

HIGHVIEW COLLEGE SELF HARM PREVENTION POLICY



Person Responsible – Director of Pastoral Care

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 well-being.

Implementation

The Deputy Principal – Pastoral Care has 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 Pastoral Care staff 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

Policy developed by Aileen Thomas – 2013

Policy updated by Marion Martin – 2016

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

The Deputy Principal – Pastoral Care is responsible to:

- Ensure that Pastoral Care Co-ordinators receive appropriate training in relation to self-harm behaviours and dangers
- Ensure that the self-harm policy is followed by all staff members
- Decide whether self-harm education should be in the curriculum, and how it should be addressed
- Look at provisions for students who self-harm, such as long-sleeved uniforms and PE uniforms, and time out of lessons when under intense stress
- Making contact if/when social workers, educational psychologists, Child Protection, etc. need to be informed
- Liaise with local services about help available for those who self-harm
- Organise counselling sessions if needed.

All staff and teachers are responsible for:

- Calmly listening to students in emotional distress in a non-judgemental manner
- Reporting self-harm to the appropriate Pastoral Care Co-ordinator 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.

The Pastoral Care Co-ordinators are responsible to:

- Keep records on SEQTA of self-harm incidents and concerns
- Liaise with the Deputy Principal – Pastoral Care
- Contact parents/carers at the appropriate time(s), while involving the student in this process
- Inform the parent/carer about appropriate help and support which is available
- Maintain up-to-date with information about self-harm
- Monitor the student's progress following an incident
- Discuss with the Deputy Principal – Pastoral Care if/when social workers, educational psychologists, Child Protection, etc. need to be informed
- Know when to seek help to deal with their feelings and distress.

Students are responsible to:

- Dress open wounds/injuries appropriately so that they are not visible
- Wear clothing that covers wounds/injuries
- Talk to their Pastoral Care Co-ordinator or another staff member if they are in emotional distress and/or self-harming
- Alert a teacher or coordinator 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.