Child Safety
POLICY

Title: Assessing and responding to self-harm and suicide risk
Policy No: CPD605-2

Policy Statement:
The Department of Communities, Child Safety Services (Child Safety Services) will promote the safety, well-being and best interest of children and young people through the implementation of effective and culturally appropriate self-harm and suicide risk management practices.

Principles:

- The safety, wellbeing and best interests of children and young people are paramount.
- Children and young people have a right to be safe and protected from harm.
- Child Safety Services staff take seriously all acts of self-harm, including suicidal threats and gestures.
- Safety and risk assessment are fundamental components of effective service delivery for children and young people.
- Children and young people in the custody or guardianship of the chief executive have the right to access the medical and therapeutic services necessary to address their risk of self-harm and/or suicide.

Objectives:
This policy aims to ensure that:

- children and young people who demonstrate or have demonstrated any self-harming or suicide risk behaviours, are responded to in ways that safeguard their immediate safety to the extent possible in the circumstances; prevent harm from occurring or reduce the risk of harm; and promote their ongoing well-being by addressing harmful behaviours and underlying causes
- risk factors, warning signs and cultural considerations are taken into account when assessing and responding to self-harm or suicide risk
- Child Safety Service Centre (CSSC), Child Safety After Hours Service Centre (CSAHSC) and the Regional Intake Service staff are provided with information and procedures about assessing and responding to self-harming or suicidal behaviours
- all children and young people subject to a self-harm alert or suicide risk alert have a corresponding self-harm or suicide risk management plan.
**Scope:**

This policy relates to children and young people across all child protection phases, including:

- intake, where the child or young person is the subject of an intake enquiry or child concern report when self-harm or suicide risk is part of the presenting problem
- investigation and assessment, when a child or young person is subject to a notification and an investigation and assessment is undertaken (including temporary assessment orders and court assessment orders)
- ongoing intervention through a support service case, intervention with parental agreement (IPA) or a child protection order (including interim orders granting custody or guardianship to the chief executive).

In addition to assessing and responding to self-harm and suicide risk, this policy will be implemented in conjunction with Child Safety Services procedures for Critical Incident Reporting which stipulates:

- attempted suicide by a child or young person subject to current statutory intervention is a level 2 critical incident
- significant self-harming behaviours (i.e. not assessed as a suicide attempt) where medical treatment/admission to hospital of a child or young person is required is a level 2 critical incident.

Following the provision of a level 1 critical incident report in relation to the death of a child or young person known to the Department, any further action and/or requests for information will be coordinated by the Complaints, Case Review and Investigation Branch – refer to Child Death Case Review Policy and Procedures (361).

**Roles and Responsibilities:**

The roles and responsibilities of Child Safety Services staff in relation to assessing and responding to self-harm and suicide risk are outlined in the Child Safety Practice Manual, chapter 10.19, 10.20 and associated practice resources.

**Authority:**

*Child Protection Act 1999*, sections 5, 6, 7, 74, 97, 122.

**Delegations:**

Deputy Director-General, Communities, Child Safety, Youth and Families

Associate Director-General, Regional Service Delivery Operations

Regional Executive Director

Regional Director, Child, Youth and Families

Manager, Child Safety After Hours Service Centre

Manager, Child Safety Service Centre

Manager, Regional Intake Service

Senior Practitioner, Child Safety Service Centre
Team Leader, Child Safety After Hours Service Centre
Team Leader, Child Safety Service Centre
Team Leader, Regional Intake Service
Child Safety Officer, Child Safety After Hours Service Centre
Child Safety Officer, Child Safety Service Centre
Child Safety Officer, Regional Intake Service

Records File No.: CHS/03376
Date of approval: 12 October 2011
Date of operation: 14 November 2011
Date to be reviewed: 12 October 2014

Office: Communities, Child Safety, Youth and Families
Help Contact: Child Protection Development – 3235 9411

Links:
Related legislation:
Child Protection Act 1999, section 246 A-H ‘Child deaths’

Procedures:
Attachment 1: Self-harm and suicide risk – identifying risk factors and warning signs
Attachment 2: Department of Communities, ‘Responding to people at risk of suicide: how can you and your organisation help?’
Child Safety Practice Manual Chapter 10.18, 10.19 and 10.20
Practice Papers: ‘A framework for practice with ‘high risk’ young people (12-17 years)’
Evolve Interagency Services Manual

Related departmental policy:
Critical incident reporting (391)
Child death case review policy and procedures (361)
Obligations, actions and responsibilities upon the death of a child in out-of-home care (421)
Forms:

Suicide Risk Alert (SR1)

Rescinded Policy:

605-1 Assessing and responding to self-harm and suicide risk

Linda A Apelt
Director-General