

HIGHVIEW COLLEGE STUDENT SELF-HARM PREVENTION POLICY

Responsible – Board

(Ratified in even years)



Developed by	DP Pastoral Care, Aileen Thomas	2013
Updated by	Director of Pastoral Care, Marion Martin	2016
Updated by	Principal, Melinda Scash	2019
Reviewed & ratified by	Board Director, Miriam Codognotto	April 2020
		2022
		2024
		2026
		2028

Rationale

Self-harm is a behaviour in which people deliberately inflict harm upon their bodies. It commonly involves scratching, cutting, or burning themselves, most often with the use of an implement. Young people who self-harm usually do so because of some difficulty they have or are facing. This may include anxiety, depression or stress, bullying, relationship or friendship break-ups, family breakdown, physical, sexual or mental abuse, or many other difficulties that people face in their everyday lives.

Many people cope with problems in ways that are risky or harmful to themselves. They may do this to numb or distract themselves from problems, thoughts or feelings they cannot bear to face. Self-harm may be viewed by some as a way of coping.

Aims

Highview College is committed to the provision of care and support for the young people who are involved in self-harm, for raising awareness about self-harm and prevention strategies, and for establishing programs which will improve mental health and wellbeing.

Implementation

The Heads of School have the overall responsibility for implementing strategies and processes for ensuring a safe and supportive environment for students involved in or at risk of self-harm.

The Heads of School, in conjunction with the Principal, will:

- Deal with pupils who self-harm in a caring and supportive manner
- Inform parents immediately we find out about an incident of self-harm
- Provide short and long term support based on individual needs of the student
- Help students improve their own mental health and wellbeing
- Support staff members who come into contact with people who self-harm
- Implement strategies to prevent self-harm from spreading within the school which may include the self-harming student being sent home until they have mental health support

- Create clear guidelines for staff in regards to who needs to be informed and when do parents and outside agencies need contacting
- Raise awareness about self-harm for students, staff and parents

Additional information

APPENDIX 1 - Definition and risk factors

APPENDIX 2 - Roles and Responsibilities

APPENDIX 3 – Support Agencies



APPENDIX 1 - DEFINITION AND RISK FACTORS

What is Self Harm?

Self-harm is any deliberate, non-suicidal behaviour that inflicts physical harm on someone's own body and is aimed at relieving emotional distress. It can include cutting, scratching, burning, banging and bruising, overdosing (without suicidal intent) and deliberate bone-breaking/spraining.

While self-harm and suicide are separate, they both involve those who are in emotional distress. It is vital that all emotional distress is taken seriously to minimise the chance of self-harm, and suicide.

Risk factors associated with self-harm include:

- Mental health disorders including depression and eating disorders
- Drug/alcohol abuse, and other risk taking behaviour
- Recent trauma e.g. death of relative, parental divorce
- Negative thought patterns, and low self-esteem
- Bullying
- Abuse: sexual, physical and emotional
- Sudden changes in behaviour and academic performance.



APPENDIX 2 - ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Executive is responsible to:

- Ensure that the Heads of School receive appropriate training and stay up-to-date with current advice in relation to self-harm behaviours and triggers
- Provide support for Heads of School managing distressing situations. This may include: discussions with other staff, the School Chaplain, accessing external counselling or support services and ensuring appropriate confidentiality requirements are met

Heads of School are responsible to:

- Notify the Principal of any incident of self-harm undertaken at the College.
- Discuss with the Principal the need and to make contact and liaise with the School Chaplain, social workers, educational psychologists and relevant Government departments
- Ensure all staff are aware of this policy (including their responsibilities) and support them in being compliant.
- Decide whether self-harm education should be in the curriculum, and how it should be addressed
- Keep records on SEQTA of self-harm incidents and concerns
- Review and provide, where appropriate, provisions for students who self-harm, such as long-sleeved uniforms and PE uniforms, and time out of lessons when under intense stress
- Make contact with local services and inform the parent/carer and student about appropriate help and support which is available for those who self-harm
- Following an incident of self-harm, and in consultation with the Principal, organise counselling sessions if needed for affected students and staff.
- Contact parents/carers at the appropriate time(s), while involving the student in this process
- Monitor the student's progress following an incident of self-harm
- Send a student home during a period of self-harm to avoid an escalation of the self-harming behaviour
- Know when to seek help to deal with their feelings and distress.

All staff and teachers are responsible to:

- Calmly listen to students in emotional distress in a non-judgemental manner
- Reporting self-harm to the appropriate Head of School as soon as possible
- Not making promises (e.g. assuring confidentiality) that can't be kept, while reassuring the student of the importance of letting the appropriate people know of their problem so that they can provide help and support
- Guiding students towards good physical and mental health and wellbeing

- Promoting problem solving techniques and non-harmful ways to deal with emotional distress
- Helping students become more aware of places to seek help and support
- Providing accurate information about self-harm
- Increasing their own understanding of self-harm and mental health disorders
- Being aware of health and safety issues such as first aid and cleaning up if a self-harm incident takes place at the school
- Being aware of their legal responsibilities in regards to when they can help, and when they cannot

Students are responsible to:

- Dress open wounds/injuries appropriately so that they are not visible
- Wear clothing that covers wounds/injuries
- Talk to their Head of School, DELTA Mentor, School Chaplain or another staff member if they are in emotional distress and/or self-harming
- Alert a teacher or Head of School if they suspect a fellow student of being suicidal or at risk of self-harm and being aware that at times confidentiality must be broken to ensure the safety of others

Parents will be encouraged to:

- Endorse the school's approach to self-harm education
- Work in partnership with the school
- Seek assessment/support from services recommended by the school



APPENDIX 3 – SUPPORT AGENCIES

- www.reachout.com.au
- www.beyondblue.com
- www.somazone.com.au
- www.headspace.org.au
- www.centrelink.gov.au
- www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au
- Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800
- Lifeline 13 11 14
- Maryborough Youth Connection Worker Counselling Health Advice 5461 0333
- Ambulance, Fire or Police 000 or mobile 112
- Maryborough Hospital 5461 0333
- Maryborough Police Station 5460 3300
- Crimestoppers 1800 333 000
- Drug and Alcohol Counselling 1800 888 236
- Poisons Information Centre 13 11 26
- Nurse on Call 24/7 1300 606 024