

when i'm at work: stopping abuse

a fact sheet for supported employees



This fact sheet tells you:

- ▶ what your human rights are
- ▶ what abuse is
- ▶ about the different kinds of abuse
- ▶ what you can do if you are abused
- ▶ who can help you to stop abuse.

What are your human rights?

The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** says that everyone in the world has the right to **freedom, justice and peace**.

This means that you have the right:

- ▶ to live without fear
- ▶ to feel safe where you live, and enjoy the same rights that other people do.

These rights spread into every part of your life, for example, your family, home, community and workplace. They include the right to:

- ▶ make your own decisions about things
- ▶ get help and a fair go if you are in trouble
- ▶ work where and when you choose.

If your rights are not looked after, you might be abused. There are laws to stop this from happening.



What is abuse?

Abuse means that another person harms or hurts you in some way. Abuse can happen anywhere, for example, at home, in the community, or at work.

Abuse can happen to anyone, not just to people who you might think are weaker than others or different from others. It can happen to you.

It is very important that you:

- ▶ know if abuse is happening to you
- ▶ get help to stop the abuse if it is happening to you.

What kinds of abuse are there?

There are different forms of abuse.

Physical abuse

(Source: www.disabilityhotline.org)

Physical abuse is when someone hurts you by touching you, for example, by:

- ▶ punching you
- ▶ hitting you
- ▶ slapping you
- ▶ burning you.

Emotional abuse

(Source: www.disabilityhotline.org)

Emotional abuse is when someone hurts your feelings or makes you upset. It can include:

- ▶ calling you names
- ▶ telling you things to make you frightened.

Sexual abuse

(Source: www.disabilityhotline.org)

Sexual abuse includes being:

- ▶ touched on your private parts when you have not said it is okay
- ▶ forced to have sex when you do not want to.

Chemical abuse

(Source: www.disabilityhotline.org)

Chemical abuse includes being forced to take medication (tablets or injections), or illegal drugs, when you do not want to.

Financial abuse

(Source: www.disabilityhotline.org)

Examples of financial abuse include other people taking your:

- ▶ money
- ▶ personal things and using them without asking you first.

Verbal abuse

Verbal abuse includes someone saying things about you that are not nice.

It could also be someone saying nasty things about what you say or do.

Civil or legal abuse

Civil or legal abuse includes not being allowed to:

- ▶ use your rights as a citizen, for example, not being allowed to vote (if you are an adult citizen of Australia)
- ▶ speak for yourself, or to choose who will speak for you if you have to go to court.



What is abuse in the workplace?

Anyone could be abused in the workplace. You could be abused by:

- ▶ your co-workers
- ▶ supervisors
- ▶ support staff
- ▶ managers
- ▶ anyone else at work.

Workplace abuse can take any form, for example:

- ▶ physical
- ▶ financial
- ▶ verbal
- ▶ sexual
- ▶ chemical
- ▶ emotional.

What can you do if you are abused?

If you think you are being abused it is very important that you tell someone who you trust about it.

Telling someone can stop the abuse from happening again. This is called **reporting the abuse**.

If you tell someone but nothing happens and the abuse goes on, do not give up. Tell someone else.

Reporting abuse outside work

If the abuse is happening in your home or outside work, tell someone who you trust and think can do something about it. This could be:

- ▶ a family member
- ▶ a support worker
- ▶ a member of your church
- ▶ the police.

You need to make sure you give details like:

- ▶ what is happening
- ▶ why you think you are being abused
- ▶ when it is happening
- ▶ who is abusing you.



The person you tell should listen to what you are saying and should do something quickly to stop the abuse from continuing.

They should tell you what they are going to do, and how long they will take to do it.

They should also tell you how they will let you know what is going on about your complaint.

If you tell someone but they do not do anything about it, do not give up. Tell someone else.

Reporting abuse in the workplace

Abuse is against the workplace laws of Australia.

All Disability Business Services that are funded by the Australian Government have policies and procedures to protect the rights of people with disability. The Disability Services Standards agree with this. The Standards also help to protect the rights of people with disability.

If you work in a Disability Business Service, your workplace must stop abuse from happening.

The Disability Services Standards (the rules that Business Services must follow) make this clear.

Disability Services Standard 12 is about the protection of human rights and freedom from abuse. This means that your workplace must make sure that you are safe and treated fairly when you are at work.

Your workplace rights

Your workplace must stand up for your rights when you are at work and when you are training.

Your workplace must make sure that nobody can:

- ▶ hurt you
- ▶ talk to you in a way that you do not like
- ▶ treat you badly because of your disability.

Workplace complaints

Your workplace has a complaints policy. If abuse is happening to you at work, the workplace's complaints policy will tell you how to make a formal complaint about it.

Your support worker, supervisor or manager can help you with this. They can give you a copy of the complaints policy and tell you the things you need to do if you want to make a formal complaint.

One of your rights as a worker is to have access to these things and to get help to use them if you need it.

Other people who can abuse you

Sometimes, the people you rely on for support can also be the people who abuse you. They could be people like parents or guardians, support workers, supervisors, or team leaders.

If this is the case, you should report the abuse to someone else, for example, another supervisor or manager, another relative or a good friend, or the police.

Contacting an advocacy service

Your workplace will also be able to give you details about how to contact an advocacy or complaint service. These are other places you can contact if you need help.

It is very important to remember that abuse harms you in all sorts of ways, not just physically.

If someone is abusing you, they are taking away your human rights and you should tell someone it is happening.

Who can help you stop abuse?

If you are in danger call the police

Phone: 000

TTY: 106

Speech to speech relay service phone: 1800 555 727

From mobile with no network coverage: 112

If you need help, but are not in danger, you can call the following people.



National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline

You can talk to the people at the National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline about abuse issues, or to find out more about what the people there can do to help you.

The Hotline can also help you if you need someone else to talk about your problem for you, and to sort it out quickly. This is called 'advocating' for you. The Hotline will find that special person for you.

Telephone: 1800 880 052 (free call)

Fax: 02 9318 1372

TTY: 1800 301 130 (free call)

NRS: 1800 555 677
(ask them to call the Hotline for you)

Website: www.disabilityhotline.org

Email: enquiries@disabilityhotline.org

The Hotline is open from 8am to 8pm across Australia, seven days a week.

If you do not speak English, contact the Telephone Interpreter Service on 131 450.

Complaints Referral and Resolution Service

People at the Complaints Referral and Resolution Service (CRRS) can help you with any problems about abuse that you have. It is their job to help you sort out these problems.

Remember that anything you say to people at the CRRS is confidential. They will not tell anyone else what you say.

Telephone: 1800 880 052 (free call)
02 9370 3174

Fax: 02 9318 1372

TTY: 1800 301 130 (free call)

NRS: 1800 555 677
(ask them to call the CRRS for you)

Website: www.crrs.org.au

Email: crrs@pwd.org.au

You should ask your supervisor or support worker if you need further help.

This might include contacting a local:

- ▶ counselling and support service
- ▶ sexual assault centre
- ▶ refuge or shelter.