Self-Harm

Policy on attempted or threatened suicide by a young person

There are a variety of organisational responses to threats of suicide. If of a young person who has attempted or threatened suicide entering the shelter, staff are to:

- call for staff backup
- make certain any other support worker involved with the young person is informed immediately
- notify the parents/carers of the young person if possible
- make an appropriate referral immediately if there is no support worker.

When a young person has threatened suicide in the shelter, staff are to:

- call for shelter-staff backup
- ensure the safety of the young person and themselves, e.g. keep young person away from knives, pills and alcohol
- move the young person to a private place
- call on any support that is needed for that young person including police and medical staff
- provide any assistance for other young people in the shelter, e.g. counselling.

In the event of an attempted suicide in the shelter, staff are to:

- summon whatever emergency services are needed
- call for shelter-staff backup
- ensure that the young person is as safe and comfortable as possible
- inform other support agency workers and, where possible, inform parents/carers of the young person
- provide any assistance for other young people in the shelter, e.g. counselling.
In the event of a completed suicide, staff are to:

- call the police
- call an ambulance
- provide any assistance for other young people in the shelter, eg, counselling
- inform other support agency workers and, where possible, inform parents/carers of the young person.

**Suicide awareness policy (staff)**

If there is a suicide incident in the shelter, such as a threatened, attempted or completed suicide (by a client), staff shall have:

- immediate shelter-staff backup
- access to medical/professional assistance at the earliest possible time
- follow-up support where needed.

In all cases of threatened, attempted or completed suicide, the manager is to be notified as soon as possible. If the manager is not available, a committee person is to be notified.

Identifying suicide and self-harm risk

PLAID

P lan
L ethability
A vailability
I llness
D epression

PALS

P revious attempts
A lone
L oss
S ubstance abuse or use

(SFSP, 1999)

Cuts, bruises and self-inflicted injury

Self-injuring behaviour is socially unacceptable. Clients may not disclose the real reason for their injury or claim it was due to alcohol or drugs, as a way of hiding:

• an attempted suicide
• an assault by someone else, perhaps his or her partner.
A way to respond to self-inflicted injury may be:

- deal firstly with the injury
- do not overreact to the injuries
- listen to the person talking about their feelings
- ask how you can help
- do not leave the person alone
- if you suspect abuse, this must be reported to your supervisor or to the police and documented
- do not tell off or scare the person.

(References: Department of Mental Health and Aged Care 1999, The Prevention Of Youth Suicide Training Program, Canberra, and Western General Hospital, Karre’s SI Coping Tips)