
CR8 Responding to Clients at Risk of Suicide or Self-harm

Policy context: This policy relates to the following legislation and / or Standard(s):	
Relevant International, National or State Standard	Human Services Quality Standards: Standard 4 - Safety, wellbeing and rights; Indicators 2 and 3
Legislation or other requirements	Nil

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide some guidance to staff at Eating Disorders Queensland (“EDQ”) who may be required to assist a person who is suicidal or engaging in self-harming behaviour.

SCOPE

- All paid staff
- Volunteers
- Students

POLICY

EDQ recognises the obligation that it has to ensure that people accessing its services are kept as safe as possible. It will take all possible steps to fulfil this obligation.

PROCEDURES

Limitations to confidentiality

EDQ staff are not obligated to maintain confidentiality if they have a reasonable belief that the safety of the client is at risk through their suicidal intentions or self-harming behaviour. They may contact ambulance or other health services, including mental health services, if they have these beliefs.

1. Responding to Suicide / Suicidal Intentions

Find out / consider the following information first:

(a) Do they have a plan? If they have planned how they will commit suicide, what steps they will take beforehand and so on, they are serious about doing so.

(b) Do they have the means? If they have planned it out, could they carry out their plan? Have they the resources required, or means of obtaining them?

(c) Is the means likely to be lethal? Is what they are planning to do likely to end up in their death? The more likely it is, the more important it is to get them additional assistance.

(c) Are they ready to do it? When do they plan to carry out their plans? The sooner it is, the more important it is to seek professional help.

In most cases, the answer will be no to at least one of these criteria. If the answer is yes to more than two you should contact the 1300 MH CALL (1300 64 22 55). The Metro South community can access local mental health services for information and assistance in times of mental health crisis 24 hours a day via a centralised phone number. They will be able to make a professional judgement on the next steps to take. If you are not with the person, you should make arrangements for someone to physically meet them while you continue communicating with them.

If the plan is already in progress, or the person does not want to seek professional help, you may need to make an emergency phone call. (000). There are a number of things to keep in mind when doing so:

- Speak clearly and slowly to the emergency operator.
- Tell them who you are, what you require, where the person is, who the person is, and what other information you have available (what their plan is, whether they are agitated, and so on). The more information you can provide them, the better.
- Most of all, take any crisis situation seriously and take appropriate action.

2. Responding to Self-Harm

While EDQ understands that self-harm may be a way that client's express emotions when they are coping with difficult experiences, they must and will respond if clients self-harm on the premises and affect their own safety or that of others.

Identify the extent of the injury. Depending on the severity, possible actions include:

- Provide basic first aid and work with the client to identify the underlying reasons and strategies for coping in the future
- Contact a co-worker or medical service for advice on managing the injury
- Call an ambulance if injury appears serious

Referral and closure

- Ring 1300 MH CALL (1300 64 22 55) or 000 if you have not already done so
- Consider your own needs for support. e.g. debrief with General Manager or co-worker or arrange immediate access to your external supervisor.
- Fill in an Incident form

REVIEW MECHANISMS

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis. Data which can inform this review may be derived from:

- Review of procedures immediately following an incident in which a person has been suicidal (as part of incident debriefing)
- Feedback from staff
- Feedback from persons affected by this policy, if appropriate

RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION

- Statement of Client Rights and Responsibilities
- Incident Report form
- EDQ Risk Register

OTHER RELEVANT POLICY & PROCEDURES

- CR5 Privacy and Confidentiality
- WHS4 Critical and Notifiable Incidents

Approved: EDQ Board
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This Document is CONTROLLED and is not to be altered without authorisation