

Self-Harming Behaviours Policy



The Hazard – Self-Harming Behaviour

Self-harming behaviour (also known as ‘deliberate self-harm’ or DSH) is when someone deliberately hurts or injures themselves. This can include:

- Cutting;
- Taking overdoses of tablets or medicines;
- Punching oneself;
- Throwing one’s body against something;
- Pulling out hair or eyelashes;
- Scratching, picking or tearing at one’s skin causing sores and scarring;
- Burning;
- Inhaling or sniffing harmful substances; and
- Engaging in risk taking behaviours.

It is important to understand that people who self-harm are not attention-seeking and it is often a coping mechanism for dealing with anxiety or painful feelings.

Self-harm and suicidal thinking can go together, and self-harming behaviour can precede a suicide attempt although there is not necessarily a link between the two. People who self-harm usually do so without any intention of killing themselves.

Lavalla Catholic College’s Policy

Lavalla Catholic College is committed to providing an environment that reduces the risk of self-harming behaviours by students.

We are focused on the identification, early intervention and prevention of self-harming behaviours amongst our students. It is our policy that:

- We provide an environment which promotes student well-being through general education programmes that increase self-esteem and address adolescent issues;
- We implement policies and practices that promote emotional well-being and provide students with access to counsellors;
- Our staff are trained to recognise signs of self-harming behaviours and are able to identify at-risk students;
- We establish procedures for responding to incidents of self-harm and suspected self-harm amongst our students; and
- We provide education, support and resources for staff, parents, students and the wider College community on the issue to assist in managing deliberate self-harm.

Common Signs of Self-Harming Behaviour

As self-harming behaviour is often not obvious, staff should take note of the following signs of self-harm:

- Unexpected decline in academic performance;
- Ideas and themes of depression, death, self-harm and suicide;
- Obvious change in mood;

- Grief about a significant loss;
- Experience of trauma;
- Withdrawal from relationships;
- Physical symptoms;
- Strange excuses provided for injuries; and
- High risk behaviour.

Safe Work Practices

Lavalla Catholic College has developed the following work practices and procedures for managing self-harming behaviours:

Notification of Self-Harming Behaviours

Self-harming behaviours may be identified by parents / guardians and reported to the College, or they may be identified by a College staff member.

When a staff member suspects a student is engaging in self-harming behaviours they should:

- Identify their concerns and observations and provide these to the student's Learning Advisor / Homeroom Teacher as soon as possible; and
- Not raise their concerns directly with the student.

Where a student discloses to a staff member that they are engaging in self-harming behaviours the staff member should:

- Respond in a 'neutral' and 'matter of fact' manner and acknowledge the behaviour as something they are familiar with;
- Not be judgemental or react negatively;
- Advise the student that self-harming behaviours are not uncommon and that the College has procedures to help students in these circumstances;
- Ask the student if there is any immediate support / assistance that they need;
- Thank the student for confiding in them and advise the student that they may need to discuss the issue with another member of staff so that the College can provide appropriate assistance;
- Assure the student that the information they have provided will be handled sensitively; and
- Identify their concerns and observations and provide these to the student's Homeroom Teacher / Learning Advisor and Wellbeing Leader / Head of House as soon as possible. The Homeroom Teacher / Learning Advisor or Wellbeing Leader / Head of House will notify the Deputy Principal – Student Wellbeing & Operations who will then collaborate with the relevant Wellbeing Team to create a support team who will arrange and document a Health Support Plan.

Urgent Medical Treatment

In the event a student requires urgent medical treatment, refer to our Accident Management Policy.

Health Support Plan

A Health Support Plan should be instigated and developed by the relevant Wellbeing Team for any student engaging in self-harming behaviours taking into account:

- Agreed roles and responsibilities of the College, parents / guardians, teachers and students;
- Academic expectations;
- Agreed behaviour management strategies;
- Agreed learning outcome strategies;

- Liaison procedures between parties; and
- Regular review procedures.

The Health Support Plan shall be stored appropriately and updated regularly. It shall be communicated to relevant staff in a confidential manner.

Staff Responsibility

All Lavalla Catholic College staff are responsible to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to identify and support students who may be at risk of self-harming behaviour. Early intervention and ongoing management is vital in promoting recovery.

Each staff member shall fulfil their agreed roles as documented in a student's individual Health Support Plan and the College shall inform parents / guardians as soon as possible of concerns regarding a student's health care, learning and behaviour management needs.

Implementation

This policy is implemented through a combination of:

- Staff training and supervision
- Maintenance of the student's Health Support Plan;
- Effective incident notification procedures;
- Effective communication procedures with the student's parents / guardians; and
- Initiation of corrective actions where necessary.

Discipline for Breach of Policy

Where a staff member breaches this policy, Lavalla Catholic College may take disciplinary action.

Related Policies

Accident Management Policy

Eating Disorders Policy

Medical Records (Student) Policy

Medication Administration Policy