

## DEALING WITH AGGRESSIVE PEOPLE

Aggressive or hostile people can be unpredictable.  
Your safety and the safety of others is the first priority.

The early stages of any confrontation are often the most dangerous.

If a staff member believes their safety or the safety of others is at risk, contact police immediately on Triple Zero (000).

### Assess

Stay calm and look around - who's nearby? where are the exits?  
Consider if drugs, alcohol or mental health might be involved.

### Listen

Let them talk. Acknowledge their problem/situation.  
Offer/explain available options if applicable.

### Respond

Don't react to their anger but respond to their concerns.  
Don't take insults personally.

### Space

Keep out of reach of their hands and feet.  
Use fixtures or objects to create distance.

### If the aggression continues

Ask them to leave. Move away and call police.

Page 1 of 2

Disclaimer: This publication contains only general guidelines and strategies for dealing with business security, and no guarantees or representations are made concerning their effectiveness. SAPOL accepts no responsibility for any injury or loss resulting from the application of these strategies.



SOUTH AUSTRALIA POLICE  
SAFER COMMUNITIES



Government  
of South Australia



## Assess

- Remain calm and consider where you are and who's around you.
- Try to make sure others are aware of the situation.
- Identify safe locations of exits /lockable doors, a phone or duress alarms (if available).
- What else may be involved? Substance abuse – (drugs or alcohol) the person may show rapid behaviour changes, trembling/twitches, changes to pupils/eyes. Mental health - the person may be anxious, not make sense or have low comprehension.
- Only one person should do the talking. Staff or bystanders not involved in the incident should not become an audience rather should discreetly monitor the situation for the safety of the person involved.

## Listen

- Let the person talk and listen to them.
- If they shout, tell them you'll listen, but politely ask them to lower their voice.
- Show interest and reflect back to the person that they have been heard.
- Acknowledge their problem or situation.

## Respond

- Respond to their concerns, don't react to their anger or take insults personally.
- Stay respectful. Try to restore a sense of justice for the person if applicable.
- Offer and explain available options if relevant.
- Keep your voice quiet and your body language non-threatening e.g. keep open hands by your side or in front of your chest with open palms facing forward.
- If you can't keep your cool, excuse yourself and move away. Take a breath.
- If you can't continue calmly, perhaps another staff member can assist.

## Space

- Stay safe! Keep out of their personal space and out of reach of their hands or feet.
- Use counters, displays, a vehicle or outdoor fixtures to create distance/space.

## If the aggression continues

- If a person refuses to calm down and continues to be aggressive, ask the person to leave.
- If they refuse, withdraw from the conversation and advise them police are being contacted.
- Do not turn your back on the person but consider moving yourself to a safer location e.g. a lockable office or a vehicle.
- Call police.

