

Managing Aggression in the Workplace Policy

Policy Type	Risk Management
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Person/Body Responsible	MHF Board
Approved By	MHF Board

Purpose

The Mental Health Foundation ACT (MHF) seeks to provide a workplace where staff, volunteers, participants, carers and other parties can meet, communicate, and participate in activities in a safe and healthy environment.

This policy aims to give MHF staff and volunteers confidence that aggression and violence in the workplace will not be tolerated at any level. The policy will provide guidance on establishing practices aimed at reducing the potential for incidents of unacceptable aggression and identify protocols for managing violence when it does occur.

Definitions

Participant aggression - is any incident where an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted by a participant in circumstances arising out of, or in the course of, their employment. Acts of vandalism and property damage are also included.

Participant aggression can be directed towards another participant, staff of other service providers, the participant's informal supports, MHF staff or consist of a confrontation between participants.

Aggression - against a person may include personal intimidation, verbal abuse, physical assault, sexual harassment, threatening behaviour, abuse through technology (text, emails, and phone calls), physical or electronic stalking, making vexatious complaints, and making derogatory, slanderous or threatening statements to, or about another person.

Policy

This policy is an extension of the MHF *Risk Management* and *Work Health and Safety* Policies and Procedures. Occupational violence towards MHF staff or between participants and/or third parties is totally unacceptable. All incidents of assault, theft of MHF property, or damage to MHF property should be reported to police as well as the MHF Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

It is the responsibility of the MHF Board to ensure that essential resources are available to provide for a safe environment for all MHF staff, participants, visitors and contractors.

It is the responsibility of the CEO to ensure procedures are in place, and that necessary training is provided to effectively implement this policy, ensuring the safety of staff, participants, visitors and contractors of MHF.

MHF staff are responsible for proactively managing their own safety by adhering to policy and procedures, participating in consultative processes, and attending required training.

Programs must assess the potential for occupational violence in the workplace, including work conducted outside MHF premises. Certain work processes, situations and interactions can place people at risk of experiencing occupational violence. Risk assessments must consider the various situations where workers may encounter violence in any form in the course of their work.

Managers are responsible for taking action to reduce identified risks of violent incidents. Managers should identify risks and controls, in consultation with staff, to eliminate or reduce risks to an acceptable level. Where it is impossible to eliminate the risk, an appropriate control plan should be implemented.

All programs are required to document relevant and effective procedures and protocols to identify a range of appropriate options available to staff in dealing with incidents of violence and aggression.

Procedures are to be communicated to staff, and staff provided with training to enable them to exercise the options appropriately and effectively.

It is acknowledged by MHF that the two primary measures in addressing occupational violence are:

- Enhancing the abilities of workers and managers through relevant training, and
- The provision of adequate supervision.

It is essential that all MHF staff working in areas that have active participant aggression management plans in place, will be trained in the management of aggressive behaviours, and receive appropriate support, supervision, coaching and mentoring from MHF management.

While control measures may reduce instances of occupational violence, it may not be possible to eliminate all circumstances where violence may occur. Clear guidance on how to respond to an incident is required. Protocols for the management of incidents of violence are identified in the MHF *Managing Participant Violence Procedures*.

References

ACT Government

Work Health and Safety Act 2011
Human Rights Act 2004

Document History				
Author	Version	Amendment	Owner	Date of Effect
PWG	1.0	Document Created	MHF Board	19/3/2013
Corporate Services Manager	2.0	Checked for currency. 'Consumer' replaced with 'participant'. 'Executive Officer' changed to 'Chief Executive Officer'. Minor grammatical changes made only.	MHF Board	March 2022
Corporate Services Manager	3.0	Reviewed for currency. Removed reference to 'Program' Manager and kept as Manager. Reviewed references for currency.	MHF Board	June 2024