

Human Resources: Harm to Employees  
Proactive Release: 28 March 2019

26<sup>th</sup> February 2019

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

E-mail: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

### **Official Information Act (1982) Request**

I write in response to your Official Information Act request, dated 28 January 2019. We received your request on transfer from the Ministry of Health, under Section 14 of the Act. Before responding, we believe the following may provide you with useful context.

CM Health services provide health services to in excess of 520,000 people residing in South Auckland, both in hospital and community settings. Obviously, many of these people are acutely unwell and / or in distress when they require care and that can result in behaviours that our staff members need to manage and respond to.

We have derived the information provided for you from our Staff Incident Reporting System (RiskMPro). However, there are limitations in the ability to extract concise details for the incident reporting. We note that the system is intended to enable multiple staff to report individually on the same incident, with each being counted as unique file, and that we use coding themes to guide the allocation of incidents. While there are 'nominated' codes for types of incidents reported, these may not always be consistently interpreted by everyone. In addition, there will be a range in the severity of incidents within the same code group.

Further, in preparing this response we note that this data shows reported incidents per annum, but accept that will not be the totality of the cases where staff deal with aggression or verbal abuse. Different services will have different numbers of incidents, and have different resources available and clinical skill levels to deal with these types of situations, that can affect reporting.

We employ over 7,000 staff, and are constantly working to create a safe work environment. We are clear that it is unacceptable for our staff to experience violence and abuse towards them in their workplaces in our services. We also provide staff with opportunities for training to learn risk assessment, de-escalation and effective communication techniques that aim to reduce the number of incidents, and the adverse impacts that can result. If appropriate, we will support individuals who need to work with Police, as they pursue investigations.

We note that this incident information should be interpreted with caution. Given the differences in reporting systems, and in the DHB sizes and services, comparisons between DHBs may be misleading.

You requested the following information:

**1. “The overall number of recorded assaults on health service staff over the last three years to enable a year by year comparison.**

| Year        | Total |
|-------------|-------|
| 2016        | 84    |
| 2017        | 134   |
| 2018        | 130   |
| Grand Total | 348   |

This includes incidents recorded as **assault – physical** during 2016 - 2018. Assaults may originate from either patients, or from members of the public. There may or may not have been intent to do harm, considering that some patients have cognitive, mental or physical impairments that contribute to incidents of this nature.

**2. The overall number of incidents where health service staff and been threatened or verbally abused over the last three years to enable a year by year comparison.**

| Year        | Total |
|-------------|-------|
| 2016        | 91    |
| 2017        | 77    |
| 2018        | 88    |
| Grand Total | 256   |

This includes incidents recorded as **assault – verbal/gesture**, and **behaviour - aggressive/threatening** during 2016 – 2018.

**3. The number of assaults on health service staff within the mental health field over the same time period.**

| Year        | Total |
|-------------|-------|
| 2016        | 46    |
| 2017        | 79    |
| 2018        | 87    |
| Grand Total | 212   |

This includes incidents recorded as **assault – physical** during 2016 – 2018 for the Mental Health division.

**4. The number of incidents where mental health staff have been threatened or verbally abused.**

| Year        | Total |
|-------------|-------|
| 2016        | 28    |
| 2017        | 24    |
| 2018        | 21    |
| Grand Total | 73    |

This includes incidents recorded as **assault – verbal/gesture**, and **behaviour - aggressive/threatening** during 2016 – 2018 for the Mental Health division.

**5. The number of injuries sustained by health service staff over the last three years including those injured whilst working.**

Note: We can only provide data on injuries sustained by health service staff whilst at work. The following data shows the number of injuries for health service staff over the last three years that was reported along with the following incidents:

- physical assaults
- aggressive/threatening behaviour
- behaviour – violent
- hit/bitten/scratched by person (where the harm was sometimes intentional, but at other times unintentional – for example due to cognitive, mental or physical impairments)

| Year        | Total |
|-------------|-------|
| 2016        | 65    |
| 2017        | 118   |
| 2018        | 118   |
| Grand Total | 301   |

**6. The number of injuries sustained by mental health staff over the last three years.**

Note: As noted for 5. We can only provide data on injuries sustained by health service staff whilst at work. The following data shows the same data as in 5. above, but for *mental* health service staff.

| Year        | Total |
|-------------|-------|
| 2016        | 34    |
| 2017        | 65    |
| 2018        | 68    |
| Grand Total | 167   |

**7. The number of convictions against individuals who have assaulted health service staff over the last three years.**

Not recorded in Incidents System. The DHB does not hold information on the number of convictions. Where appropriate, we will support staff to work with NZ Police in response to incidents. The decision to prosecute is a matter for the NZ Police and Crown Prosecution Service.

**8. The number of convictions against individuals who have assaulted mental health staff over the last three years.**

Not recorded in Incidents System. The DHB does not hold information on the number of convictions. Where appropriate, we will support staff to work with NZ Police in response to incidents. The decision to prosecute is a matter for the NZ Police and Crown Prosecution Service.

**9. The number of individuals who have been sent to prison for assaulting health service staff.**

Not recorded in Incidents System. The DHB does not hold this information on Sentencing outcomes. This is a matter for the NZ Courts to determine.

**10. The number of individuals who have been sent to prison for assaulting mental health staff.**

Not recorded in Incidents System. The DHB does not hold this information on Sentencing outcomes. This is a matter for the NZ Courts to determine

**11. The number of physical restraints required by health service staff to contain someone due to their aggressive/violent behaviour.**

| Year        | Total |
|-------------|-------|
| 01/01/2016  | 6     |
| 01/01/2017  | 8     |
| 01/01/2018  | 5     |
| Grand Total | 19    |

This includes incidents recorded as **Physical restraint** (but excludes incidents recorded as **Personal restraint** and **Seclusion with restraint**) during 2016 – 2018.

**12. The number of physical restraints required by mental health staff to contain someone due to their aggressive/violent behaviour.**

| Year        | Total |
|-------------|-------|
| 01/01/2016  | 3     |
| 01/01/2017  | 1     |
| 01/01/2018  | 1     |
| Grand Total | 5     |

This includes incidents recorded as **Physical restraint** (but excludes incidents recorded as **Personal restraint** and **Seclusion with restraint**) during 2016 – 2018 for the Mental Health division.

**13. The number of times police have been called to assist with managing individuals who were exhibiting aggressive/violent behaviours.**

Not recorded in Incidents System. Our systems do not provide this level of detail. In some cases, NZ Police are already involved in an incident and will assist, in other cases there will be later follow-up with NZ Police that is not captured in the initial incident report.

**14. The number of times patients have required seclusion due to their aggressive/violent behaviour over the last three years.**

| Year        | Total |
|-------------|-------|
| 01/01/2016  | 120   |
| 01/01/2017  | 158   |
| 01/01/2018  | 115   |
| Grand Total | 393   |

These incidents are recorded as **Seclusion WITH restraint**, Mental Health patients.

I trust this information satisfactorily answers your query. If you are not satisfied with this response you are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act.

Please note that this response or an edited version of this may be published on the Counties Manukau DHB website.

Yours sincerely,



Fepulea'i Margie Apa  
**Chief Executive**