

GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS WHEN RECEIVING REPORTS/DISCLOSURES

It takes an incredible amount of courage for a person to disclose their experience of sexual harm and harassment. Managers hold a key position to influence how a person feels about an organisation's response to their experience.

As a manager, your role is to:

- be empathetic and sensitive;
- provide a safe space for staff to share their experiences;
- let staff know that they have your support and you are available to discuss their options;
- be familiar with guidance and resources, including from LPA;
- know where to go for advice, support and information if required;
- engage genuinely with staff, including acknowledging when you don't have all of the answers;
- foster a positive organisational culture; and
- promptly identify and respond to concerns as they arise.

Your response matters and is critical in maintaining your staff members' trust and confidence in your organisation.

KEY PRINCIPLES

To adopt a best practice approach to support staff members who have disclosed their experience of sexual harm and harassment, managers should act consistently with the following principles:

- **Respect victim-survivors** by taking a trauma-informed approach which supports, listens to and validates their experience. Your role is to inform victim-survivors with options and facilitate their chosen pathway with timely responses and by practising good record keeping.
- **Believe victim-survivors** who disclose that they have experienced sexual harm and harassment. Believing a person's account of their experience is not the same thing as making findings or decisions about their complaint.
- **Take a safe, considered, sensitive and timely process** when responding to sexual harm and harassment.
- **Provide ongoing support** by facilitating access to support services, informing a person of their options to take leave, and nominating an appropriate person to check in with victim-survivors and persons who have received disclosures of harm.
- **Embody accountable leadership** to empower your staff to be informed, active upstanders by upholding and championing these principles through your own considered actions, words and decisions.
- **Foster positive community knowledge and understanding** by taking proactive steps to educate and inform your staff and reinforce your organisation's position that sexual harm and harassment will not be tolerated.

- **Practice sound decision-making** unhindered by the status, power or influence of the parties involved and protect those who come forward from victimisation.
- **Support cultural sensitivity and safety** for all staff by being aware of cultural differences and by recognising and addressing cultural and linguistic barriers, including through engagement with community elders and interpreters as a means to ensure culturally sensitive support.
- **Respect intersectionality** to understand, respect, and embrace the many aspects of a person's identity in preventing and responding to sexual harm and harassment. These may include Indigeneity, race, ethnicity, socio-economic background, migration status, age, disability, religion, sex, gender, gender identity and sexuality as well as a range of individual unique characteristics and experiences.

GUIDANCE FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

The first priority for a first responder is to consider whether there is any serious or imminent risk to health or safety. If so, please call police or an ambulance on 000.

After you have taken steps to minimise any serious or imminent risk to health or safety, the role of a first responder is to listen, provide information, and facilitate access to services if the person requests it.

First responders are encouraged to use the **HEARTS response** when receiving disclosures of harm (which may include sexual harassment, discrimination, bullying or victimisation).

Hear

- Let the person use their own words to articulate what happened.
- Avoid asking too many questions. You're not there to investigate or judge the accuracy of their statements.
- People who have experienced traumatic events can have disjointed or fragmented recollections, appear confused, and can react highly emotionally or appear detached or unemotional.

Empathise

- Speak to the person with empathy and compassion.
- Tell them you're sorry this has happened to them.
- Focus on their physical and emotional wellbeing.

Affirm

- That you believe them.
- That it is not their fault.
- They did the right thing by telling you.

Record

- Be observant; remember what is being said.
- Make a written record to help the person later, including the who/what/when/where of what they told you.
- Keep any notes confidential and secure.

Tell someone

- Inform the person they can make a report to authorities, an appropriate person in your organisation and/or access support services.
- You can provide them with a print out of relevant services.
- Inform the person that the opportunity to collect forensic evidence after a sexual assault is time limited and that if they seek medical assistance to have the evidence collected they can decide later if they want to proceed with speaking to police.
- Helping the person to understand their options empowers them to regain a sense of control over the situation.
- It's not your role to decide what they do next. Your role is to provide them with information so they can decide.
- Don't make any promises you can't keep.

Self-care

- Debrief and seek support for yourself.
- Support services are available to people who have received disclosures.