

MANAGING DIFFICULT BEHAVIOURS

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Policy Number:		Version:	2
Drafted by:	Strategic Finance Executive	Board approval on:	June 2023
Responsible Person:	Strategic Finance Executive	Scheduled Review Date:	June 2024

INTRODUCTION

Big Yellow Umbrella's staff and volunteers will occasionally have to face clients or other persons who become aggressive, abusive, angry, or difficult to deal with. Whilst being unpleasant and confronting, these situations can be managed to achieve positive outcomes in most cases.

PURPOSE

The safety and wellbeing of our clients, staff, volunteers, students, and visitors is Big Yellow Umbrella's top priority.

The purpose of this document is to:

- Guide Big Yellow Umbrella's staff, volunteers, and students to deal with persons exhibiting difficult behaviour with the objective of achieving a safe and satisfactory outcome for all concerned.
- Ensure services and resources are fair and equitable for all Big Yellow Umbrella (BYU) service users.
- Ensure the health and safety of BYU staff, volunteers, and students.
- Define unreasonable behaviour and demands.
- Ensure that BYU staff, volunteers, and students are aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to the management of unreasonable behaviour and demands, and how these procedures will be used.
- Ensure that BYU staff, volunteers, and students feel confident and supported in taking appropriate action to manage unreasonable customer conduct.

Definitions

Persons exhibiting difficult behaviour are those whose behaviour is threatening, intimidating, or extreme, and which can pose a risk to the health and safety of BYU staff, volunteers, and students. This includes:

- Persons who make excessive phone calls or who seek excessive personal contact.
- Persons who cannot be satisfied.
- Persons who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol and acting irrationally.
- Persons who make unreasonable demands on BYU whether by:
 - The amount of information they seek, or
 - The value and scale of services they seek, or
 - The number or frequency of approaches they make.
- Persons who act in a rude, angry, abusive, or aggressive manner by:
 - Making inflammatory statements or comments, or
 - Making statements or comments clearly intended to intimidate.
 - Engaging in personal abuse including name-calling and using profanities directed at a person.

Anger is tension and hostility which arises from frustration, real or imagined injury by another, or a perceived injustice. It can manifest itself in behaviours designed to remove the object of the anger (e.g., determined

actions such as protesting, arguing), or behaviours designed to express emotion (e.g., swearing, screaming). It varies in intensity, duration, and frequency, and can range from mild irritation to full-blown rage. It may sometimes lead to aggression.

Aggression is behaviour which intends to harm someone or something through threats or violence. It can be expressed using verbal threats or physical force.

POLICIES

This Policy and Procedures applies to all staff, volunteers, and students of BYU.

When difficult, abusive, or aggressive situations occur and the procedures listed below are inadequate, staff, volunteers, and students must immediately call for assistance from another staff or volunteer. 000 must be called if this aggressive situation continues to escalate.

All incidents of aggressive or abusive behaviour must be reported to the Chief Operations Manager or Strategic Finance Executive as soon as possible and an Incident Form must be completed.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chief Operations Manager and the Strategic Finance Executive are responsible for the implementation and monitoring of all aspects of this Policies and Procedures.

All staff, volunteers, and students are responsible for reading and understanding this Policies and Procedures.

The Chief Operations Manager or the Strategic Finance Executive is responsible for determining any appropriate action to be taken against the difficult, abusive, or aggressive person or persons.

PROCEDURES

The following procedures apply:

Strategies For Dealing With Difficult Behaviour

The following general strategies are suggestions from Psychologytoday.com.au for dealing with difficult behaviour:

- **Stay calm and listen.** Listening is the most effective way to deal with "unreasonable" persons. Everyone wants to feel heard, acknowledged, and understood. Use a low, calm, even monotone voice. Don't try to talk over the person. Wait until the person takes a breath and then speak.
- **Don't judge.** Persons who act unreasonably are likely to be feeling vulnerable, worried, or afraid.
- **Reflect respect and dignity** toward the other person. Showing contempt will not help productively resolve the situation.
- **Look for the hidden need.** What is this person really trying to gain and/or avoid?
- **Look for others around you who might be able to help** if you feel unsure about how to manage someone's difficult behaviour.
- **Don't demand compliance.** For example, telling someone who is upset to be quiet and calm down might agitate them more. Instead, ask the person what they are upset about and allow them to vent.
- **Saying, "I understand," can worsen a situation.** Instead, say: "Tell me more so I can understand better."
- **Avoid smiling,** as this may look like you are mocking the person.
- **Avoid using humour,** as it is risky and may backfire.
- **Set limits and boundaries.** You have the right to be assertive and say: "Please don't talk to me like that."
- **Don't argue** or try to convince the person displaying difficult behaviour of anything.
- **Keep extra space between you and the other person.** If someone is already upset, avoid touching them, as it might be misinterpreted.

- **Try to defuse the situation** telling the person displaying difficult behaviour that you are sorry, or that you will do your best to help them.
- **Trust your instincts.** If you feel that the person's behaviour is getting worse, be ready to act to ensure your safety. Look for an exit strategy and whether 000 should be called.
- **One response does not fit all.** Remain flexible. Although these guidelines have proven effective in de-escalating tough situations, every person is unique and may respond differently.

Further Procedures For Dealing With Difficult Behaviour

If the above strategies have not been helpful in dealing with a person's difficult behaviour, the appropriate procedures as listed below are to be followed:

Dealing with persons who cannot be satisfied.

Despite the best efforts of BYU, some persons may not be satisfied with the service/help/support they receive from BYU, or with the action taken in response to their complaint. If in the opinion of the Chief Operations Manager and / or the Strategic Finance Executive, where a person who cannot be satisfied and where all appropriate avenues of internal review or appeal have been exhausted and the person continues to write, telephone and/or visit BYU, the following actions may be taken:

Staff members to complete **incident reports** and keep them on file, notifying the Leadership Team when the situation becomes unmanageable.

The relevant Leadership Team member will notify the person in writing advising if the person continues to contact BYU regarding the matter. BYU may then:

- Refuse to accept any further calls from the person.
- Require all further communication to be put in writing either by letter or email; and
- Notify all staff in writing about the situation and the course of action they need to take if dealing with this client.
- Notify Big Yellow Umbrella's Board of the situation, the actions that have been taken including that all incidents have been recorded and kept on file.
- Continue to receive, read, and file correspondence but only acknowledge or otherwise respond to it, if:
 - The person provides significant new information relating to their complaint or concern; or
 - The person raises new issues which, in the Leadership Team's opinion, warrant fresh action.

The period for this notification will be at the discretion of Management.

The person shall be given an opportunity to make representations about BYU'S proposed course of action to Big Yellow Umbrella's Board.

Dealing with people who take up too much of BYU staff's time.

Staff should clearly explain to the person involved what the issue is and ensure this correspondence is kept on file. Staff and clients should be encouraged to use email rather than phone when corresponding, to avoid any unnecessary contact. This often deters most people. Staff should:

- Inform them that they will respond at their earliest convenience.
- Notify the Chief Operations Manager and / or the Strategic Finance Executive of any actions taken.

- Continue to review all correspondence from this person in case new issues are raised that warrant fresh action.

Dealing with persons who try to exercise too much personal contact.

Staff who feel that clients or service users are trying to exercise too much personal contact should:

- Notify the Chief Operation Manager and / or the Strategic Finance Executive of their concerns and whether this personal contact is causing them to feel unsafe.
- Complete an **incident report** and put on file in case future issues arise.
- If the staff member feels comfortable, set appointment times in an open office environment to limit the person contact.
- If this excessive personal contact continues, BYU Board are to be notified, the client will be refused service and incident reports will be kept on file.
- The staff member is to be offered support through the EAP.

Dealing with persons who make unrealistic or unreasonable demands for services or assistance.

When dealing with a person who makes unrealistic demands for services or assistance:

- Staff should be assertive but respectful and explain clearly and briefly the reason why BYU is unable to help.
- Demonstrate to the client that you are willing to offer alternative help either through BYU or as a referral to another organisation.
- If the client refuses to accept the explanation, the staff can explain the organisation's complaint procedure and provide a copy of the BYU Complaints Management Policy and Procedures for information on this process.
- If the situation escalates, please refer to actions to be taken when a person is angry or aggressive.

Persons who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol and acting irrationally.

When dealing with persons who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol and are acting irrationally:

- Try to remain calm, and speak in a calm, clear, and slow voice to the person.
- Use an 'open' body stance: arms open, palms up, head lowered.
- **Give the person some physical space to minimise their feelings of confinement.** If possible, remove furniture or objects that the person might use aggressively. Turn down the lights as this may calm them down. Explain what you are doing, e.g., "I am just moving some things out of your way, so that you don't hurt yourself."
- **Give the person time to think and respond.** Slow things down as much as possible. When they speak, listen to what they say, and show them you understand e.g., "that must be really upsetting" or "if that happened to me, I'd feel the same way".
- If the behaviour intensifies, **give the person a choice to help them feel like they are still in control.** For example, "if you continue like this, I'll have to leave and call the police. But if you calm down, maybe we can find another way to help."

- It is important to consider your exit points and who else is in the building that can help if necessary. If the client is too intoxicated to receive support, the staff member should remove them from the building immediately with help from staff and management.
- **If at any stage you feel like you need to leave, do so.** Call the police (000) for help and remove yourself from the situation. This is especially the case if your exit is blocked, if the person is already too hostile, unstable, overly fearful, too intoxicated to respond to you, is threatening you or others, or has a weapon.
- **An incident report** is to be written and kept on the client's file. Management is to be notified immediately.

Persons who act in a rude, angry, abusive, or aggressive manner

For a range of reasons, a small proportion of service users will display rude, angry, abusive, or aggressive behaviour in their interactions with BYU staff, volunteers, or students. All staff have the right not to be subjected to any rude, abusive, or aggressive behaviour which includes:

- Threats of, or acts of, physical harm or violence.
- Inappropriate religious, cultural, or racial insults.
- Homophobic, sexist, or other derogatory remarks.

When such behaviour becomes offensive or dangerous to the extent that it interferes with the safety, security, or emotional wellbeing of any staff member, volunteer, or student of BYU, it may be necessary to give clear messages that such behaviour is unacceptable. If in the opinion of any staff member, volunteer, or student, any person who makes rude, angry, or abuse comments or statements in person, telephone conversations or email, the staff member should:

- If safe, warn the offender that if the behaviour continues the conversation will be terminated; and
- Terminate the conversation or interview if the rude, angry, or aggressive behaviour continues after a warning has been given.
- It is the responsibility of the Chief Operations Manager and / or Strategic Finance Executive to notify the BYU's Board of the incident and keep records on file.
- If in the opinion of Management, any correspondence to BYU that contains personal abuse, inflammatory comments, or material clearly intended to intimidate, threaten, or harm, will be returned to the sender, and not otherwise acted upon.
- Persons who have been deemed difficult persons in accordance with one of the categories as defined in this Policy may be excluded from accessing programs and services provided by BYU.
- If at ANY TIME a staff member, volunteer, or student feels unsafe due to someone's difficult behaviour, they should exit the situation without hesitation and find a safe place, such as room which they can lock from their side, or a room in which there are other people. If they are unable to do so, they should use their phone to try and send a text message to any nearby colleagues to alert them of the situation. They should then call the Police on 000 to request assistance.
- If a staff member, volunteer, or student of BYU is physically assaulted by a client or service user in the course of their work with BYU they should call the Police on 000 and report the incident. This client will be prohibited from using BYU services into the future.
- An **incident report** must be completed, management notified immediately, the BYU's Board notified, and the staff member, volunteer or student offered counselling through EAP or somewhere better suited to the person. BYU will cover all necessary costs. Management will manage any ongoing issues related to this incident.

RELATED DOCUMENTS
Access & Equity Policy

Anti-discrimination Policy
Bullying & Harassment Policy
BYU Incident Form
Clients Record Policy
Code of Conduct Policy
Complaints Management Policy
Confidentiality and Declaration Policy
Customer Service Policy
Delegation Policy
Disclosure of Information Policy
Drug & Alcohol Policy
Psychologytoday.com.au
Recovery Orientated Policy
Risk Management Policy
Staff Induction Policy
Trauma Informed Care Policy
Volunteer Management Policy
WH&S Policy
Working Alone Policy

AUTHORISATION

The Board of Big Yellow Umbrella has reviewed and approved this policy.

Signature of Board Secretary: _____

Date of approval by the Board: _____

On behalf of the Big Yellow Umbrella