CHQ Values in Action – Expect Respect – Conversation Guide

Expect respect – stay calm – be kind

Our values of Respect, Integrity, Care and Imagination guide how we interact with each other across CHQ. Sometimes, staff are exposed to rudeness from patients, families of patients or visitors (consumers) and even, rarely, from our colleagues. This Conversation Guide is to help you deal with a disrespectful conversation – in person or on the telephone.

Incivility and rudeness are known to contribute to workplace distress and burnout, can escalate into overt violence, and contribute to patient harm through errors and poor teamwork\(^1\text{-}\text{4}\). We all have the right to work within a safe workplace. We also know that civil interactions at work are an important part of feeling safe and appreciated at work.

However, it is also important to recognise that many patients, parents or colleagues who act in a way we feel is rude may be upset, frustrated, frightened or distressed by outside events. That is why, while we can and should expect respect, a professional response includes staying calm (which helps to avoid further emotional escalation) and being kind.

There are several organisational responses that may be helpful.

1. Our Code Black procedure outlines management of personal threat. Follow this procedure if you feel personally threatened, or at risk of violence or unsafe verbal aggression. If it is safe to do so – move yourself and others to a place of safety. Activate a duress alarm or call 555 and state Code Black and location for an immediate response by Security. See here for the procedure:  

2. Our statement of consumers' rights and responsibilities includes reminders that consumers have a responsibility to treat staff and other patients with dignity, courtesy and respect, and to behave in a manner that is not aggressive or abusive.  

3. If you feel able to speak to the person who you perceive as disrespectful, you may use the script below or similar words to calm the person or end the conversation.

Some words to try on the phone (speak calmly):

“"I am sorry that you are upset (or angry or disappointed as appropriate)."

“I do want to help you. However, I am not able to help you when you are talking to me in this way. Please call back when you are calm, and I will help you.”

(Pause to allow the person to continue if more respectful, but if disrespect continues advise the caller that you will end the call.)

“Unfortunately, I will need to end this call now. Please call back when you are calmer.”
Some words to try in person (stay calm):

“I am sorry that you are upset (or angry or disappointed as appropriate).

“I do want to help you. However, I am not able to help you when you are talking to me in this way.

“Please contact me again when you are calm, and I will talk with you then.”

(Pause to allow the person to continue if more respectful but leave if disrespect continues or if you feel unsafe.)

“Unfortunately, I need to leave now. Please contact me again when you are calmer.”

1. After dealing with disrespect, please talk with your manager, or the manager of the area. They will be able to support you.

2. Enter the incident into Riskman. In ‘Who was affected?’ select Worker ‘Type of incident’ - select classification of Occupational Violence and other relevant.

3. For repeated disrespectful communication by a consumer, consider a behavioural agreement with the consumer in question. Contact your manager.

For managers

- Please check in with your staff member and consider their need for support.
- For repeated disrespectful communication by a consumer, consider need for a behavioural agreement with the consumer in question - discuss this with your divisional leadership team or the Executive Director of Clinical Services.

References


