



Sexual Abuse/Assault Policy

Policy Intent

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the needs of clients who have been affected by sexual abuse or assault are recognised and service is delivered in a way that is sensitive, appropriate and in a way that assists in the recovery process for victims and survivors. Victims and survivors of sexual abuse or assault may seek assistance from Housing Tasmania in locating and maintaining safe and secure accommodation. Assistance with accommodation may be provided to:

- Assist the applicant or household member to recover from assault or abuse associated with their current housing situation; and/or,
- Lessen immediate or known risk to the health and well-being of the applicant of their household.

Who are our clients?

Clients consist of applicants for public housing, tenants and their families and other household members.

What is sexual abuse/assault?

Sexual abuse or assault is any behaviour of a sexual nature that the victim has **not** consented to and makes them feel uncomfortable, frightened, or intimidated. This includes but is not limited to, forced or unwanted sexual activity, rape, violence and forced compliance in degrading sexual acts.

Support

Clients who contact Housing Tasmania should be positively supported and not blamed for the abuse/assault perpetrated against them. Ensure the client knows your name and wherever possible is able to speak with you rather than re-telling their story to other people. Always offer the privacy of an interview room. Be mindful that clients may prefer not to share information over the phone.

Referral

The involvement of and referral to other appropriate services is an important part of this policy. As a key referral point, clients should be made aware of the Sexual Assault Support Service (SASS) and the service they provide i.e. counselling, information and support. Referrals can be active or passive. Pamphlets on SASS and other support services should be made readily available to clients.

Children

In order for support services to even begin to work with a child who has experienced sexual abuse it is essential that he/she feels safe. Triggers to a child feeling unsafe are many and varied. However fear of the room, house or area where the abuse occurred or fear of seeing the perpetrator are major factors which may inhibit or negatively affect the healing process for the child. Hence safe housing is often a key element in the recovery process (SASS May 2004).



Housing Tasmania's responsibility is to help the family to make the home safe or to relocate to accommodation away from a known assailant.

Clients with Special Needs

Client groups who may face additional barriers in accessing assistance include older women, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender people, Aboriginal women, clients with disabilities or mental health issues, and those living in rural and remote locations.

Confidentiality

Information relating to sexual abuse/assault is of a particularly sensitive and personal nature and clients need to be reassured that the information they provide is confidential.

Exceptions

Area Managers have discretion to vary sections of this policy to better meet individual tenant needs. All decisions should be documented and copies placed on the client's file.

For further information relating to this policy please email the helpdesk housing.policyhelpdesk@dhhs.tas.gov.au