Support and referral services for apprentices and trainees

Purpose

To provide support and referral services to apprentices and trainees experiencing difficulties.

Overview

This procedure relates to referral services available to apprentices and trainees who may be experiencing stress during their training contract term by providing limited counselling services and/or referral options to community-based/government agencies.

This procedure includes referrals to:
- the contracted fee for service provider
- government or community agencies
- Workplace Health & Safety Qld (WHSQ), and
- Fair Work Commission (FWC).

Responsibilities

Regional Office, Training and Skills, Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT):
- Make an assessment of the particular issue/situation.
- Determine the degree of risk to the apprentice or trainee.
- Take the necessary actions based on the risk assessment (with assistance from the regional management team if required).
- Maintain a list of government/community agencies available for referrals.

Queensland Apprenticeship and Traineeship Office (QATO), DESBT
- Reconcile the account in regard to urgent professional assistance sessions.

LifeWorks.com Pty Ltd (formerly known as Optum Health & Technology (Australia) Pty Ltd)
- Forward an invoice directly to QATO for reconciliation and payment.
- Advise the relevant regional office of the apprentice’s or trainee’s attendance at appointments after the last counselling session service.
- Provide permissible advice on any outcomes.

Process

A regional officer must make contact with the apprentice or trainee, and employer (if applicable), when they become aware of a situation involving a critical incident, non-critical incident, or allegations regarding bullying.

If the apprentice or trainee is 18 years or older, the decision to report allegations of sexual abuse remains with the apprentice or trainee. If the apprentice or trainee is under 18, mandatory reporting exists (refer to Mandatory reporting for direction.)

Critical incidents

For situations that are assessed as critical, the regional officer must make a decision on whether the situation:
- warrants urgent professional assistance, or
• can follow the process as described for situations assessed as non-critical incidents.

**Urgent professional assistance**

Referrals for urgent professional assistance may be initiated where:

• immediate intervention is required, and/or
• community-based/government agencies are not available or cannot respond within a reasonable timeframe.

The contracted fee-for-service provider is LifeWorks.com Pty Ltd (formerly known as Optum Health & Technology (Australia) Pty Ltd). They may be contacted 24 hours a day, 365 days a year on telephone 1300 361 008.

The Regional Director may authorise three (3) initial sessions if referral to a community-based or government agency is unavailable. If required, an additional 3 sessions may be authorised under a further application.

Regional officer, DESBT:

• Complete the [Support and Referral Form](#) and forward to LifeWorks.com Pty Ltd.
• Email a copy of the [Support and Referral Form](#) to QATO at [OPRA@desbt.qld.gov.au](mailto:OPRA@desbt.qld.gov.au), for account reconciliation.
• Where appropriate, instigate the initial contact with LifeWorks.com Pty Ltd on behalf of the apprentice or trainee.
• Monitor the progress of the issue in regard to the training contract only.

LifeWorks.com Pty Ltd:

• Send the invoice to QATO.

QATO, DESBT:

• Maintain a record of sessions authorised by the relevant Regional Director.
• Check that the number of sessions provided has not exceeded the number authorised. Resolve any discrepancies with the relevant Regional Director.
• Send the invoice to Finance and Business Services for payment.
• Retain a copy of the invoice on the reconciliation file.
• Email the relevant Regional Director advising, for their information, that the apprentice or trainee has attended the authorised number of sessions.

**Non-critical incidents**

For situations that are assessed as non-critical, or are assessed as critical but do not require urgent professional assistance, the regional officer must:

• include and involve other parties (including the supervising registered training organisation) where necessary to reach a resolution
• make use of the educational material and practical resources available to assist in developing a safe, supportive and productive workplace
• discuss the issue with the regional management team to determine the best course of action in instances where the regional officer is experiencing difficulties
• provide the details of community/government agencies able to provide further assistance if the issue remains unresolved, and/or the apprentice or trainee has requested additional support.

**Details of community-based/government agencies**

Agencies include, but are not limited to:

• [Lifeline](#) – Telephone 13 11 14
• [Relationships Australia](#) – Telephone 1300 364 277
• [Kids Help Line](#) – Telephone 1800 55 1800
• Crisis Care – Telephone 1800 177 135
• [My Community Directory](#) – contains a comprehensive list of counselling services.

**Allegations regarding bullying**
The regional officer must take all reasonable steps to intervene at the workplace when they become aware of behaviours which may be workplace bullying.

DESBT cannot advise whether the behaviour is workplace bullying or whether or not it has occurred.

Regional officer:
- Schedule a visit to safeguard the well-being of all apprentices and trainees.
- Ask the party making the allegation if they have raised their concerns with anyone in the workplace.
- Visit the [Safe Work Australia website](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au) to assist with responding to bullying allegations.

If the workplace bullying issue is not resolved, the regional officer may provide information to the apprentice or trainee on how to lodge a complaint with WHSQ or FWC.

**Referral to WHSQ**

The regional officer may refer the apprentice or trainee to the [fact sheet on the role of WHSQ in workplace bullying complaints](https://www.hsqworkhealthsafety.qld.gov.au), and inform them that to lodge a complaint with WHSQ they must contact the Work Health and Safety Infoline on 1300 369 915 for an information package, which includes the address to send the complaint.

**Referral to Fair Work Commission**

The apprentice or trainee may also choose the option to lodge an application with the FWC, refer to [Fair Work Commission](https://www.fwc.gov.au) for more information in relation to anti-bullying.

**Definitions**

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<th>Critical incident</th>
<th>May include:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-harming attempts or threats of self-harm</td>
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<td>threat of harm to others</td>
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<td>recipient of threats or actual violence</td>
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<td>involved in or witnessing a robbery or other violence</td>
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<td>informed of or witnessing a sudden or unexpected death</td>
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<td>present when a fatality or serious bodily injury occurs</td>
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<td>seriously injured, or exposed to the risk of serious injury</td>
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<td></td>
<td>involved in a hostage or siege situation.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Non critical incident</th>
<th>Situations which may impact at the workplace include:</th>
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<td>apprentice or trainee has disengaged from training</td>
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<td>uncharacteristic behaviour</td>
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<td></td>
<td>learning problems</td>
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<td>general behavioural problems (e.g. attendance, attitude)</td>
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<td>long-term emotional problems that are not affecting the day-to-day functioning of the apprentice or trainee</td>
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<td>relationship problems</td>
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<td>serious medical or mental health issues</td>
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<td>substance abuse issues.</td>
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**Workplace bullying**

Workplace bullying is defined as repeated and unreasonable behaviour directed towards a worker, or a group of workers, that creates a risk to health and safety. Refer to the [Safe Work Australia](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au) website for further details.

**Bullying behaviour**

Behaviour that a reasonable person, having considered the circumstances, would see as unreasonable, including behaviour that is victimising, humiliating, intimidating or threatening. Examples of bullying behaviour, whether intentional or unintentional, include but are not limited to:
- abusive, insulting or offensive language or comments
- unjustified criticism or complaints
- deliberately excluding someone from workplace activities
- withholding information that is vital for effective work performance
• setting unreasonable timelines or constantly changing deadlines
• setting tasks that are unreasonably below or beyond a person’s skill level
• denying access to information, supervision, consultation or resources to the detriment of the worker
• spreading misinformation or malicious rumours
• changing work arrangements, such as rosters and leave, to deliberately inconvenience a particular worker or workers.

Legislation
• Nil

Delegations/Authorisations
• Nil

Related policies
• Code of Conduct, DESBT

Related procedures
• Nil

Guidelines
• Nil

Supporting information/websites
• Support and Referral Form (DESBT only)
• Fair Work Commission
• Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

Contact
For further information, please contact Apprenticeships Info:
• Website: www.apprenticeshipsinfo.qld.gov.au
• Telephone: 1800 210 210
• Email: apprenticeshipsinfo@qld.gov.au