

Customer aggression 104-02010010

Background

This document outlines information and provides links to materials to support staff when handling unreasonable customer conduct, including customer aggression.

Preventing and Managing Unreasonable Customer Conduct policy

Unreasonable customer conduct includes [customer aggression](#), [unreasonable complainant behaviour](#) and other unreasonable behaviour as defined in the policy [Preventing and Managing Unreasonable Customer Conduct](#). This document establishes the framework for managing [unreasonable customer conduct](#) in the Department of Human Services and includes:

- who the policy applies to
- the 'Prevent, Respond, Recover' model
- key principles that underpin the department's approach to managing unreasonable customer conduct

Unreasonable customer conduct may arise through any service delivery channel (including face to face, phone and online).

The [Resources](#) page contains information to help staff manage customer aggression and links to additional resources on the Intranet. Choose from the relevant links below:

[Definitions](#)

[Customer aggression guidelines](#)

[Restricted Servicing Arrangements](#)

[Escalation guidelines and staff support](#)

[Customer support](#)

[Training](#)

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Resources

This page contains information and links to assist staff when dealing with unreasonable customer conduct, including customer aggression.

On this Page:

[Escalation Guidelines](#)

[Customer aggression management](#)

[Additional resources](#)

Escalation Guidelines

This attachment may not be printed, broadcast or released externally. For contact details and more information, see [Information Publication Scheme](#).



[Escalation Guideline - Office closure as a result of a serious threat](#)

This attachment may not be printed, broadcast or released externally. For contact details and more information, see [Information Publication Scheme](#).



[Escalation Guideline - Handling phone threats](#)

Customer aggression management

Definitions, guidelines, management and reporting

This table provides information and links to assist staff dealing with customer aggression.

Category title	Description
Definitions	<p>What is unreasonable customer conduct and customer aggression? + Read more ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer aggression including violence, is any actual, attempted or threatened physical or psychological harm to a person, or any actual, threatened or attempted property damage. Actions are generally deliberate, unauthorised by the department, its staff or third parties, and undertaken without the consent of those affected by the actions. Customer aggression may also include a pattern of intimidating or fear inducing behaviour. • Unreasonable complainant behaviour includes conduct by way of unreasonable persistent contact, demands, or arguments, which may be in the form of complaints to or about the department, or more general correspondence or interactions. Actions are generally deliberate. Individuals may behave in an uncooperative manner and may also be aggressive in their communications with the department. • Unreasonable customer conduct may also refer to behaviour which includes, but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ anti-social behaviour ◦ harassment ◦ discrimination ◦ bullying ◦ cyber-bullying by customers. Cyber-bullying is behaviour, using digital technologies (including social media and other online networking tools), that could reasonably be considered to be humiliating, intimidating, threatening or demeaning to a person, or group of persons, and which creates a risk to health and safety. Examples include harassment via a mobile phone or setting up a defamatory personal website.
Customer aggression guidelines	<p>What are the Customer aggression guidelines? + Read more ...</p> <p>The Customer aggression guidelines provide information for all staff about the prevention and management of customer aggression in line with the department's definition of unreasonable customer conduct.</p> <p>This may include but is not limited to:</p>

- threatening or offensive behaviour
- swearing
- using a weapon
- verbal abuse
- physical violence
- stalking or harassment

Restricted Servicing Arrangements

What are Restricted Servicing Arrangements? [+ Read more ...](#)

Some customers respond to interactions with the department in ways that are aggressive, inappropriate or threatening.

Depending on the nature of the behaviour we may restrict a customer's access to our services. [Restricted Servicing Arrangements](#) include, but are not limited to:

- **time based restrictions** - for example, excluding a customer from using our services for 24 hours. This could arise after a customer has become angry or disruptive and needs some time to calm down.
- **specific service restrictions** - for example, excluding a customer from face to face telephone or written communication services. This could arise after a customer has been disruptive or has committed or threatened an assault or other attack in a service centre. For all RSA letter templates, see [Restricted Servicing Arrangements \(RSA\)](#). **Note:** For staff delivering Child Support services these letters can only be issued by the Personalised Services team.
- **restricting a customer to only dealing with a certain officer** - for example, if a customer becomes easily distressed when dealing with staff but can attain a level of comfort with a specific officer.

Escalation guidelines and staff support

How do I address customer aggression? [+ Read more ...](#)

If a customer threatens to attend a departmental site with the intent to cause harm and/or damage refer to the [Escalation Guideline - Office closure as a result of serious threat](#).

If a customer makes a threat or displays aggressive behaviour over the telephone refer to the [Escalation Guideline - Handling phone threats](#).

To escalate urgent or high profile issues refer to the [Escalation Coordination Team](#).

Note: Staff should attempt to engage police support for violent customers or those in possession of a weapon or threatening death to themselves or a staff member. Customer contact staff follow [local response procedures](#).

Staff can become distressed when dealing with inappropriate or offensive behaviour. Threats of attack, self-harm or suicide can leave a staff member scared or distressed. See [Threat to self-harm and/or to harm others](#).

Support is available to assist all managers and staff in preventing and dealing with incidents of customer aggression. See [Addressing customer aggression](#).

When faced with incidents of customer aggression or abuse, staff are encouraged to:

- **talk** - resources to help you and your manager talk about customer aggression and to prepare for potential incidents,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • report - information about recording and reporting all incidents of customer aggression. To report a security incident, see How to report security incidents. • support - tools available to assist staff in preventing and managing incidents of aggression and unreasonable customer behaviour. <p>For links to the topics above, see How do I manage customer aggression?</p>
<p>Customer support</p>	<p>How can I support distressed customers? + Read more ...</p> <p>Customers who are distressed about personal issues such as finances, housing or relationships, suffering from depression or contemplating self-harm or suicide, may require immediate referral to a social worker or other welfare agency.</p> <p>The following links provide staff with information to support customers in these situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Release of information following threat of self-harm or to harm others • Child Support eReference: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Child Support Customer Referral Services • Centrelink eReference: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Identifying customers for referral to a social worker • Operational Blueprint: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Referring customers to welfare agencies ◦ Eligibility and assessment of an urgent payment • Medicare specific resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Medicare complaints and feedback handling procedures
<p>Training</p>	<p>What training is available? + Read more ...</p> <p>Learning and Development provides the customer aggression training standards and related course codes for the Learning Management System (LMS). These courses and related material enable staff to manage and strengthen individual knowledge around abusive, angry customers. They will assist staff in how to deal with disruptive incidents, inappropriate and offensive (swearing) customers.</p> <p>These courses may also provide improved mental capacity to deal with threats including bombs, self-harm, weapons and suicide. See also: Learning portal in ESSentials</p>

Additional resources

[Customer aggression fact sheet](#)

[Malicious Call Trace Procedures](#)

[Front of house signage](#)

[Safety and emergency procedures and support](#)

[Safety Reference Centre](#)

Bomb threats