

Debriefing

Debriefing is a structured voluntary discussion aimed at putting a stressful event into perspective. **It is not counselling.**

Debriefing can be at an operational (healthcare service) or individual level.

Operational debriefing

Regardless of when the occupational violence (OV) incident occurs, the intention of the operational debriefing is to provide those affected with an opportunity to talk about what occurred with others who were involved and how they were affected by the incident (as soon as possible after the incident).

| Prompt | Action |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Who | <p>Ideally all healthcare workers (workers) impacted by, or involved in, the OV incident or incident response.</p> <p>Examples of workers involved include clinical, administrative, security, food services, wards persons, cleaning, volunteers, students, contractors.</p> <p>Participation in these sessions is voluntary and workers should be consulted as to whether they would like to participate.</p> |
| What | <p>Operational Debriefing are designed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• gain everyone perspective and understanding of the OV incident• determine whether there is a requirement to implement new risk controls or update policies, guidelines, processes, or procedures• determine whether there is a need for more education and/or training. |
| How | <p>Ideally, an operational debriefing will be held as a meeting conducted by a senior manager who was not involved in the event and is trained in the process, providing clarity to all in attendance of the debrief intentions and purpose.</p> <p>If the manager is unable to locate a suitable facilitator with the required debriefing skills, options include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• reaching out to senior managers (for advice or recommendations)• contacting the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for advice or to engage their services• communicating with affected workers, advising them of the potential delay and actions being undertaken to establish an opportunity to debrief. |

| Prompt | Action |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Where | <p>Operational debriefings should be conducted in a suitable space with adequate space, access, lighting, comfort, and privacy.</p> <p>When debriefing in a face-to-face setting is not available due to factors such as distance, location or timing, the facilitator can determine whether connecting the affected worker using technology is acceptable (for example: online meetings or by phone).</p> |
| Why | <p>Through conversation/discussion and reflection, the operational debriefing will look to understand the OV incident and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learn from the people who went through the process and involve them in the solutions • minimise any negative effects • evaluate the physical and emotional impact on workers • identify the need for counselling or support for workers involved. |
| When | <p>At an agreed place and time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a hot debrief – ideally occurs as soon as possible after the event to ensure all information is obtained before anyone leaves the workplace (or within 24 hours of the incident) • a formal debrief - typically occurs 1-2 days after the incident. <p>When the OV incident occurs out of business hours, the debrief may not be able to occur before people leave the workplace, or until the next business day. The timeframes identified are best practice suggestions. Managers need to work with the resources they have and do their best to provide the opportunities for affected workers. They may need to handover the requirement to an incoming Manager for follow-up during the next shift.</p> |

Operational debriefing is not critical incident psychological debriefing, as this has been shown in some cases to have the potential to cause harm by re-traumatising people or traumatising those who may not initially have been impacted by the incident. Psychological first aid or other support services should be provided to workers as required.

⇒ **Psychological first aid factsheet**
 ⇒ **Support services factsheet**

Individual debriefing (low impact debriefing)

| Prompt | Details |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Who | Any individual affected by OV. |
| What | A low impact debriefing provides an opportunity for an individual to express personal concerns or feelings about an incident with a colleague. |
| How | <p>A low impact debriefing involves informally talking with a colleague.</p> <p>Firstly, make sure the colleague knows what the individual wants to debrief about and has their permission to do so. This is important as the debriefing experience should not result in emotional trauma (injury or illness) for the person they are debriefing with.</p> <p>The following are four strategies you can share with workers on how to go about engaging in low-impact individual debriefing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Talk to them about having increased self-awareness<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Get workers to think about how they debrief, with who and how much detail do they provide/share?b. Ask them to think about who debriefs with them (who they listen to) and how much detail do they are given/hear?2. Remind them of the importance to provide fair warning to the listener, prior to starting the debrief and making sure the person they are debriefing to is aware that they want to talk about a critical incident.3. Remind them of the importance of asking for consent before they start debriefing. By asking for permission, it gives the listener the option to decline or clarify what they are able/not able to hear.4. Encourage them to start their debrief with low impact disclosure (the least traumatic information first) as it may not be necessary to provide all the graphic details (depending on how distressing the incident or event has been and the receptiveness/capacity of their listener). |
| Why | Typically, the individual is looking for support and validation of their feelings and their understanding of the incident. |
| When | At a time and place suitable for all individuals, typically in a private space. |

Operational debrief template

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------|-----------|
| Debrief Conducted by: | | |
| Date: | Time: | Location: |

OV incident

| Date | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|--------|
| Time | | |
| Location | | |
| Summary of OV incident | | |
| OV incident particulars | Comments | Action |
| Safety and/or medical response | | |
| People involved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • directly • indirectly | | |
| Contributing factors | | |
| Learnings, risk controls identified | | |
| Supports engaged for workers | | |

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

ACT Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land, the Ngunnawal people. ACT Health respects their continuing culture and connections to the land and the unique contributions they make to the life of this area. ACT Health also acknowledges and welcomes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are part of the community we serve.

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