

# **When I'm at work: Solving problems**

Trainer's guide



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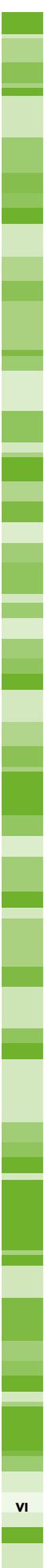
## Aim of the ‘When I’m at work’ series

The aim of the ‘When I’m at work’ series is to bring together information about being at work. The resources that comprise the series focus on the workplace and provide information, scenarios, and suggested activities to assist you and the supported employees working in your Disability Business Service.

Topics in the ‘When I’m at work’ series are as follows.

- ▶ Supported employee induction
- ▶ Solving complaints
- ▶ Solving problems
- ▶ Retirement planning
- ▶ Working on a committee
- ▶ Using a computer
- ▶ Stopping abuse and neglect
- ▶ Teamwork
- ▶ Bullying
- ▶ My rights/responsibilities
- ▶ Drugs and alcohol
- ▶ Being healthy
  - › Being sunsmart
  - › Keeping your workplace clean and tidy
  - › Wash your hands and keep germs away
  - › Good posture and a healthy back
  - › Stretching for good health
- ▶ Workplace behaviours

Using the ‘When I’m at work’ series will help Disability Business Services meet the requirements of a number of Disability Services Standards. For example, it will be useful in relation to Standard 11 that requires the provision of appropriate and relevant training and skills for each staff member.



# Introduction



## Who is this resource for?

You do not need to be an experienced trainer to use this resource with supported employees. We have included lots of tips to make sure that you will be able to help supported employees understand the information that they need to know about solving workplace problems.

The *Training and Assessing and Work Talk* resources support this resource, and provide further assistance for you.

This resource has been developed for use with supported employees who are working in a Disability Business Service.

## Aim of the resource

The resource provides information and activities that aim to assist supported employees to understand a range of issues around solving workplace problems.

## Learning objectives

After taking part in the training, learners should be able to describe:

- what a workplace problem is
- different ways to solve workplace problems
- the four steps to solve workplace problems
- the dos and don'ts of problem solving.

## What is in this resource?

The resource contains:

- this trainer's guide
- the solving problem learning activities on CD-ROM (Microsoft PowerPoint® slides)
- a wall poster.

Note: The learner's worksheet features a learning activity that will help supported employees understand and manage problem solving at work. The integrity of the worksheet will not be compromised if learners do not record their responses on it. However, it will be important for learners to apply their learning, perhaps verbally or through role-play.

## What you will need

You will need:

- ▶ the *Four steps to solving problems* worksheet (see appendix to this trainer's guide) to reproduce for learners. It may not be appropriate to use the worksheet if the literacy level of the learners is low
- ▶ the *What was the problem, how did you feel?* worksheet (see appendix to this trainer's guide) to reproduce for learners
- ▶ your workplace's grievance, complaints or other appropriate policies and procedures
- ▶ a computer/data projector to play the CD-ROM (if you do not have access to a computer/data projector for training, you can copy the slide content to A4 paper for one-to-one training sessions, or to butcher's paper for group training sessions)
- ▶ whiteboard or butcher's paper to record responses
- ▶ whiteboard markers or felt-tipped markers.

It is vital that everyone's viewpoints are valued and comments are allowed to be made in an open discussion. You should familiarise yourself with your workplace procedures that manage inappropriate behaviour such as bullying and dangerous behaviour.

Your preparation should include knowing your workplace's policies and procedures in relation to grievances and complaints.

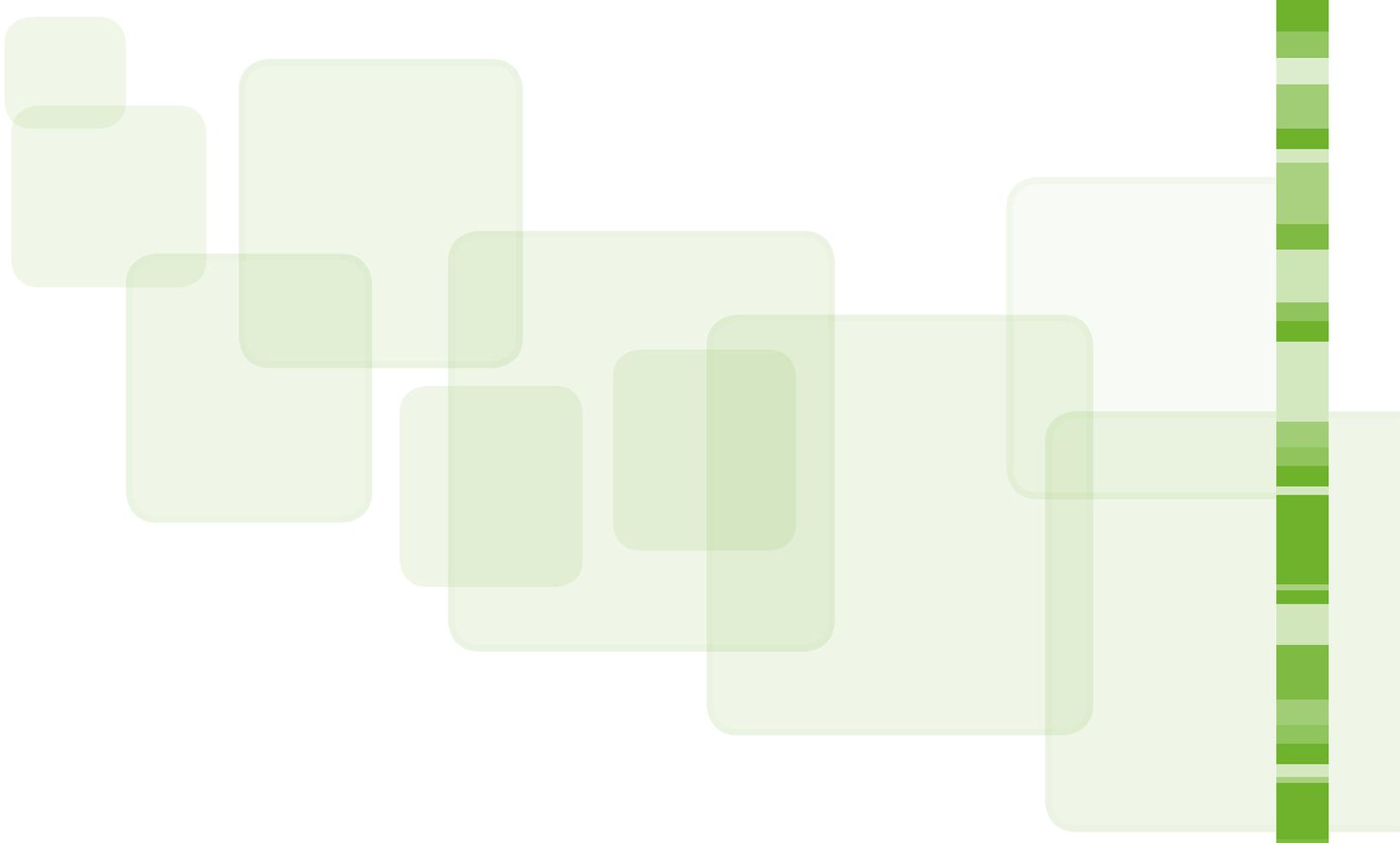
## What learners will need

Learners will need:

- ▶ the *Four steps to solving problems* worksheet
- ▶ the *What was the problem, how did you feel?* worksheet
- ▶ their personal examples of workplace problems, if appropriate
- ▶ pen or pencil for writing.



# Using the resource



This resource has been developed to be used as a stand-alone training program. You could also integrate it into a larger training program that your workplace may already have in place.

The resource is intended to be interactive and experiential, using a variety of techniques including the presentation of a slide show, completion of a worksheet by learners with assistance from the trainer, and guided questioning of learners by the trainer. The structure is as follows.

- 1 Learners are asked by the trainer to think about problems they have experienced at work, which they could have handled better.
- 2 Learners are then introduced to the concept of problem solving.
- 3 A scenario is presented and the learners are guided by questioning through the *Four steps to solving problems*.
- 4 Options for solving problems are discussed.
- 5 The *Four steps to solving problems* model is presented diagrammatically and discussed.
- 6 Learners are further questioned to encourage them to express how they would feel in a variety of different negative situations. They are also asked how they would now act if having a problem at work.
- 7 Additional scenarios can then be introduced. Either or both of the scenarios outlined in Appendix 3 can be used, or substituted with other actual work problems, if considered to be more appropriate.
- 8 The trainer introduces the ‘dos and don’ts’ of problem solving and the session is concluded.

Each scenario comprises a workplace incident to reinforce the need to solve workplace problems. The scenarios describe different examples of workplace problems. They are short and are designed to be:

- ▶ user-friendly
- ▶ learner-centred
- ▶ inclusive
- ▶ engaging
- ▶ realistic
- ▶ relevant.

These scenarios have been developed for you to use as triggers to encourage discussion of the workplace issues with supported employees. They can be customised to reflect current problems that the workplace may have and wants to address. If you are not using a computer/slide presentation to deliver the material you will need to read the audio script, which appears in Appendix 3, aloud to the learners.

The *Four steps to solving problems* worksheet may also be used at a later date if a workplace problem arises and the workplace wants to encourage supported employees to take responsibility for solving a problem.

## Your role as a trainer

Your role as a trainer is to guide supported employees in their learning. You need to provide a safe and secure learning environment where learners feel that they are respected and their input valued. You need to have clear learning outcomes, a plan for how the learning program will go, and what you want to achieve within a given timeframe.

As an effective trainer, you will:

- ▶ be prepared
- ▶ know the topic
- ▶ know your audience
- ▶ listen to the needs of the learners
- ▶ involve the learners
- ▶ encourage open discussion
- ▶ seek and give feedback
- ▶ be flexible
- ▶ respect individual differences.

A useful resource to help you plan and present this learning is *Training and Assessing*, a resource package developed to assist workplace trainers to deliver training to supported employees in Disability Business Services. It includes a manual, a toolkit with sample sheets and checklists, and an implementation guide. The *Work Talk* resources are also useful.

## Planning the training session

- ▶ Make sure you have all the relevant equipment to show the Microsoft PowerPoint® slides. If you are delivering the training without a computer/projector, transfer the information presented on each slide to butcher's paper. The audioscripts for the scenarios are included as an appendix to this trainer's guide.
- ▶ Test the equipment to make sure it works, and practise using it effectively (volume, lighting, obstacles). Do not forget OH&S – make sure that cords are secured.
- ▶ You need to be prepared and set the scene.
  - › Create a relaxed and comfortable environment.
  - › Read over the information so that you are familiar with it.
  - › Print out the Microsoft PowerPoint® presentation in handout format (three slides per page) and note some points for your discussion and clarification of the learning.
- ▶ Decide how you will use the scenarios. They could be used one-to-one, with a small group of learners in a more formal training context, or informally over lunch or afternoon tea.
- ▶ Think about how you will deliver the scenarios. Will you look at one scenario at a time or more than one? Will you use the scenarios provided or will you create your own?
- ▶ Think about inviting a guest speaker to discuss the issues identified, for example, a representative from a Disability Advocacy Service, a member of your management team, or a union representative.
- ▶ Decide how you will debrief the *Four steps to solving problems* activity. Will you do this individually and then share with the group? Or will you do this as a whole group activity?

## Delivering the training session

The time you take to deliver this resource will be your decision, based on the experience of the group to participate in new learning and remain involved, the time available, and so on. The format may look something like this.

Show slide number	Learning activities and discussion points
1	Welcome the learners and explain that they will be learning about how to solve workplace problems.
2	<p>Introduce the session with the two questions, ‘Have you had a problem at work?’ and ‘Do you wish you had handled it better?’</p> <p>Encourage learners to think about and discuss these questions and to think of some real workplace problems or experiences they may have had at work.</p> <p>Allow time to discuss generally some of their experiences or problems.</p> <p><i>NB. It is recommended you seek a commitment from the learners that people are not identified in general discussion and/or real names used.</i></p>
3	<p>Explain that ‘If you have a problem at work it is a good idea to sort it out’ and that ‘This is called problem solving’.</p> <p>You may like to ask the learners why they think it is important to solve problems and list their responses on a sheet of butcher’s paper. This list with a heading can be built on when you discuss slide 11.</p>
4	<p>Listen to Samantha’s story. If necessary re-listen to the story. Provide a print copy of the story for learners if appropriate. See Appendix 3 Samantha’s story.</p> <p>For slides 5 to 8 a sample problem solving worksheet has been developed – Refer to the Appendix 1 Worksheet 1 <i>Four steps to solving problems</i>.</p> <p><i>It may be necessary to replay Samantha’s story after showing each of the What? Who? Why? How? Questions.</i></p>
5	<p>Using Samantha’s story:</p> <p>Ask the question ‘Is there a problem?’</p> <p>‘What is the problem?’</p> <p>Have a sheet of butcher’s paper prepared with the heading ‘What is the problem?’</p> <p>List learner’s responses.</p> <p>Try and come to a consensus of what the problem is.</p> <p>Highlight this on the butcher’s paper.</p>
6	<p>Using Samantha’s story:</p> <p>Ask the question ‘Who is involved in the problem?’ Have a sheet of butcher’s paper prepared with the heading ‘Who is involved in the problem?’</p> <p>List learner’s responses.</p> <p>Try and come to a consensus of who is involved in the problem.</p> <p>Highlight this on the butcher’s paper.</p>

Show slide number	Learning activities and discussion points
7	<p>Using Samantha's story:</p> <p>Ask the question 'Why is there a problem?'</p> <p>Have a sheet of butcher's paper prepared with the heading 'Why is there a problem?'</p> <p>List learner's responses.</p> <p>Read through these and discuss and clarify any differences.</p> <p>Explain to the learners that there may be one or several reasons why there is a problem.</p>
8	<p>Using Samantha's story:</p> <p>Ask the question 'How can the problem be solved?'</p> <p>Have a sheet of butcher's paper prepared with the heading 'How can the problem be solved?'</p> <p>List learner's responses.</p> <p>You now have four sheets of learner's information about a workplace problem.</p> <p>Explain these four sheets are the <i>Four steps to solving problems</i>.</p> <p>Encourage learners to ask questions for clarification of the four steps to problem solving.</p>
9	<p>Read the statement 'If you think you have a problem at work, there are a number of ways to sort things out ...'</p> <p>Read these and allow time to discuss each of the ways. Ask learners to consider when one way may be better than another to solve a problem.</p> <p>Allow time for discussion and clarification of learner's understanding.</p>
10	<p>Review the learning so far and summarise the <i>Four steps to problem solving</i> by explaining the cycle.</p> <p>If your learners have good literacy skills you will have printed copies of Worksheet 1 available.</p> <p>Distribute the worksheet to each learner and explain that 'if they think they have a problem at work', it can be worked through asking the questions What? Who? Why? How?</p> <p><i>At this point it may be suitable to take a break for 10 or 15 minutes or if necessary reconvene at another time.</i></p> <p><i>If a break is taken here it will be important to recommence the training with a review of the learning with questions such as 'If you think you have problem at work what can you do?'</i></p>

Show slide number	Learning activities and discussion points
11	<p>Have prepared a sheet of butcher's paper with the heading 'Why is it important to solve work problems?'</p> <p>Commence the session referring to the question 'Why is it important to solve problems?' and ask learners to tell you 'What happens when problems are not solved?' List these responses.</p> <p>Compare these responses with the information on slide 11.</p> <p>Allow time for discussion and clarification.</p>
12	<p>Introduce discussion that workplace problems have an effect on people and it is important to think about how people feel when there is a problem or they think there is a problem.</p> <p>Explain that you are going to spend some time discussing people's feelings and what happens when there are problems at work.</p> <p>Read the statement 'A job you would like to do has been given to someone else'.</p> <p>Hand out the 'How would you feel if this happened to you?' worksheet and ask learners to highlight the face and if appropriate write the words that express how they would feel.</p> <p>Encourage discussion from learners about how important it is to solve workplace problems.</p>
13	<p>Read the statement 'Someone tells you they do not want to work with you anymore'.</p> <p>Using the 'How would you feel if this happened to you?' worksheet ask learners to highlight the face and if appropriate write the words that express how they would feel.</p> <p>Ask the question 'What would you do?'</p> <p>Encourage discussion from learners about how important it is to solve workplace problems.</p>
14	<p>Read the statement 'Another worker tells you that you are doing your job wrong, when you know this is not true'.</p> <p>Using the 'How would you feel if this happened to you?' worksheet ask learners to highlight the face and if appropriate write the words that express how they would feel.</p> <p>Ask the question 'What would you do?'</p> <p>Encourage discussion from learners about how important it is to solve workplace problems.</p>

Show slide number	Learning activities and discussion points
15	<p>To review the learning to date, ask learners the question, ‘So, what will you do now if you have a problem at work?’</p> <p>Complete another exercise using the <i>Four steps to solving problems</i> worksheet.</p> <p>You may wish to use the two case studies provided or develop your own case studies that reflect a workplace problem that needs solving.</p> <p>Learners can work in pairs or groups to solve a problem using the <i>Four steps to solving problems</i> worksheet.</p>
16	<p>Listen to Bruce’s story and provide a print copy of the story if appropriate.</p> <p>After learners have developed the information in the four step process, discuss the information gathered and the solution learners agreed to.</p>
17	<p>Listen to Lily’s story and provide a print copy of the story if appropriate.</p> <p>After learners have developed the information in the four step process, discuss the information gathered and the solution learners agreed to.</p>
18	<p>Discuss with learners what they have learned from this training session.</p> <p>Using butcher’s paper with the heading ‘Dos of problem solving’ ask learners to tell you what they think these are. List them.</p> <p>Compare their list to the information on slide 18.</p>
19	<p>Using butcher’s paper with the heading ‘Don’ts of problem solving’ ask learners to tell you what they think these are. List them.</p> <p>Compare their list to slide 19.</p> <p>Close the session by thanking learners for their involvement, ask if there are any further questions or assistance needed.</p> <p>Offer yourself or someone in your organisation who could be available at a later date to help the learners solve a real workplace problem if required.</p>

- ▶ Allow time for learners to recall experiences of workplace problems.
- ▶ Invite learners to share their experiences.
- ▶ Encourage learners to talk about situations and not people by name.
- ▶ Encourage open and honest discussion.
- ▶ Ensure everyone has a voice.

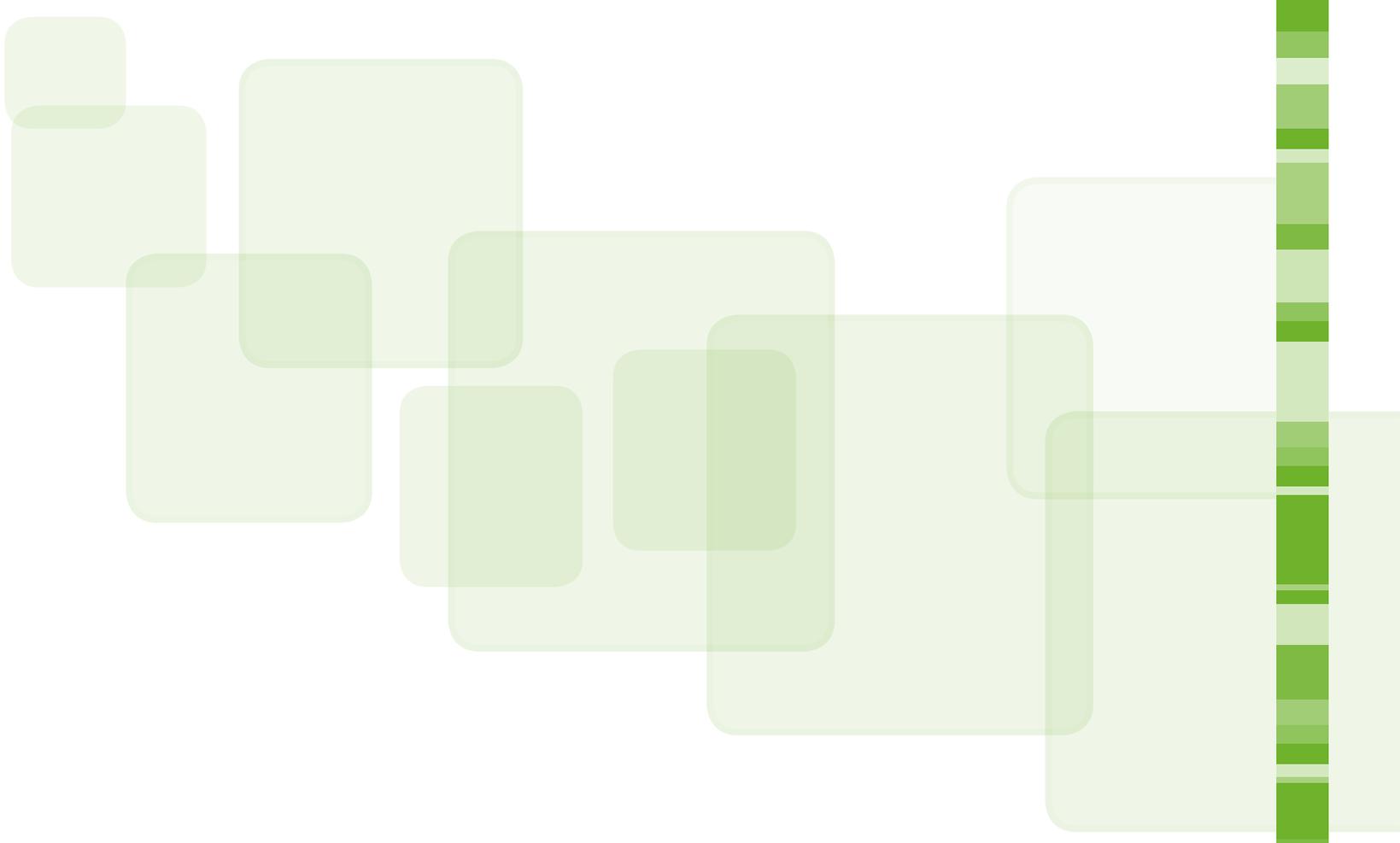
It is important for you to explain to supported employees that some workplace problems require disciplinary action because they contravene the workplace's code of conduct and require that appropriate action be taken. Some problems may only be able to be resolved by externally managed and/or facilitated processes such as mediation.

## Evaluating/following up

- ▶ Offer future directions in terms of training or resources that learners can follow up.
- ▶ Remember to thank everyone for their participation and invite any evaluative comments for future sessions.
- ▶ Note evaluative comments from learners and record these and any changes that you feel need to be made to your presentation of the material or the content. This can be kept and used to improve future training sessions.



# Key resources



This section provides you with information about and links to the location of additional resources that you can access. You may wish to use this material if you need to investigate further or explore issues relevant to your learners.

## Disability Services Standards

### **Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs**

<http://www.fahcsia.gov.au>

This website has information about:

- ▶ Disability Services Standards 2007
- ▶ Standards for Disability Employment Network (DEN)
- ▶ Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS)
- ▶ targeted support services.

Please note that FaHCSIA will publish a quality strategy toolkit early in 2008 that will contain all such relevant information.

## Workplace policies and procedures

The Disability Services Standards require that Disability Business Services have policies and procedures in place that relate to the issues discussed in the scenarios.

## Discrimination and harassment

### **NSW Premier's Department**

[http://www.eeo.nsw.gov.au/pdf/harassmentfree\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.eeo.nsw.gov.au/pdf/harassmentfree_guidelines.pdf)

This website contains definitions and guidelines relevant to harassment.

### **Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission**

<http://www.hreoc.gov.au/>

### **The Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW**

<http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adb>

## Conflict resolution

### **Conflict Resolution Network**

<http://crnhq.org/index.php>

The Conflict Resolution Network is a great resource to help you manage conflict. It includes free training, information about books and manuals, and summaries of publications. The material on the 12 skills of conflict resolution and gender-linked values (The Gentle Revolution) may be of particular interest.

## Abuse

<http://www.wvda.org.au/keran.htm>

Violence against women with disabilities – an overview of the literature (Howe 2000).

## Bullying

Turney, L 2003, 'Mental health and workplace bullying: The role of power, professions and 'on-the-job' training', *Australian e-journal for the Advancement of Mental Health*, vol. 2, no. 2, viewed at:

[www.auseinet.com/journal/vol2iss2/turney.pdf](http://www.auseinet.com/journal/vol2iss2/turney.pdf)

## Solving problems

[www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)

Australian National Training Authority FGIG 28A *Solve problems in the workplace (basic to national competency)*.

Bolton, R 1986, *People skills: How to assert yourself, listen to others and resolve conflicts*, Prentice Hall, Melbourne.

## General resources

Jay, R 2003, *How to handle tough situations at work: A manager's guide to over 100 testing situations*, Pearson Education, England.

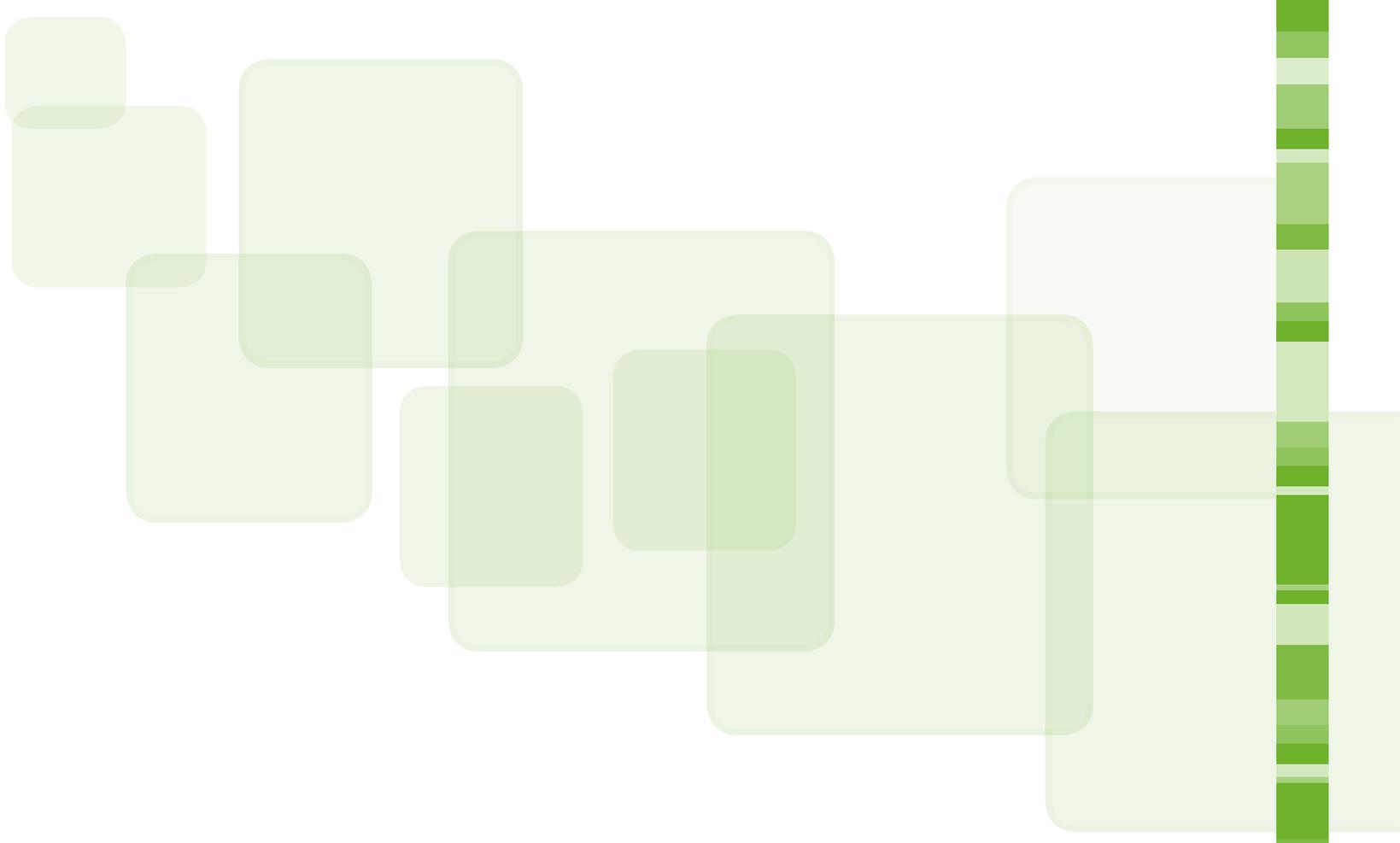
### **Victorian WorkCover Authority**

<http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au>

This website is important in setting workplace dilemmas in a workplace safety context.



# Appendices



## Appendix 1

### Worksheet 1: Four steps to solving problems

<p>If you think you have a problem, think about ... Is there a problem? What is the problem?</p>	<p>Who is involved in the problem?</p>
<p>Why is there a problem?</p>	<p>How can the problem be solved?</p>

**If you think you have a problem, think about ...  
Is there a problem? What is the problem?**

Yes there is a problem. Samantha is bossy.

**Who is involved in the problem?**

Samantha  
Mary  
Phillip

**Why is there a problem?**

Samantha thinks she is helping Mary and Phillip by finishing off their work.  
Mary doesn't like Samantha doing this.  
Samantha thinks she is being very helpful.

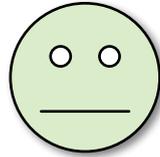
**How can the problem be solved?**

Phillip and Mary ask Samantha if they could have a talk and explain to her they don't like her taking over their work.  
Samantha works at another station.  
Phillip and Mary get more training so they work faster.

## Appendix 2

### Worksheet 2: How would you feel if this happened to you?

- 1 A job that you would like to do has been given to someone else.



My notes

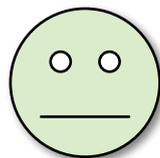
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- 2 Someone tells you they do not want to work with you anymore.



My notes

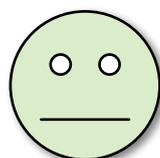
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- 3 Another worker tells you that you are doing your job wrong, when you know this is not true.



My notes

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## Appendix 3

### Scenarios

#### Samantha's story

Samantha is a fast worker. Her co-workers think she is bossy. Samantha is always first to finish her work. When she is finished, she often goes over to where Phillip and Mary sit and says, 'I will finish your work for you'. Phillip and Mary have been getting sick of Samantha doing this.

Last week Mary was very angry with Samantha and pushed her aside saying, 'You leave me alone, Miss Bossy Boots'. Samantha started crying and said, 'I was only trying to help'.

#### Bruce's story

Bruce has been acting strangely. He used to be one of the best workers on his line at XYZ Packaging, but lately he has been making a lot of mistakes. He also seems to be having trouble concentrating on his work.

Last week a customer sent back an order because more than half of it was wrong. Bruce had done this order. Because it needed to be done again it cost XYZ Packaging a lot of money.

Some of his co-workers have noticed that Bruce has been talking to himself. He also told two members of his team to throw all the boxes with red labels into the rubbish bin. When they checked with the supervisor they found out that this was wrong.

Bruce doesn't seem to notice that what he is doing is causing problems.

#### Lily's story

Lily and Jelena work together at DFL Enterprises, a business service which has a food section that makes lunches for businesses. Everyone who works in the food section must do a training course, Certificate II in Food Handling.

Lily has been working with Jelena in the mail section at DFL for the last four years. When the food section was set up six months ago Lily was asked if she would like to work there. She told her supervisor that she was happy to stay where she was. Recently Jelena has been asked to do the Food Handling course by Martin, who is the supervisor in the food section. After she finishes the course she will move into that section.

Because Lily hasn't been asked to do the course, she is very angry. She has been taking it out on Jelena, and saying nasty things to her. Lily has said that she has always wanted to join the Army, and doing this course would help her to get in.

'I could be an officer now, if DFL had put me through the training. It's not fair. They give training to some people but not everyone. Only the favourites.'

Lily has been telling people that Jelena has been given the chance to do the course because Martin, the supervisor of the food section, 'fancies her'.





