**Improving bystander response can reduce sexual violence incidents   
in an organisation.**

Bystanders are unlikely to be present when the most egregious offences happen. By intervening in response to inappropriate comments or touching, however, bystanders decrease the likelihood of more serious incidents of sexual violence occurring.

The following five-step response can serve as a basic guide for bystander intervention:

**1. noticing the event;**

**2. interpreting whether the situation is appropriate for intervention;**

**3. taking responsibility;**

**4. deciding how to help; and**

**5. intervening.**

Bystander intervention training helps individuals to understand the five steps. The table below lists key aspects of each step.

The five steps of bystander intervention

| Step | Keep in mind |
| --- | --- |
| 1 Notice the event | Bystanders need to understand what risk factors to look out for. These include individual, organisational and external risk factors for aggression. It is unlikely that someone who is the target of sexual violence will ask anyone for help, but bystanders may be able to identify if a conversation is making that individual uncomfortable. Bystanders need to pay attention to these indicators. |
| 2 Interpret whether the situation is appropriate for intervention | Consider the risk factors for aggression and decide whether it is a situation that requires intervention.  If an event is occurring that warrants intervention, assess the situation by asking yourself the following questions:   * Are you yourself at risk of experiencing sexual or other forms of violence if you intervene? * Will intervention cause the survivor to experience more violence? * Is support available for an intervention from anyone nearby? * Is it more effective to flee and report the incident than to confront the offender immediately?   Each situation is unique. It may be important to intervene if a colleague or friend is vulnerable or unable to make clear decisions (such as under the influence of alcohol or drugs). It is important to intervene whenever there is a high risk of serious sexual violence, if possible. |
| 3 Take responsibility | Once an incident is identified as appropriate for intervention, the bystander must take responsibility to help in some way.  Bystanders are more likely to intervene when they are the only witnesses to an incident. They are less likely to act if they feel that there are others present who could intervene instead. The risk that no one takes responsibility is, therefore, higher when there are multiple witnesses and so it is important that bystanders take responsibility even when there are others present who could intervene as well. Training sessions on bystander intervention will aim to empower potential bystanders to feel that they can take the decision to intervene. |
| 4 Decide how to help | The level of intervention from a bystander will vary considerably from person to person, depending on the situation; the capability, power and strength of the bystander; and how the offender is likely to respond.  Bystanders can help directly and indirectly, in the moment and at a later date. For example, they can:   * speak to the offender in the moment, so as to discourage further harassment or other activity, or to distract the offender; * speak to the target of sexual violence in the moment, to ascertain their well-being and possibly to encourage them to leave the location with someone they trust; * report the incident immediately to someone with authority, such as a security person or police officer; * speak to the survivor at a later date and encourage them to report the incident to a focal point; * report the incident directly at a later date, such as to the security focal point or safeguarding focal point; or * speak to the offender at a later date and start a discussion around the incident and why the individual should try to avoid initiating a similar incident in the future. Bystanders should take this step only if they perceive the incident as minor and feel safe approaching the offender directly, for example, if they are friends of the offender. |
| 5 Intervene | When intervening, it is important to:   * do so in the safest manner for you and others; * seek help if possible, such as by intervening jointly or finding someone better able to intervene; and * aim to defuse rather than escalate the situation. |