



ACT
Government

Chief Minister and Treasury

Policy Statement
Policy Number: WHS-06-2012
First Issued: August 2010
Revised: March 2010

ACT PUBLIC SERVICE

PROTOCOL FOR RESPONDING TO PEOPLE THREATENING SUICIDE OR SELF HARM

1. PURPOSE

To provide practical guidance on responding to, and managing, people threatening suicide or self harm.

2. APPLICATION

This protocol is for Return to work (RTW) coordinators and rehabilitation case managers employed within the ACT Government.

3. CONTEXT

RTW coordinators and rehabilitation case managers may on occasion be confronted by a distressed person, threatening suicide or self harm, for whom they have case management responsibilities. Such situations can be difficult to handle, especially when the majority of RTW Coordinators or rehabilitation case managers are not appropriately trained or qualified to assist the person with such mental health related issues.

There are numerous factors which may have influenced or led a person to the point of making such threats. It is important that all such threats are taken seriously, and where necessary, the appropriate support provided to them to obtain the professional support and assistance that they need.

This document provides guidance on the procedures to be followed to ensure such support is provided to the person making the threat. However, it is also recognised that as an employer, the ACT Government takes the health and safety of its employees very seriously, and therefore this document provides guidance on the support services available to case managers who have been the recipient of such a threat.

4. PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO A PERSON THREATENING SUICIDE OR SELF HARM

- Take the person and the threat seriously.
- Advise the person that threats of suicide or self harm are taken seriously and that you may need to refer them to someone who is more appropriately trained or qualified to provide assistance.
- Inform the person that you have a duty of care to ensure that they are safe and have appropriate support.
- If not already known or readily available, seek details of the person making the threat, i.e. name, address, telephone number, treating doctor details and the person's current location (if threat made by telephone).
- Encourage the person to seek immediate support from a friend, partner, their treating general practitioner or mental health worker and supply them with crisis telephone numbers such as:
 - The Mental Health ACT Triage and Crisis Assessment and Treatment Team (provides a 24-hour, seven day a week, triage service to assess and co-ordinate the necessary referral for treatment of individuals with mental health issues) - 1800 629 354 (24 hour service) or (02) 6205 1065; or
 - Lifeline – 131 114.
- If the person refuses to seek such support, wherever possible seek their agreement to contact a support person or service on their behalf.
- Advise the person that you will be contacting and providing their details to the Mental Health ACT Triage and Crisis Assessment and Treatment Team, their treating general practitioner, the police or their local hospital to ensure that they have someone to come and assess them as the case may be.
- For immediate life threatening or dangerous situations call 000 for emergency services.
- Do not attempt to counsel the person or make a judgement about whether you think the person will carry out the threat of suicide or self harm - refer the matter to appropriately qualified personnel at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Notify your manager immediately and outline the course of action you have taken.
- If the person making the threat is currently participating in a return to work program under the guidance of a rehabilitation provider, notify the rehabilitation provider and the person's general practitioner of the nature of the threat and details of the referral as soon as possible. This will enable the general practitioner and rehabilitation provider to give appropriate consideration to future support and activity requirements for the person.

- Where the person does not have an active return to work program in place, with the involvement of a rehabilitation provider, you should ensure the person's general practitioner is advised of the nature of the threat and details of the referral and seek advice from the general practitioner as to any support required.
- Where appropriate, notify the injured worker's immediate manager of the nature of the threat and details of the referral and any agreed future support or activity to maintain or assist the person in returning to the workplace.

5. SUPPORT THE PERSON WHO RECEIVED THE THREAT

The RTW coordinator or rehabilitation case manager who was the recipient of the threat should be encouraged to utilise free confidential support and counseling through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP is a service that provides employees with confidential and professional counselling and related services to assist them in resolving issues that may be work related or of a personal nature.

You are encouraged to access the EAP service as early as possible.

6. REVIEW

This Policy Statement will be reviewed after three (3) years unless earlier review is required.

7. APPROVAL AUTHORITY

Andrew Kefford
Commissioner for Public Administration

Document Name: WHS Policy – Protocol for responding to people threatening suicide or self harm – RTW coordinators

Prepared by: Continuous Improvement & Workers' Compensation Branch, CMCD

Feedback to: IPMPolicyFeedback@act.gov.au

Issue Date: August 2012

Review Date: August 2013