

Preserving a Positive Service Environment

The Child Support Recalculation Program (RP) and the Maintenance Enforcement Program (MEP) strive to ensure a positive service environment in which all people are treated with respect. Abusive, violent, threatening, or harassing behaviour toward employees or other clients is unacceptable. It is detrimental to the staff person, it interferes with effective service provision, and it negatively affects other clients, whether it occurs over the telephone or in letters, e-mails or faxes.

- **Abuse** means the emotional or mental mistreatment of another individual. Abusive behaviour may include, but is not limited to, name calling, racial or gender slurs, yelling, using profanity, unwelcome comments about a person's physical appearance, ability or mental capacity, and behaviour that scares or intimidates another person.
- **Threats** mean explicit or implicit statements of intention to inflict fear, pain, injury, damage, or other hostile action on any other person.
- **Violence** means attempted, or actual behaviour that causes or is likely to cause physical harm to employees or property.
- **Harassment** means repetitive behaviour that is unwarranted and interferes with the work of staff. This includes, but is not limited to, continuous phone calls, letters, emails, facsimiles or personal visits, and persistently pursuing a complaint or issue that is groundless or has already been addressed.

Possible responses to unacceptable behaviour include ending the session with the client, limiting responses to client communications, restricting access to conversations with staff, and pursuing legal action. Whenever possible, clients are provided with an opportunity to correct their behaviour, typically through a verbal or written warning, before more formal action is pursued.

A client who has their access to staff restricted may authorize a third party to act on their behalf. If the third party demonstrates abusive, violent, threatening and/or harassing behaviour, their access can also be restricted.

Clients can request a review of any action taken by the MEP or the RP in response to unacceptable behaviour. Requests for review must be submitted in writing and clearly state the reasons for removing the restriction. When reviewing a request, the severity of the behaviour which resulted in the restriction, the person's subsequent behaviour, and any unreasonable hardship caused by a particular action are considered. Clients are provided with a written response stating the outcome of the review and the reasons for the decision.

To see this Policy in its entirety, please go to: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/preserving-a-positive-service-environment>.

Relevant legislation that deals with preserving a positive service environment

The Maintenance Enforcement Act; the Trespass to Premises Act; and Occupational Health and Safety Act