

2nd September 2020

██████████
Producer
Mediaworks

Email: ██████████

Dear ██████,

Official Information Act Request for: 'Complaints from staff alleging they were assaulted in the workplace within the last 3 years.'

I write in response to your Official Information Act request received by us 22 July 2020, requesting the following information:

1. The number of complaints from mental health workers alleging they were assaulted in the workplace within the last 3 years.

For each complainant please provide the following information

- age, sex, job title of the complainant
- allegation details and date
- all investigations outcomes (including but not restricted to all investigation reports)
- if not investigated why not
- was there any criminal prosecution and details of the outcome
- if there was no criminal prosecution why not

2. The number of complaints made by health workers who have alleged they were assaulted while working at the Emergency Departments over the last 3 years.

For each complaint please provide the following information

- age, sex, job title of the complainant
- allegation details and date
- all investigations outcomes (including but not restricted to all investigation reports)
- if not investigated why not
- was there any criminal prosecution and details of the outcome
- if there was no criminal prosecution why not

3. The number of complaints from health workers who have made allegations they were assaulted while working at maternity services over the last 3 years

For each complaint please provide the following information

- age, sex, job title of the complainant
- allegation details and date
- all investigations outcomes (including but not restricted to all investigation reports)
- if not investigated why not
- was there any criminal prosecution and details of the outcome
- if there was no criminal prosecution why not

For context, Counties Manukau Health (CM Health) employs over 7,500 staff and provides health and support services to people living in the Counties Manukau region (approx. 569,400 people). We see over 118,000 people in our Emergency Department each year, and over 2,000 visitors come to Middlemore Hospital daily.

Our services are delivered via hospital, outpatient, ambulatory and community-based models of care. We provide regional and supra-regional specialist services i.e. for orthopaedics, plastics, burns and spinal services. There are also several specialist services provided including tertiary surgical services, medical services, mental health and addiction services.

Counties Manukau DHB Response

In order to provide you with further context in terms of the information you have requested, please note that generally our employees will complete an Incident Report, rather than a complaint about such events. The incident system is intended to enable DHB staff to report on any incidents in their workplace, and to have these fully investigated and resolved. These are not all to be considered as formal complaints by staff.

We accept that employees across all our services do at times experience and report incidents of inappropriate behaviour towards them. We actively encourage staff to report all types of incidents that occur and to seek support in dealing with these, both at the time and if they feel this is affecting them subsequently.

However, this means that the data we are providing to complete our response has limitations. Given the differences in DHB incident reporting systems, staff reporting options and the range of incident-type selection categories, and also differences in DHB population size, employee numbers, and services, making comparisons between various DHBs may be misleading. Please consider these that we outline below carefully in making any interpretations.

Irrespective, every incident that is reported to CM Health by our staff is automatically notified to the appropriate manager for investigation and follow-up. Employees will be offered further support and any other health care if as required, including medical attention, counselling and access to the funded Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

In the system which is available to all staff, there are a mix of data and free text field. The collated data repository is used for reporting and identification of wider issues. Incident reporting can mean there can be issues with data 'uniformity' and interpretation, and we cannot always directly extract information across all incidents logged.

Each incident is counted as a unique file, and coding themes are used to guide the allocation of incidents, along with narrative text that provides extended details, but this is not as easily coded. 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.

There are several coding classifications for physical assaults, as "assault – physical", "behaviour – violent", or "hit/ bitten/ scratched by person". We use coding themes to guide the allocation of incidents, and while there are 'nominated' codes for types of incidents reported, these may not always be consistently interpreted by everyone.

The data we are providing is derived from staff self-selection of incident category codes, and may also not reflect a consistent interpretation of severity of incidents.

Incidents can involve more than one type of violence and one incident may be reported by multiple people. When an incident is logged, details of victim and perpetrator are only in the text descriptions, and may not identify the qualification of the staff member, or their role. Due to the way that incidents are logged, it is not possible to accurately discern from the statistical fields, just assaults on staff members, and staff member role, and to identify if the perpetrator was a patient, a visitor or a member of the public (although, this is generally clear from the textual description) and determining that level of detail for each report as defined in your request will require manual review.

We are therefore providing a summary of the

- Number of incident reports related to assault (physical), not including verbal or psychological impact.
- The service it was reported in (Mental Health, Maternity or Emergency Department)

- The date
- General category
- Outcome – noting that all incident reports are investigated by a line manager.
- Providing detailed investigation reports for the numbers involved would be substantial and require significant review and checking to ensure that no privacy impacts occurred.

Below are the numbers of physical assaults on health workers data is taken from the RMPPro incident reporting system:

**1. Emergency Department 22 June 2018 - 22 July 2020.
The Code Orange data was reviewed for this report.**

Year	Total number of assaults ED
2018	10
2019	13
2020	8

Table 1. Data source Code Orange as at 22/07/20

2. Mental Health Services 1 January 2018 – 31 May 2020

Year	Total number of assaults Mental Health
2018	114
2019	124
2020	53

Table 2. Data source RMPPro Incident Reporting System as at 31/05/20

3. Women’s Health services: 1 January 2018-27 August 2020

Year	Total number of assaults Women’s Health
2018	0
2019	1
2020	1

Table 3. Data source RMPPro Incident Reporting System as at 31/05/20

Our frontline services also work closely with NZ Police regarding a variety of issues on DHB premises; however situations are not always recorded as an incident of unacceptable behaviours.

It is difficult to provide retrospective data of all the times the NZ Police were called to assist or intervene in any incident from the available data. This is because an incident report is completed immediately, and in some cases the decision to involve NZ Police may be a subsequent one. There are cases where further follow-up will occur also after an incident. If appropriate, we support individuals who need to work with the Police as they pursue investigations.

We do not hold information related to any decision to proceed to prosecution or the outcome of any prosecution. These are matters determined by NZ Police and the Courts, rather than employers.

As additional relevant information we note that since June 2018, the Middlemore Hospital Emergency Department has also been using a service-specific reporting system (“Code Orange Call”) for the logging of all incidents requiring a code orange response (including security).

Situations that may require a Code Orange Call

- Intimidating or manipulative behaviour from patient, whaanau or visitors
- Aggressive/ intoxicated or suicidal patient or visitor
- Event or behaviour in which staff feel uncomfortable or compromised
- Unwelcome visitors

- Patients, whaanau or visitors refusing to be sensitive to, or respect the rights of others to privacy, extremely stressed patient, whanau or visitors

This enables streamlined reporting for staff, creating better statistics to be collected and analysed for the Emergency Department services, where there is a higher level of concern about staff safety. Rather than relying on anecdotal reports, the system is now providing a basis on which remedial action can be taken.

The scope of this reporting is wider than the classifications used in the incident system, to identify contributing factors and triggers etc. The system does not specifically capture any injuries to staff or other patients in the Emergency Department.

Current DHB practice is that there is a Security staff member based in Emergency Department at all times, and this helps with quick security responses to incidents in and around Emergency Department.

We can provide a summary of these logged events, noting that this system has been impacted by the requirements on a staff and capacity to manage the COVID health response. We accept that reporting is variable for capacity.

As you are aware, information on the reported incidents related to occupational violence, Code Orange implementation and other changes to our systems along with staff survey findings are regularly presented to the CMDHB Board in the regular Health and Safety Reports to each Board meeting.

You are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or Freephone 0800 802 602.

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 Officer
Counties Manukau Health