responding to self-harm

This section outlines actions to take when a child engages in self-harm behaviour or if there is a disclosure or suspicion of self-harm. Educators should also consider these actions in the context of their own school, such as local emergency management policies and processes, roles and responsibilities within the school and referral pathways.

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Is this a medical emergency?

Some instances of self-harm require urgent medical attention. In the school environment, an urgent response is required if the child, for example:

- *has taken an overdose, consumed poison, or misused prescription or non-prescription medicine, regardless of whether symptoms are present or not*
- *is showing signs of having taken alcohol or other drugs*
- *is confused, disoriented or unconscious*
- *has bleeding that is rapid or pulsing.*

Yes → **Call an ambulance (000) immediately.** → Follow the school's emergency management procedures. → Take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of all concerned until ambulance arrives, including asking the child for any instrument/object that they may use/have used to self-harm. → Follow up actions for all self-harm incidents

No ↓

Is an immediate medical response required?

An immediate medical response may be required if the child has an injury that requires attention. This may be relevant even if self-harm is disclosed later.

Yes → Take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of all concerned, including asking the child for any instrument/object that they may use/have used to self-harm. → Call for help using the school's emergency alert processes (e.g. use a mobile phone to call for help and/or send two other children together to seek help). → Follow the school's first aid policy. → Notify the school leadership team. → Follow up actions for all self-harm incidents

No ↓

Take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of all concerned, including asking the child for any instrument/object that they may use/have used to self-harm. → If deemed appropriate, call for help using the school's emergency alert processes (e.g. use a mobile phone to call for help and/or send two other children together to seek help). → Stay with the class and stay with the child. → Once other adult supervision is secured, move the child to a safe environment to allow for further enquiry to occur. → Notify the school leadership team. → Follow up actions for all self-harm incidents

Follow up actions for all self-harm incidents

In all instances of self-harm, including disclosures and historical self-harm, the school should have processes in place to follow up on and support the child, other children and staff.

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Check on the safety and wellbeing of children who may have witnessed or informed staff of the incident. Notify parents/carers as required.

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Contact parents/carers and make recommendations for referral to mental health support either within or external to the school, and/or medical support external to the school.

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An appropriately trained mental health professional should undertake a risk assessment, including suicide, further self-harm and mental health risks. **This is not the role of the school.**

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Ensure all staff involved in responding to the incident are provided with information of the supports available to them.

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Consider what post-incident follow-up may be required, including ongoing support for staff and children.

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Document and report the incident, as required by policies and procedures in your school/jurisdiction.

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