

Strategies for municipalities



Maintaining Collaborative Communication During Escalated Situations

In offices that serve the public, it is vital to know what to do when high emotions are expressed. While there is no one-size-fits-all approach, here are some strategies to help manage these scenarios.

1 PREPARE

Understanding Why Situations Like This Arise

Citizens have the right to complain about matters that affect them. Not everyone has the same capacity to manage their emotional response to frustrating experiences. Due to previous life experiences, some may be triggered by feelings of being judged, not heard, not understood, or not treated fairly.

Training

There is benefit in having training that provides practical skills in areas like de-escalation, conflict resolution and trauma informed practices for workplaces. These help empower staff to have the tools to effectively respond when escalated situations arise.

2

IN THE MOMENT...

- Stay calm and keep your voice calm.
- Let the person tell their story without rushing or interrupting them.
- Display compassion even if you don't agree with their points.
- Try to stay focused on their issue and dismiss any negative thoughts about the behaviour.
- When concerning behaviour arises, name it and, using a calm voice, ask them to stop.
- You may need to end a phone call that has become escalated. Warn the caller when and why this will occur.
- When you need to be firm, still be polite.
- Ensure your tone does not match that of the escalated person.
 - Avoid taking things personally.
 - Avoid labeling people.

3 DEBRIEF

Debriefing after an escalated situation gives a chance to review:

- What happened
- What went well
- What didn't go well
- How it might have gone better

Do

- Record facts
- Have a process to debrief, reflect and plan

Avoid

- Personal opinions
- Speculating about motives



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