Zero Tolerance Framework

Zero Tolerance is an initiative led by National Disability Services in partnership with the disability sector. It aims to assist disability service providers to understand, implement and improve practices which safeguard the rights of people they support.

This evidence-based framework outlines strategies for service providers to improve prevention, early intervention and responses to abuse, neglect and violence experienced by people with disability. An expanding range of Zero Tolerance tools and resources for the disability sector are available to support broader safeguarding approaches for people with a disability.

For more information and resources visit https://www.nds.org.au/resources/zero-tolerance

1. Understanding Abuse
   - Promote and apply human rights
   - Understand causes of abuse
   - Recognise risk factors and signs of abuse

2. Practices and Safeguards which can help prevent abuse
   - Implement policy and practice that protect people’s rights
   - Support empowerment of people with disability
   - Create the right organisational cultures

3. Addressing Risk for Specific Groups and Service Settings
   - Targeted approaches for groups at increased risk of abuse
   - Target service features and settings that increase risk
   - Reducing and eliminating restrictive practices

4. Responding to abuse
   - Early intervention and response
   - Supporting the person
   - Meet legal and organisational requirements

5. Analysis, Learning and Improvement
   - Maintain and analyse records
   - Continuous improvement
   - Support initiatives to reduce abuse
Zero Tolerance Framework

This table expands the Zero Tolerance framework to highlight specific areas that disability service providers should incorporate into their broader safeguarding approaches. Some topics may require multiple approaches to ensure understanding, ongoing training and action at appropriate levels of the organisation.

1. Understanding Abuse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promote and apply human rights</th>
<th>Understand causes of abuse</th>
<th>Recognise risk factors and signs of abuse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• apply the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)</td>
<td>• causes of abuse, neglect, exploitation, violence in disability services</td>
<td>• recognise when abuse is happening</td>
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<tr>
<td>• recognise abuse as a violation of human rights and the right to justice</td>
<td>• recognising lived experience</td>
<td>• individual and service risk factors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• power and control</td>
<td>• trauma informed approaches</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. Practices and Safeguards which can help prevent abuse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implement policy and practice that protect people’s rights</th>
<th>Support the empowerment of people with disability</th>
<th>Create the right organisational cultures</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• commit to person centred approaches</td>
<td>• listen to people with disability</td>
<td>• safe recruitment and screening practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• strong leadership</td>
<td>• provide information and training on rights, self-advocacy and speaking up</td>
<td>• establish cultures of respect</td>
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<tr>
<td>• clear policy and guidelines induction</td>
<td>• abuse prevention education and training</td>
<td>• set expectations about professional attitudes, behaviour and boundaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>• ongoing training and supervision</td>
<td>• support decision making &amp; risk enablement</td>
<td>• create positive speaking up cultures and address barriers to disclosure</td>
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<tr>
<td>• training on communication styles and support</td>
<td>• support access to relationship and sexuality training</td>
<td>• develop clear and accessible complaints processes</td>
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<tr>
<td>• whole of organisation commitment to human rights and abuse prevention</td>
<td>• build community connections</td>
<td>• develop clear whistleblower protections</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• engage family, friends and advocates</td>
<td>• open to external mechanisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• support access to preferred communication methods</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3. Addressing Risk for Specific Groups and Service Settings

**Target approaches for groups at increased risk of abuse**
- people with intellectual disability and ABI
- women with disability
- children and young people
- people with complex communication needs
- Aboriginal communities
- CALD communities
- people with limited/no informal supports
- people at risk of family violence

**Target service features and settings that increase risk**
- risk factors in accommodation settings
- respectful personal care
- systemic abuse
- remotely supervised services

**Reduction and elimination of restrictive practices**
- use positive behaviour support approaches
- recognising restrictive practices
- commitment to the reduction and elimination of restrictive practices

### 4. Responding to abuse

**Early intervention and response**
- intervene early: guidelines on responding to early indicators of abuse and trauma
- encourage bystander action
- clear expectations, policies and procedures for responding to disclosures and allegations
- take reports of abuse seriously
- timely reporting and action
- evidence gathering and record keeping protocols

**Supporting the person**
- ensure safety of victims
- responses informed by victim’s experience and wishes
- engage family, carers and significant others
- link to police, specialist services, complaints bodies, and advocacy
- address barriers to justice
- ongoing person-centred healing strategies
- trauma informed support

**Meet legal and organisational requirements**
- Acknowledgement - Actions - Answers - Apology
- clear disciplinary processes that protect victims
- rigorous approaches to investigations
- meet needs of whole organisation including other clients, families and staff
- communicate actions and outcomes
- meet legislative and stability obligations

### 5. Analysis, Learning and Improvement

**Maintain and analyse records**
- rigorous quality monitoring
- meet incident reporting requirements
- review and analysis of individual incidents
- maintain records on any alleged staff abuse
- recognise patterns of abuse

**Continuous Improvement**
- review staff knowledge and competencies
- use feedback and data to inform improvements
- explore systemic safeguarding gaps
- address organisational impacts of abuse

**Support initiatives to reduce abuse**
- use referee checks to identify people of concern in the sector
- work collaboratively with mainstream, specialist support services and advocacy
- contribute to cross-sector approaches

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