

Preparing for and preventing aggressive customer behaviour

The retail sector is experiencing significant pressures due to increased in store traffic as well as COVID-19 related factors, which are likely to increase the risk of unacceptable customer behaviour. Challenging or aggressive behaviour can have an impact on an employee's psychological health and safety.

Whilst there are many factors that can trigger aggressive behaviour that are outside of your control, **the way you respond** is within your control.

Preparing for aggressive customer behaviour is one of the most important steps in keeping you safe at work.

We know that we can not prevent 100% of customer aggression. If incidents do occur, ensure that you:

- Stay calm and slow down your speech and movements.
- Respect the customer's personal space and protect yours.
- Consider using natural obstacles e.g. counters if the situation is escalating.
- Report the incident via appropriate channels and ensure your manager is informed.
- Where possible, take some time out in a back tearoom or stock room and reach out to your manager if you require further support.

In Order To Prepare Consider The Four S's:

Safety

- **Your safety is the number one priority.** If you feel unsafe, always reach out for support e.g. colleague, manager, security guards or emergency contacts.
- Do not attempt to apprehend or physically intervene in a situation involving aggressive behaviour unless you have been trained to do so. Notify the police and let the offender leave the store.

Self

- Recognise and monitor your fatigue and energy levels. Do they fluctuate? How are you feeling today?
- Be aware of your triggers: What situations do you find difficult to manage?
- Recognise your limits and capabilities.
- Remember to communicate with your team.

Surroundings

- Consider your work environment e.g. know your CCTV cameras, security guards and internal and external exit routes – especially if you move between sites/stores.
- Take note of any natural obstacles e.g. counters, barriers or where you stand.

Supports

- Know who you can call for support/backup.
- Ensure there are appropriate working alone procedures in place.
- Consider the use of a code word that can be used by team members to discreetly flag that they may need assistance (before behaviour escalates).

For more information on managing customer aggression and supporting your mental wellbeing visit eml.com.au/resources or scan the QR code

