



ALLIANZ AUSTRALIA INSURANCE LIMITED

Workplace Violence and Aggression Response Management Protocol

Defusing is a one-off 'check in' which should be provided following an incident of workplace violence and aggression (WVA). It is delivered by a leader or peer supporter who was not present at the time of the incident, and aims to address any immediate emotional response. The goal of defusing is to support any impacted employees to process the experience, not to retell the incident in detail. It is important to provide informal support to prevent further psychological injury. After defusing, a follow-up check in should occur one week later, and repeated if necessary.

Tips for speaking with staff:



Beforehand, ask yourself:

"Am I the best person to speak with this person?"

If not, identify an alternative contact point ASAP.



Things to avoid:

- **Asking the employee to retell their experience/s.** Instead focus on how they can be supported.
- **Don't try to resolve their distress,** rather validate their feelings and experience and give them time to process how they are feeling.
- **Talking about your own experience/s** or minimising the incident.
- **Using humour.**



What to do:

- **Choose a safe, comfortable and private/confidential environment.**
- **Allow enough time** so that the employee feels genuinely cared for, not rushed or dismissed.
- **Listen and show genuine concern,** rather than focusing on saying 'the right thing.'
- **Maintain a calm, reassuring approach.** Focus on how the employee is feeling, what would be helpful and what happens next rather than retelling or deep diving the event itself.



Follow-up:

Aim to have the same leader/peer supporter that completed the defusing, complete the follow-up. This is important for continuity of the response management process. However, if this is not possible the next most appropriate person should follow-up, as any support is better than none.

5 Principles of Psychological First Aid: Consider these during a defusing conversation or check in:



Sense of Safety

- **Promote and reassure** a realistic sense of safety to allow the employee to reduce their state of stress and distress.
- **Prevent exposure** to additional stressful experiences and remove the employee from the immediate environment where the incident occurred.
- **Example:** *'I don't expect you to return to that room. You are safe now.'*



Calming

- **Provide reassurance and validation** that feeling distressed is understandable and normal given the circumstance.
- **Example:** *'I can see you are quite distressed right now, and that is understandable given what you experienced.'*



Self-efficacy

- **Following an incident**, an employee may feel overwhelmed and have difficulty with prioritising their needs.
- **Assist the employee** to re-frame their expectations of themselves to what is achievable, highlighting what is within their control.
- **Example:** *'What has helped you in the past when you have had to deal with stress? What has been not as helpful?'*



Connectedness

- **Promote family, friend, and professional connection** to enhance recovery by providing emotional, material, and physical support.
- **Example:** *'I can support you to access counselling services, would this be helpful for you?'*
- **Example:** *'Who will be there today when you get home? Can you share with them how you are feeling and some things that would be helpful for you over the next day or two?'*



Hope

- **An incident may create feelings of hopelessness** and overwhelm an employee.
- **Provide a sense of hope** by focusing on the person's strengths and ability to move forward from the experience. Share insights or reflections from times they have coped well in the past or things that may be helpful.
- **Example:** *'You are doing such a great job of managing things considering how tough this has been. I can already see progress.'*

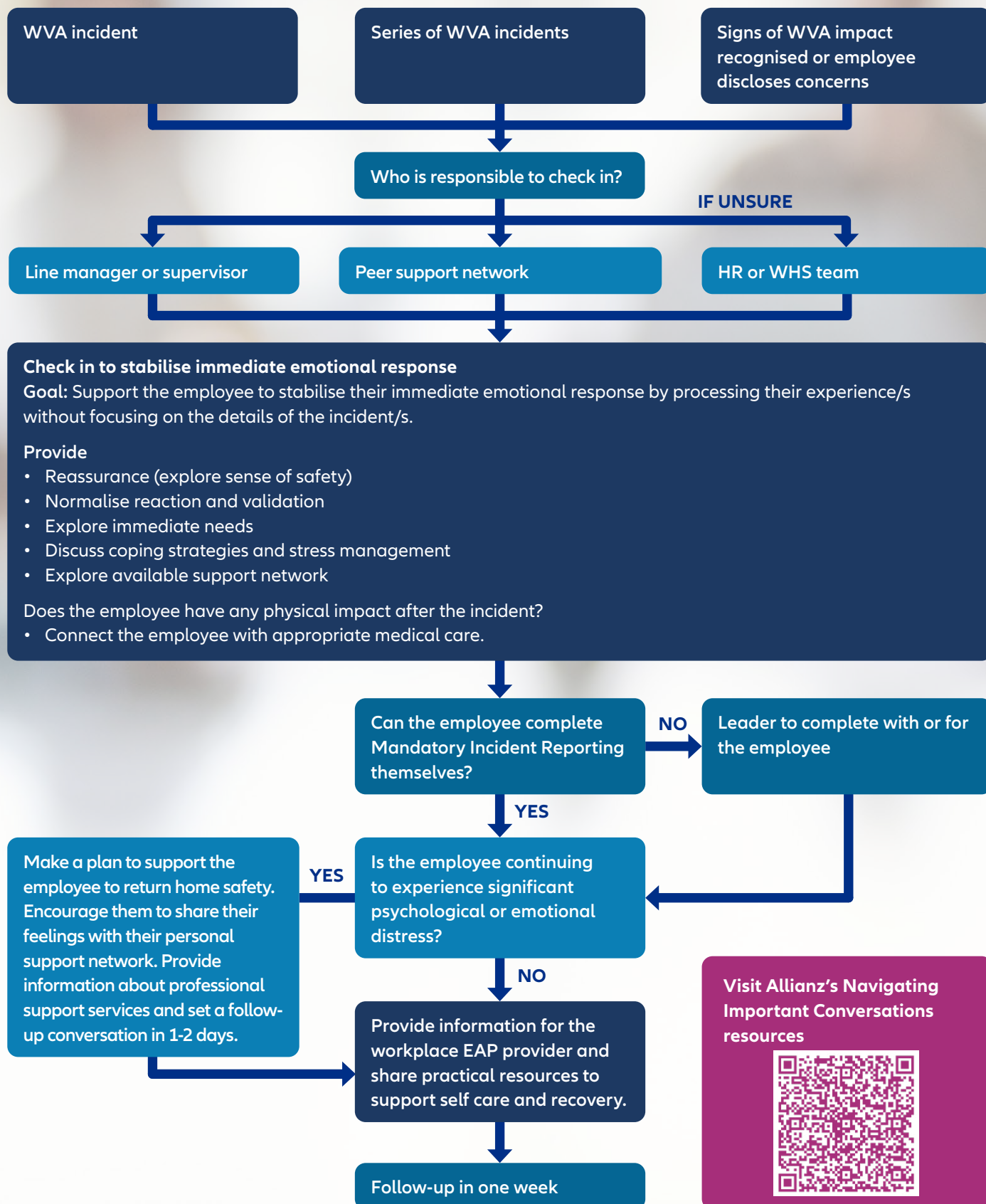


Defusing:

In the following hours to days since the incident or first signs of impact recognised:

? Considerations:

- Is the environment safe and comfortable?
- Is the environment quiet and private?



Visit Allianz's Navigating Important Conversations resources





Ongoing check-in and follow-up

In the following days to weeks after the first check-in and repeat as necessary:



Considerations:

- Is the environment safe and comfortable?
- Is the environment quiet and private?

First follow-up

Continued signs of impact recognised

Can the same person that completed the defusing check in, complete this follow-up?

YES

NO

Contact person to request that they complete this follow-up

Most appropriate person to proceed with follow-up, any check-in is better than none

Follow up conversation to monitor impact of the WVA incident:

- Are you feeling supported?
- What sorts of coping strategies are you using? (identify to maximise positive strategies and encourage minimising any harmful coping strategies)
- Are there any additional supports that can be offered to you?

YES

Is the employee experiencing ongoing concerns or emotional distress?

NO

Make a plan to adjust the employee's work duties as suitable. Encourage them to share their feelings with their personal support network. Provide information about professional support services and set a follow-up conversation within the next week.

Provide a reminder of information for the workplace EAP provider and share any additional practical resources to support self-care and recovery. Develop a plan for any other required supports. Where possible provide an update regarding how the incident is being investigated and responded to by the workplace.

Repeat follow-up process as needed



Indicators of Psychological impact:

- Absenteeism
- Avoiding similar situations
- Avoidant behaviours or change in performance
- Changes in mood
- Isolated

Visit the Allianz Workplace Mental Health Hub



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