Responding to incidents of self-harm

All incidents of self-harm should be responded to quickly. Use this flowchart to guide staff responses to an incident at your school, or to develop your school’s self-harm response procedures. It may be useful to display this flowchart in a prominent location in staff rooms.

Staff member suspects or identifies student self-injury through warning signs, peer disclosure, or self-disclosure

Approach and refer student to school nurse or first aid officer to treat wounds and assess severity

Severe or life threatening wounds?

Refer to emergency services
Call 000

Refer to school suicide policy

Risk of suicide determined?

Low risk
Superficial tissue damage, fewer than four episodes, few forms of self-injury, and no symptoms of mental health problems

Moderate risk
Light tissue damage, four or more episodes, multiple methods, or mild symptoms of mental health problems

High risk
Severe tissue damage, four or more episodes, multiple methods, and acute symptoms of mental health problems

Assess future risk of self-injury, severe injuries, and co-occurring mental health problems

No evidence or immediate risk of self-injury. Monitor student

Intervention in school and periodic follow-up risk assessments

Parents/carers contacted with student present

Point person/member(s) of crisis team, student and parents/carers meet to discuss external referral. Follow-up 2 weeks later to monitor progress and pursuit of referral. Feedback to referring staff member or student within confines of confidentiality.

No contact by another student - check impact and ensure they access appropriate support.

Qualified point person/member(s) of crisis team meets with student to conduct initial risk assessment

Refer to return to school policy

Refer to school suicide policy

Refer to point person/member of Wellbeing/leadership team

Continue with self-injury risk assessment


MindMatters is a national mental health initiative for secondary schools developed by beyondblue with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health.