

Discrimination

Discrimination is defined by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission as treating or proposing to treat, someone unfavourably because of a personal characteristic protected and not subject to any exemption by law. Children and young people can be subject to discrimination based on a number of different characteristics such as age, sex, race, disability, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race and religious belief or activity. Promoting the safety of children and young people requires that we remain vigilant to possible discrimination and victimisation.

Research among Australian children by Priest et al (2016) found that children from visible minority backgrounds experienced more discrimination than children with Australian-born parents. In addition, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children reported higher risks of bullying, victimisation and racial discrimination in the community, while children and young people with a disability are at an increased risk of discrimination, violence and bullying within an organisational context.

DISCRIMINATORY BEHAVIOURS

Possible behaviours that characterise discrimination include:

- inappropriate jokes
- insults
- name-calling
- inappropriate images (e.g. posters, cartoons)
- physical violence
- threats of harm
- restricting access to venues
- preventing participation in activities (e.g. exclusion)
- bullying
- refusal to make reasonable adjustments.

PHYSICAL INDICATORS

Possible physical indicators of discrimination include:

- fear
- distress
- sleep difficulties
- trouble concentrating
- avoidance of the context where the discrimination is occurring
- changes to eating patterns e.g. loss of appetite, emotional eating
- self-harm.

BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS

Possible behavioural indicators of discrimination are:

- low self-esteem

Discrimination

- anxiety
- depression and/or anxiety
- difficulty coping
- withdrawal and emotional disengagement
- wariness as a result of a lack of trust
- poor academic outcomes
- feeling suicidal.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
enquiry line: 1300 292 153
website: www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au

Australian Human Rights Commission
phone: 1300 656 419
website: www.humanrights.gov.au

REFERENCES

Priest, N, King, T, Bécares, L & Kavanagh, AM 2016, 'Bullying victimization and racial discrimination among Australian children', *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 106, no. 10, pp. 1882–84.



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*The Archdiocese of Melbourne is committed to the safety, wellbeing and dignity
of all children, young people and vulnerable adults.*