may wish to make a report to SA Police. If you choose to complete a police report, we recommend you using your work address to protect your confidentiality. You are encouraged to speak to your manager about this so they can support you through this process or allocate someone to do so (e.g. Mental Health First Aider, Peer Support Officer).

# Appendix B

## FACT SHEET- Challenging Behaviour, Violence, and Aggression A guide for Managers

SA Health is committed to providing a safe workplace and protecting our staff from harm. However sometimes challenging behaviour can occur in the workplace, and this can be confronting and stressful. Workplace challenging behaviour, violence, and aggression (CBVA) is defined as actions or incidents that may, or have the potential to, physically or psychologically harm another person, self, or property. CBVA can be intentional/deliberate, or unintentional - for example when associated with delirium, dementia or psychosis.

Managers and leadership teams can play a key role in supporting the recovery of staff following a CBVA incident by providing the following support:

ACTIONS CHECKLIST	
IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE INCIDENT	WITHIN 24 – 72 HOURS
<p><i>Ensure safety and wellbeing of staff</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure everyone involved in the incident is safe</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure medical attention is provided where necessary</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If possible, check in with the person/s affected face-to-face, and in a quiet and private environment</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide option to take a break or go home</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Discuss EAP support with worker and arrange services as requested</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> When appropriate, ensure staff are provided with FACT SHEET – Challenging Behaviour, Violence, and Aggression Worker Support</li> </ul> <p><i>Report the incident and notify appropriate people</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure incident is reported on SLS (or IRQA for SAAS)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If staff member is injured or unable to complete shift, ensure the Injury Management Hotline is called on the day or next business day (tel: 1800 702 264)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure relevant managers/line manager/director are advised of incident</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Follow up with the person/s involved to assess any further support needs</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Maintain regular contact with staff who are off work- checking in on their welfare and wellbeing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Discuss at Work Health and Safety meeting to monitor any outstanding actions or controls of risk</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If the incident was a critical incident, operational debriefing with staff involved is recommended within 48 hours.</li> </ul>
FOLLOW UP – 2 WEEKS +	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Schedule a reminder in your diary to check in on them in a couple weeks</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Monitor sick leave</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide ongoing availability of manager for support – open door policy</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Look out for ongoing signs below</li> </ul>	
<p><i>Staff who work in high risk area may experience multiple CBVA incidents over the course of their week. While this checklist provides a stepped-out guide on how to support your staff and colleagues, all the steps may not always be required.</i></p>	



## What signs should I look out for?

Each person has a different way of responding to a stressful situation that arises in the course of their work. While these are some common reactions, if they continue for over 2 weeks it may be an indication your staff need further support. Encouraging them to check in with their General Practitioner is a good start. If they do not have a GP, consider [www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/find-a-professional](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/find-a-professional).

<b>FEELING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Irritable or 'on edge'</li> <li>&gt; Fearful, sad or angry</li> <li>&gt; Overwhelmed</li> </ul>
<b>THINKING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Difficulty with attention and concentration</li> <li>&gt; Difficulty making decisions</li> <li>&gt; Worrying more than usual</li> <li>&gt; Unwanted memories or dreams about the event</li> <li>&gt; Constant questioning such as "what if I had done something different?", and "what will happen now?"</li> </ul>
<b>BEHAVIOUR</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Difficulties with sleep</li> <li>&gt; Aggressive behaviour</li> <li>&gt; Feeling detached or withdrawn from others</li> <li>&gt; Loss of sense of purpose at work</li> <li>&gt; Failure to perform work tasks</li> <li>&gt; Poor communication with peers</li> <li>&gt; Increased use of medication, alcohol or illicit substances</li> <li>&gt; Work avoidance/absenteeism</li> <li>&gt; Generally not being themselves</li> </ul>

## What if the person does not want to talk?

Sometimes checking in with them and showing you're concerned is enough. Help them open up by asking questions like "How are you going?" or "What's been happening?" Let them know your door is always open if they would like to have a chat at a later time.

There is no legal obligation for staff to disclose personal information unless they are unable to work or if there is a risk of safety to themselves or others. If you are concerned about a risk of harm please contact Mental Health Triage 13 14 65.

<b>For further support about how to assist your staff please contact:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Our Employee Assistance Program providers                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Please visit our <a href="#">EAP page on the SA Health intranet</a> for further details.</li> </ul> </li> <li>&gt; Your Work Health Safety Consultant who can assist you further, including referral to a Mental Health First Aid accredited staff member</li> <li>&gt; Your line manager</li> <li>&gt; Your local Health &amp; Safety Representative</li> </ul>

NB: This toolkit addresses behaviour from a consumer/patient perspective. Staff to staff disrespectful behaviour is addressed through the Respectful Behaviour Policy Directive. Resources can be found through this following link: [Respectful Behaviour Resources](#).

## For more information

SA Health

Safety and Quality Unit

Telephone: (08) 8226 9599

[sahealth.sa.gov.au/challengingbehaviourstrategy](https://sahealth.sa.gov.au/challengingbehaviourstrategy)

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