

Operationalising Staff Protection in SingHealth

Ms Cass CHAY Jwee Cheong

Chief Operating Officer
National Neuroscience
Institute, Singapore

Co-chairman
Anti-abuse Committee
SingHealth



A ROUNDTABLE TO TALK ABOUT **CONNECTING THE DOTS**

ABUSE & HARASSMENT IN THE HEALTHCARE ECOSYSTEM



- Cass has served as Chief Operating Officer of National Neuroscience since 2021. In addition to this role, Cass also oversees the SingHealth Operations Shared Service - Workplace Safety and Health.
- Starting her 20-year healthcare career first as a data analyst at the Singapore General Hospital, Cass moved on to corporate roles such as Strategic and Performance Planning and assumed headship roles in Clinical Operations Management in Singapore General Hospital and Sengkang General Hospital.





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Chief Operating Officer, National Neuroscience Institute

Chief Operating Officer (Workplace Safety and Health), SingHealth

Operations Lead, SingHealth Staff Protection Office

Co-chairman, SingHealth Staff Protection Council

Growing problem of abuse

'We're also humans': Healthcare workers face physical, verbal abuse in their workplace



A patient at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital threatened to strip healthcare assistant Marisol Zabellero Villabrille three months ago. AP/WIDE WORLD

Moh Nio Yu

UPDATED DEC 15, 2022, 11:09 AM

SINGAPORE - Three months ago, a patient threatened to strip Ms Marisol Zabellero Villabrille, a healthcare assistant at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital.

She had to accompany him into the toilet as intensive care unit patients are not allowed to use the washroom by themselves. But he was uncomfortable with her presence and grew increasingly agitated.

After the patient's threat was issued, a colleague nearby intervened on her behalf and "scolded" the patient, and the hospital's security team arrived quickly to de-escalate the situation by taking the patient back to his bed.

Definition of Abuse and Harassment:

Words, communications, actions or behaviours that are inappropriate, threatening and insulting, and cause healthcare workers to feel intimidated, alarmed or distressed



I read the report on front-line healthcare workers being verbally abused by anxious patients with sadness (Healthcare workers struggle as Covid-19 patients flood emergency rooms, Feb 25).

This pandemic brings out the best and the worst of people.

Many healthcare workers, especially front-line staff, have been receiving verbal abuse from patients and their families more frequently during the pandemic.

I hope the public understands that the sheer rise in patient load from Covid-19 infection will affect the medical care of both Covid-19 and non-Covid-19 patients.

Manpower is further stretched by doctors and nurses testing positive for Covid-19.

Studies have shown that healthcare workers receiving abuse from patients or their relatives have poorer morale, poorer mental health, higher absenteeism and resignation, and poorer clinical outcomes.

It is high time the Government took an active role in cracking down on abuse of this kind.

Consider punitive measures such as imposing a fine or blacklisting abusive patients and relatives.

Desmond Wai (Dr)



PUBLISHED DEC 13, 2023

Healthcare workers need better protection from abuse; new measures in place by June 2024: Ong Ye Kung



“Healthcare workers need better protection from abuse”;
“Medical staff should not be expected to tolerate abuse”

Health Minister Ong Ye Kung

SINGAPORE - By June 2024, all public healthcare institutions such as hospitals and polyclinics will implement a new standardised framework to curb abuse of healthcare workers.

The framework, launched on Dec 13, includes a common definition of abuse and harassment, standardised protocols for response and measures that can be taken against abusers.

This comes after the Tripartite Workgroup for the Prevention of Abuse and Harassment of Healthcare Workers released its findings in March 2023, following a survey of more than 3,000 healthcare workers and 1,500 members of the public in the second half of 2022.

It found that more than two in three workers had witnessed or experienced abuse or harassment in the year preceding the survey. Among the affected workers, 75 per cent did not report the incidents, enduring the abuse in silence.

The workgroup comprises representatives from the Ministry of Health (MOH), Healthcare Services Employees' Union, public healthcare clusters, community care partners and private healthcare providers.

Healthcare institutions should consider giving affected staff time off to prepare for and attend police interviews.

They may also guide and support staff who wish to lodge a magistrate's complaint or file a claim with the Protection from Harassment Court.

Necessary support such as medical treatment, reassignment of duties and mental health help will be offered to abuse victims, and such assistance should be extended to outsourced or contract-for-service staff who are working in the institutions.

Regardless of police outcomes and proceedings, healthcare institutions can also take concurrent and appropriate actions against perpetrators.

Depending on the severity of abuse or harassment, institutions may issue verbal or written warnings to perpetrators, disengage and bar abusive next of kin or visitors from visiting patients for a period of time, and refuse unreasonable requests.

Healthcare institutions can also discharge abusive patients who do not need urgent medical care and document the behaviour of recalcitrant abusers in their medical records so healthcare workers may take appropriate precautions.

For example, to protect themselves during an incident, healthcare workers can take actions like firmly telling the perpetrator to stop, activating security personnel or administering restraints on the abuser as a last resort.

Each public healthcare institution will have a staff protection team to oversee proper and fair reviews of all abuse and harassment incidents.

Victims are also encouraged to call the police if they are threatened with harm or injured.

SingHealth group CEO Ivy Ng said: “We value our patients who entrust us with their care, and our staff who give of their best every day. We strive to provide a healing and safe environment and to do so, it is imperative that we treat each other with mutual respect and kindness.”

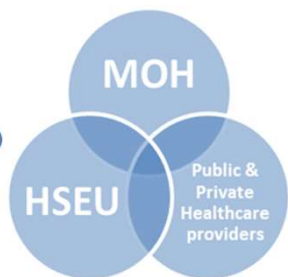


Defining Tomorrow's Medicine

MOH & SingHealth's Efforts

APR 2022

Tripartite Workgroup (TWG) formed for the Prevention of Abuse and Harassment of HCWs



A/Prof Phua Ghee Chee
GD, Staff Wellness



A/Prof Tracy Carol Ayre
Group Chief Nurse

SHS TWG Members

APR 2023

SingHealth Anti-Abuse Committee (AAC) established to spearhead and operationalize a coordinated cluster effort against staff abuse and harassment by external perpetrators (patients, NOKs, visitors) in alignment to TWG recommendations



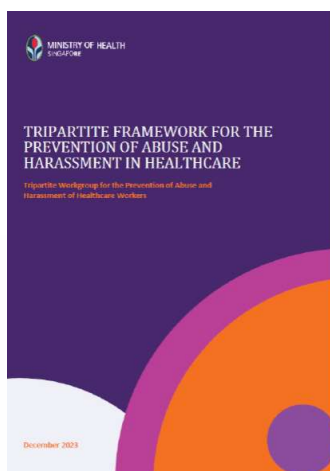
AAC Co-Chairpersons

Ms Cass Chay Jwee Cheong
COO Workplace Safety, SH
COO, NNI

Ms Christina Lim Poh Ying
CN, Crisis Planning and
Nursing Operations, SH
CN, SKH

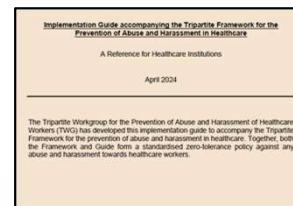
DEC 2023

Tripartite Framework published



APR 2024

Tripartite Framework Implementation Guide published



JUN 2024

Standardization of protocols, within SingHealth to align to TWG Framework



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CN, SKH

DEC 2023

APR 2024

JUN 2024

Setting the stage for the Staff Protection Program

- Senior management sponsor and champion
- Group level Anti-Abuse Committee
 - Led by senior staff
 - Comprising mid to senior level staff from all institutions
 - TOR is to establish the basic elements of the Staff Protection Program based on the 3 pillars of Protect, Prevent and Promote
- Group and Institution level Staff Protection Office



Staff Protection Program Elements



Protect healthcare workers who face abuse and harassment

PROTECT

- Definitions of abuse & harassment (A&H)
- A&H management strategy
- Framework for reporting and escalation
- Supporting structures and internal actions



Prevent situations that lead to abuse and harassment

PREVENT

- Measures to mitigate risk of A&H
- System of investigations, reviews and sharing of best practices
- Develop effective training plan
- Education to manage and avoid abusive situations



Promote positive relationships between healthcare workers and patients / caregivers.

PROMOTE

- Define management's commitment of zero tolerance
- Develop effective communications plan to raise public awareness
- Educate staff and members of public on measures to avoid abusive situations

Staff Protection Program Elements

Harnessing representation from stakeholder staff groups across all Singhealth to kickstart institutions

PROTECT Leads

Clinician
Nurse

PREVENT Leads

Clinician
Nurse

PROMOTE Leads

Patient Experience
WSH

- Define abuse and harassment in healthcare context
- Review, refine and develop the Staff Protection Program guiding policies and workflows
- Research and develop Training Program to manage abuse and harassment in healthcare context
- Communications strategy and plan for internal and external stakeholders
- Internal webpage repository of resources for SingHealth institutions.

Staff Protection Program Elements

Harnessing representation from stakeholder staff groups across all Singhealth to kickstart institutions

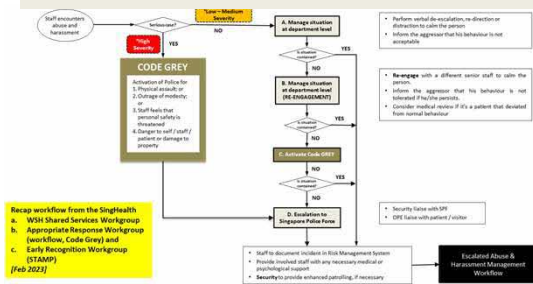
PROTECT

PREVENT

PROMOTE

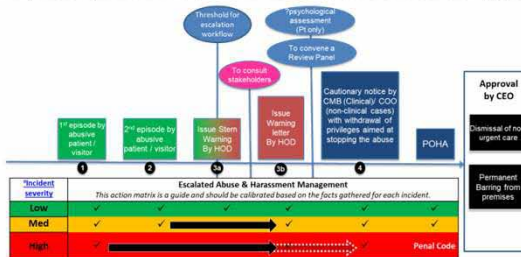
Harmonised policy and practices to manage abuse & harassment (A&H) in SingHealth

Ground Response plan



Escalated A&H Management workflow

Action plans must be stepwise and cumulative in preparation of ultimatums → but every step deters the next; and fulfills aim of stopping abuse

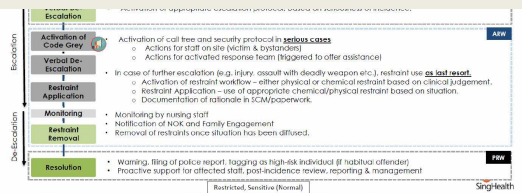


Review Panel to assess A&H cases warranting Cautionary Notices

COMPOSITION OF REVIEW PANEL	
Patient and patient care related cases	Non-patient related cases
*CMB	*COO
*Institutional Staff Protection Office	
*HOD of staff directly related to the case	
Care team for the patient (clinician, nurses, allied health professionals (therapists, MSW, pharmacist, psychologists, outpatient team etc)	Care team for the patient that may be related to the perpetrator (clinician, therapist, MSW, pharmacist, psychologist, outpatient team etc)
Any other department representative that may have input on the case	
*Support – Security, OPE (Office of Patient Experience, Corporate Communications)	
TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR REVIEW PANEL	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make a decision on the follow up actions to be taken in the case, with reference to the Warning Letter. To recommend coordinated management of possible future encounters with the patient / visitor To provide a fair and balanced argument for consideration of dismissal of non-urgent care or barring from hospital 	

Overview of Management Workflow & Code Grey Activation

Code Grey Activation



At SingHealth, each staff is encouraged to report A&H

Incident Reporting System



FOR INTERNAL CIRCULATION ONLY
18 September 2023
Dear colleagues,
Implementation of the SingHealth Incident Reporting System (IRS)
The system aims to:
1. Support a safe and secure incident reporting process with robust system functionalities.
2. Support all incident reporting or safety incident reporting systems, and
3. Capture relevant data to support trends analysis and informed decision making at the division and hospital levels.
The SingHealth IRS, which staff is now encouraged to report incidents and near misses. The central design features of the system include a streamlined reporting process, which will set us up to engage in continuous feedback and reporting. This allows patient safety and incident reporting, as well as the dissemination of your reported findings to complete the safety culture of knowledge and best practices.

Proposed Severity Classification of Abuse and Harassment

Severity Classification of Incidents

Type of Incident	Proposed Severity Classification of Abuse and Harassment		
	Level 1 - Low	Level 2 - Moderate	Level 3 - High
Physical assault	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document for incident responses to be recorded (e.g. physical assault, sexual harassment, etc.) Document for incident responses to be recorded (e.g. physical assault, sexual harassment, etc.) Document for incident responses to be recorded (e.g. physical assault, sexual harassment, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document for incident responses to be recorded (e.g. physical assault, sexual harassment, etc.) Document for incident responses to be recorded (e.g. physical assault, sexual harassment, etc.) Document for incident responses to be recorded (e.g. physical assault, sexual harassment, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document for incident responses to be recorded (e.g. physical assault, sexual harassment, etc.) Document for incident responses to be recorded (e.g. physical assault, sexual harassment, etc.) Document for incident responses to be recorded (e.g. physical assault, sexual harassment, etc.)



Row's Medicine

Staff Protection Program Elements

Harnessing representation from stakeholder staff groups across all Singhealth to kickstart institutions

Protect

PREVENT

PROMOTE

Harmonised policy and practices to manage abuse & harassment (A&H) in SingHealth



SingHealth Training Framework to Prevent Abuse and Harassment

SHS Training Framework (1) Champions against Abuse (2) eLearning

4. The Central Health Services will form a Centralised SingHealth training pool to train other staff

Phase I: Prioritise the training of staff in Inpatient (psychiatric / dementia wards) and Emergency Departments which are identified as High Risk violence areas.

Phase II: To gather feedback from Phase I training before making recommendations to CEO/CMB on Phase II of the training of other groups of staff.

Target: 30% of frontline staff to be trained by FY2025

20

Staff Protection Program Elements

Harnessing representation from stakeholder staff groups across all Singhealth to kickstart institutions

PROTECT

PREVENT

PROMOTE

Harmonised policy and practices to manage abuse & harassment (A&H) in SingHealth

Defining SHS Management Commitment to build a healing and safe place for both patients and staff

AS A PATIENT, I PLEDGE TO...

PATIENT AND HEALTHCARE TEAM CARE PLEDGE

AS A HEALTHCARE STAFF, I PLEDGE TO...

- SAFEGUARD**
Ensure the safety of all and stamp out abusive and rude behaviour
- COMMUNICATE**
Communicate respectfully and clarify concerns
- RESPECT**
Show understanding and treat you with respect and kindness
- INFORM**
Provide clear, timely and complete information for shared decision making
- PARTNER**
Be responsible and play our part in this healthcare journey
- TRUST**
Ensure the safety of one another and trust professional standards

SingHealth DukeNUS
ACADEMIC MEDICAL CENTRE

PATIENTS. AT THE HEART OF ALL WE DO.™

Logos for various SingHealth entities: Singapore General Hospital, Chang Ghee Memorial Hospital, Singapore General Hospital, KK Women and Children's Hospital, National Cancer Centre Singapore, National Dental Centre Singapore, National Heart Centre Singapore, National Neuroscience Institute, Singapore National Eye Centre, SingHealth polyclinic hospitals, and SingHealth Region.

A central repository of materials and resources

Home News Hub Work Services Groups IT Applications People Divisions & Departments Cyber & Data Gov

SingHealth HQ > Protecting You From Abuse and Harassment by Patients and Caregivers

Protecting You From Abuse and Harassment by Patients and Caregivers

Protecting You From Abuse
by Patients and Caregivers

How do I know if I am abused? What to do if I am abused?

What to do if my staff is abused? (for supervisors and HCOs) How can I train myself to resist abuse?

Anti-Abuse Awareness Materials (Internal)

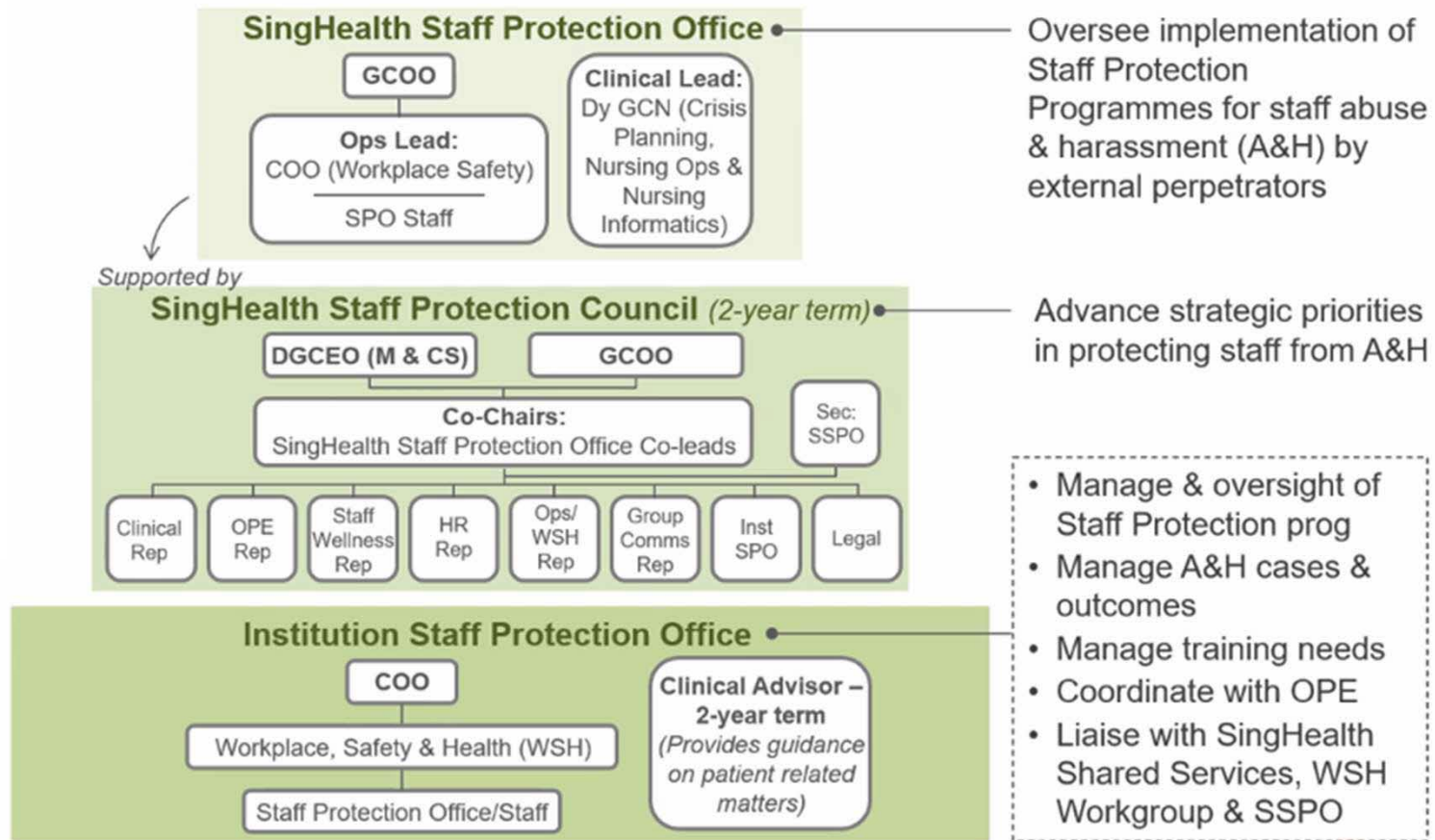
Communications Plan – EDMs published to guide our staff in managing difficult situations

STAMP OUT
OUTRAGE OF MODESTY

SingHealth logo



One Systemness : A holistic coordinated approach to propagate a cluster wide culture promoting staff protection




SingHealth Institutions' SPOs

Ops Lead
 Cass Chay
 COO (Workplace Safety)



Clinical Lead
 Christina Lim
 Deputy GCN (Crisis Planning,
 Nursing Ops and Nursing Informatics)



Singapore General Hospital

Kam Wai Kuen
 Assistant Director



KK Women's and Children's Hospital

Moon Loh
 Assistant Director




National Cancer Centre Singapore

Ken Tan
 Assistant Director




National Neuroscience Institute

Kelvin Chiew
 Assistant Director
Alternate: Tay Lee Lian



Changi General Hospital

Jacky Wan
 Manager



SingHealth Community Hospitals

Ricky Chan
 Senior Manager



National Dental Centre Singapore

Lim Kai Li
 Executive
Alternate: Chua Xiu Juan



Singapore National Eye Centre

Cheryl Ong
 Director
Alternate: Ng Siu Ning



Sengkang General Hospital

Jerry Quek
 Manager



SingHealth Polyclinics

Lucas Goh
 Deputy Director
Alternate: Dr Wong Wei Teen



National Heart Centre Singapore

Lim Chee Pheng
 Director



SingHealth HQ

Joseph Lim
 Deputy Director
Alternate: Cassandra Tan



Restricted, Sensitive (Normal)



Thank You