

# READY TO LISTEN

## Supporting victims/ survivors of sexual assault in residential aged care

### Start by believing

Believing victims/survivors who report sexual assault (i.e.: unlawful sexual contact or inappropriate sexual conduct) is critical. It helps to ensure they get the support they need, and it enables staff to take steps to prevent further sexual assault. Listen closely, with empathy and without judgement.

### Secure immediate safety

Take **immediate action** to secure the victim/survivors safety and prevent further sexual assault. Separate the victim/survivor from the perpetrator. Ask the victim/survivor what would help them to feel safer; and check whether they would like a support person (such as a family member) notified.

### Seek medical attention

Ensure the victim/survivor receives immediate medical attention. In an emergency call **000** (triple zero) to arrange an ambulance. If not an emergency, call the resident's GP. Check with GP and Police whether forensic medical examination is required.

### Reporting

If sexual assault is witnessed, disclosed, or suspected, it should be reported **immediately** to senior management.

From October 2022 the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission requires that all sexual assaults are reported to the Serious Incident Response Scheme as a Priority 1 incident within 24 hours.

### Access sexual assault services

Provide the victim/survivor with information on local sexual assault services for counselling and support. Sexual assault services may be able to provide phone support or visit the aged care service. Sexual assault services provide invaluable support, even if the resident is unable to communicate.

Contact 1800 RESPECT (**1800 737 732**) and ask for the details of your closest service.

### Accessing OPAN's aged care advocates

Offer the victim/survivor access to an aged care advocate. Contact the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) information and advice line on **1800 700 600** or check the website at: <https://opan.org.au/>.

### Document a safety plan

Work with the victim/survivor, their family (where appropriate) and other experts (e.g. sexual assault or family violence services) to document, implement and review a safety plan.

### More resources

This resource was developed for the #ReadyToListen project, which is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and is led by the Older Persons Advocacy Network, in partnership with Celebrate Ageing Ltd and the Older Women's Network, New South Wales. More resources are available at: <https://opan.org.au/support/support-for-professionals/ready-to-listen/>

