

# Responding to and managing an incident of self-harm impacting a secondary school

## Emergency

### Self-harm that requires urgent medical attention

- Call an ambulance (000) immediately.
- Take all reasonable steps to **ensure the safety of all concerned**, including requesting that the student hand over any instrument that may assist them to further self-harm. Do not try to disarm the student against their will.
- **Do not send the self-harming student anywhere alone.**
- Use your mobile phone or send **two other students** together to get help from the nurse or another member of staff.
- **Do not leave the class unattended**
- **Stay with the student** until you secure other adult supervision.

### Check on the wellbeing and safety of other students

- Get assistance to **follow up on the safety and wellbeing** of students who may have witnessed or have reported the self-harm.

### Notify leadership

- All incidents of self-harm, suicidal ideation and attempted suicides are reported to ISOC **1800 126 126**.

### Contact parents or carers

- This contact requires sensitivity and compassion.
- It is best undertaken by a member of the wellbeing team, SSS or a member of the leadership team.
- All occasions of self-harm must be shared with parents/carers in order to promote safety and access to appropriate supports. For advice on what to do in instances where this is not appropriate, see: [Self-harm and attempted suicide response policy](#).

### Remember

- If a staff member witnesses an incident, receives a disclosure or forms a reasonable belief that a child has been, or is being, abused they must follow the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#).

## Not an emergency

### Self-harm that does not require urgent medical attention

- A sensitive and non-judgmental manner is critical.
- Move the student to a safe environment where possible.
- Request that the student hand over any instrument that may assist them to self-harm.
- Do not try to disarm them. If required, contact the appropriate emergency service for assistance.
- Arrange for the student to apply first aid under the supervision of an appropriate staff member.

### Remember

- Encouraging the student to apply first aid, such as dressing wounds themselves, promotes self-care rather than self-harm.
- Covering wounds, regardless of severity, will reduce distress among other students and staff.
- In most cases, self-harm is not a suicide attempt.



## Ensure safety

- Contact relevant emergency services as appropriate (000).
- Contact the Department's Incident Support and Operations Centre (ISOC) on 1800 126 126.
- Implement the school's Emergency Management Plan (EMP).

### Seek advice and professional assistance

An appropriately trained staff member or professional should **undertake a suicide risk assessment**. If no suitably trained staff are available, the student's parents or carers should be directed to have an assessment completed at hospital or by a community-based practitioner immediately.

**Make recommendations for referral** for mental health support either within the school (appropriately trained wellbeing staff or SSS) or external to the school as appropriate (e.g. headspace, CYMHS or CAMHS). For more information, see: [Self-harm and attempted suicide response policy](#).

### In an emergency

**Seek advice and professional assistance** from SSS. Support and advice is also available from [headspace](#), CYMHS or CAMHS

### Provide ongoing support

- Ensure there is a **debrief for all staff involved** in responding to the incident and that they are provided with information about self-care and the supports available to them.
- Consider what **post-incident follow-up** is required for staff and students. Support for students could include:
  - suicide risk assessments
  - referrals to appropriate services
  - identification of a support person
  - reasonable adjustments to a student's program
  - safety plans
  - return to school plans following a hospitalisation or an extended absence.
- Consider a **Worksafe Notification** (13 23 60).

### Remember

School staff have a duty of care to support students and to take all reasonable steps to keep all students and staff safe.

This is an overview only. It is important to read and understand the [Self-harm and attempted suicide policy](#) and accompanying guidance. This includes a safety plan template and checklists.