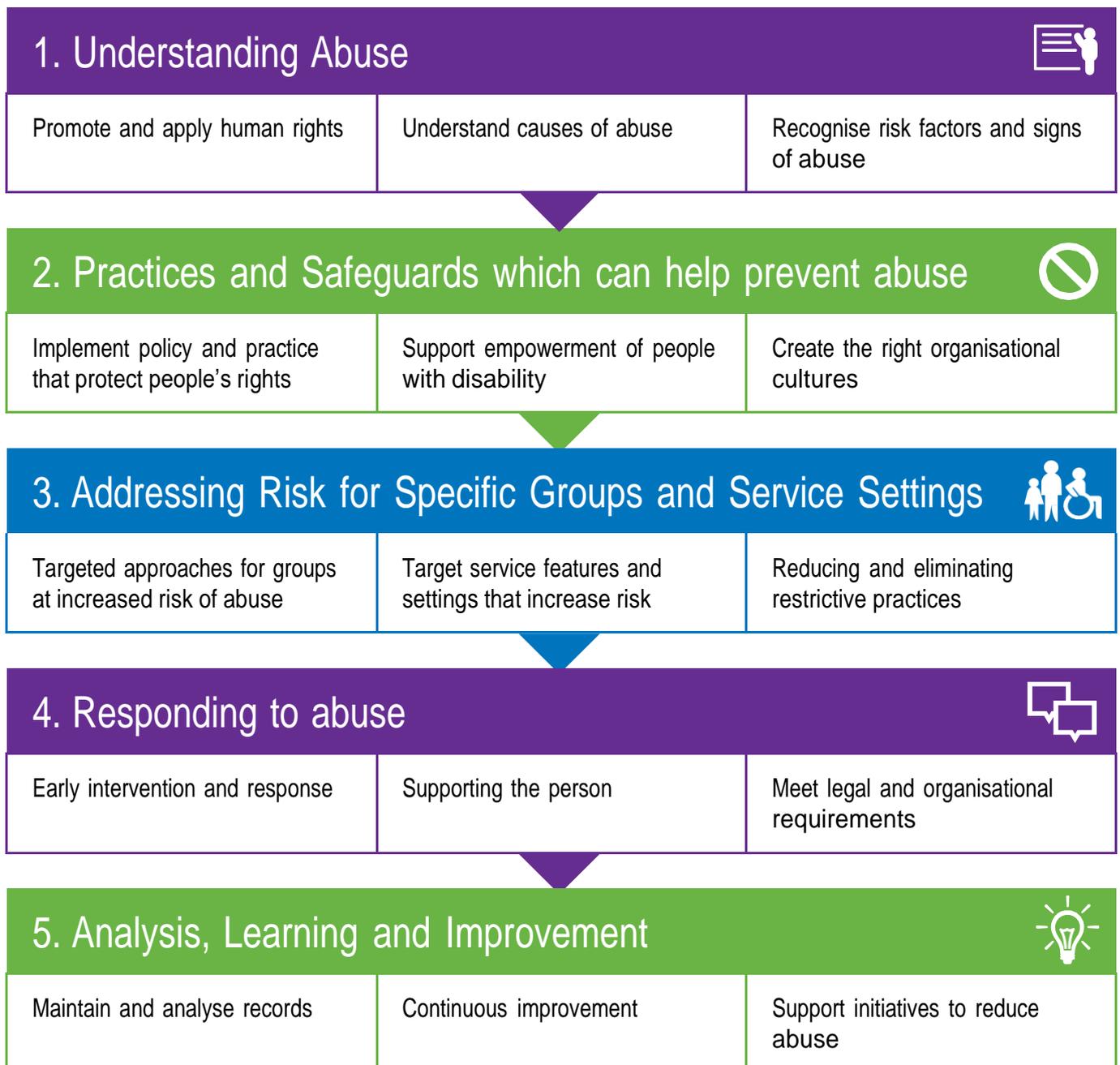# Zero Tolerance Framework

Zero Tolerance is an initiative led by National Disability Services in partnership with the disability sector. It aims to assist disability service providers to understand, implement and improve practices which safeguard the rights of people they support.

This evidence-based framework outlines strategies for service providers to improve prevention, early intervention and responses to abuse, neglect and violence experienced by people with disability. An expanding range of Zero Tolerance tools and resources for the disability sector are available to support broader safeguarding approaches for people with a disability.

For more information and resources visit https://www.nds.org.au/resources/zero-tolerance

1. Understanding Abuse

Promote and apply human rights	Understand causes of abuse	Recognise risk factors and signs of abuse

2. Practices and Safeguards which can help prevent abuse

Implement policy and practice that protect people's rights	Support empowerment of people with disability	Create the right organisational cultures

3. Addressing Risk for Specific Groups and Service Settings

Targeted approaches for groups at increased risk of abuse	Target service features and settings that increase risk	Reducing and eliminating restrictive practices

4. Responding to abuse

Early intervention and response	Supporting the person	Meet legal and organisational requirements

5. Analysis, Learning and Improvement

Maintain and analyse records	Continuous improvement	Support initiatives to reduce abuse

Zero Tolerance Framework

This table expands the Zero Tolerance framework to highlight specific areas that disability service providers should incorporate into their broader safeguarding approaches. Some topics may require multiple approaches to ensure understanding, ongoing training and action at appropriate levels of the organisation.

1. Understanding Abuse

Promote and apply human rights
- apply the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)
- recognise abuse as a violation of human rights and the right to justice

Understand causes of abuse
- causes of abuse, neglect, exploitation, violence in disability services
- recognising lived experience
- power and control

Recognise risk factors and signs of abuse
- recognise when abuse is happening
- individual and service risk factors
- trauma informed approaches
- abuse as a crime

2. Practices and Safeguards which can help prevent abuse

Implement policy and practice that protect people's rights
- commit to person centred approaches
- strong leadership
- clear policy and guidelines induction
- ongoing training and supervision
- training on communication styles and support
- whole of organisation commitment to human rights and abuse prevention

Support the empowerment of people with disability
- listen to people with disability
- provide information and training on rights, self-advocacy and speaking up
- abuse prevention education and training
- support decision making & risk enablement
- support access to relationship and sexuality training
- build community connections
- engage family, friends and advocates
- support access to preferred communication methods

Create the right organisational cultures
- safe recruitment and screening practices
- establish cultures of respect
- set expectations about professional attitudes, behaviour and boundaries
- create positive speaking up cultures and address barriers to disclosure
- develop clear and accessible complaints processes
- develop clear whistleblower protections
- open to external mechanisms

3. Addressing Risk for Specific Groups and Service Settings

Target approaches for groups at increased risk of abuse
- people with intellectual disability and ABI
- women with disability
- children and young people
- people with complex communication needs
- Aboriginal communities
- CALD communities
- people with limited/no informal supports
- people at risk of family violence

Target service features and settings that increase risk
- risk factors in accommodation settings
- respectful personal care
- systemic abuse
- remotely supervised services

Reduction and elimination of restrictive practices
- use positive behaviour support approaches
- recognising restrictive practices
- commitment to the reduction and elimination of restrictive practices

4. Responding to abuse

Early intervention and response
- intervene early: guidelines on responding to early indicators of abuse and trauma
- encourage bystander action
- clear expectations, policies and procedures for responding to disclosures and allegations
- take reports of abuse seriously
- timely reporting and action
- evidence gathering and record keeping protocols

Supporting the person
- ensure safety of victims
- responses informed by victim's experience and wishes
- engage family, carers and significant others
- link to police, specialist services, complaints bodies, and advocacy
- address barriers to justice
- ongoing person-centred healing strategies
- trauma informed support

Meet legal and organisational requirements
- Acknowledgement - Actions - Answers - Apology
- clear disciplinary processes that protect victims
- rigorous approaches to investigations
- meet needs of whole organisation including other clients, families and staff
- communicate actions and outcomes
- meet legislative and stability obligations

5. Analysis, Learning and Improvement

Maintain and analyse records
- rigorous quality monitoring
- meet incident reporting requirements
- review and analysis of individual incidents
- maintain records on any alleged staff abuse
- recognise patterns of abuse

Continuous Improvement
- review staff knowledge and competencies
- use feedback and data to inform improvements
- explore systemic safeguarding gaps
- address organisational impacts of abuse

Support initiatives to reduce abuse
- use referee checks to identify people of concern in the sector
- work collaboratively with mainstream, specialist support services and advocacy
- contribute to cross-sector approaches