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| Code of conduct for disability service workers |
| Frequently asked questions for disability service workers |

# Introduction

Everyone has a right to be respected, to feel safe and to be free from abuse.

Victoria’s *Code of conduct for disability service workers* applies an obligation of zero tolerance of abuse of people with a disability, and prescribes the behaviour expected of you as a disability service worker.

# Why is a code of conduct being introduced?

Recent inquiries and investigations, including the *Parliamentary inquiry into abuse in disability services*, have shown that abuse of people with a disability is widespread and that suspected abuse has often been ignored or not adequately addressed.

The Victorian Government is working with disability service workers and disability service providers to uphold the rights and dignity of people with a disability and to encourage and promote good practice.

As part of the Victorian Government’s commitment to embed the principle of zero tolerance of abuse into the delivery of disability services, the code of conduct is being introduced to better protect people with a disability now and into the future.

# What do I need to do as part the code of conduct?

The *Code of conduct for disability service workers: zero tolerance of abuse of people with a disability* provides a framework for ethical decision-making and outlines general standards of behaviour expected of disability service workers. It contains five obligations that all disability service workers must abide by, and example behaviours that demonstrate what each obligation looks like in practice, and what it might look like if the obligation has been violated.

# What will the code of conduct mean for me?

All disability service workers **must** abide by and sign up to the code of conduct by signing a declaration acknowledging and agreeing to abide by the obligations in the code of conduct.

A disability service worker is defined as:

* A worker engaged by a disability service provider who:
	+ - provides, or supervises or manages a person who provides, direct support to a person with a disability, and
			* has direct contact or access to a person with a disability.

Disability service providers also have obligations under the code of conduct. For more information see [*Code of conduct for disability service workers:Implementation instruction for employers – A toolkit for disability service providers*](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/code-of-conduct)<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/code-of-conduct>.

# What happens if I don’t want to sign a declaration?

The purpose of the code of conduct is to promote adherence to a zero tolerance of abuse of people with a disability, and to highlight the obligations a worker must abide by.

In the first instance, you should raise any concerns you have about signing a declaration with your employer to see whether together your concerns can be addressed.

You are still bound by the obligations contained in the code of conduct, even if you have not signed a declaration. Any violation of the code of conduct will be investigated and managed through your organisations usual disciplinary processes.

Your organisation may use appropriate human resources processes, their own policies, obligations arising under contract law and industrial instruments to manage situations where a worker does not sign up to the code of conduct.

# What if my employer already has a code of conduct?

Your employer can continue to use their own code of conduct. However, existing codes of conduct must be consistent with and cover the material outlined in the *Code of conduct for disability service workers.* It is your employer’s responsibility to ensure that their existing code of conduct is consistent with the zero tolerance of abuse obligations in the department’s code of conduct.

# What options are available to me for reporting abuse?

If you see, suspect or are told about a case of abuse, you must take immediate action. This includes reporting the abuse to your manager or supervisor. It may also be necessary to report the matter to an external authority. For instance, if a senior staff member is suspected of committing abuse, or if the senior staff member does not adequately respond to the incident, you should seek advice or make a complaint through an external pathway. A list of external pathways is available at the [code of conduct page](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/code-of-conduct) <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/code-of-conduct>.

# More information

You can visit the department’s [disabilty abuse prevention information hub](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/disabilty-abuse-prevention) <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/disabilty-abuse-prevention> to access information, toolkits, websites, training resources and guidelines tailored for individuals, workers and providers. The code of conduct can be accessed from the code of conduct page <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/code-of-conduct>.

Alternatively, if you have any policy queries you can contact Ms Amanda Leitch, Manager, Legislative Policy and Safeguarding Projects, Disability and NDIS Branch at amanda.leitch@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

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