

20 March 2020

Re Official Information Request – Reported assaults and harassment

I refer to your official information request dated 27 February 2020 requesting the following information under the Official Information Act:

1. The number of sexual harassment reports made by person(s) employed (staff) by the DHB in the calendar years of 2019, 2018 and 2017, broken down by whether they involved either patients or other staff.
2. The number of sexual harassment reports made by patients to the DHB in the calendar years of 2019, 2018 and 2017, broken down by involving either other patients or staff.
3. The number of complaints made to the DHB by staff members for each of the following
 - Physical assault/abuse
 - Verbal assault/abuse
 - Psychological assault/abuse
 - Racial assault/abuse;

Made to the DHB in the calendar years of 2019, 2018 and 2017, broken down by whether they were perpetrated by either patients or staff.

4. The number of complaints made to the DHB by patients for each of the following:
 - Physical assault/abuse

- Verbal assault/abuse
- Psychological assault/abuse
- Racial assault/abuse

Made to the DHB in the calendar years of 2019, 2018 and 2017, broken down by whether they were perpetrated by either patients or staff.

The information you have requested is provided in the table below

Reports by ADHB staff/patients	Year		
	2017	2018	2019
Patient to Staff: Sexual Harassment	2		13
Patient to Staff: Physical Assault/abuse	216	358	255
Patient to Staff: Verbal Assault/abuse	113	132	159
Staff to Staff: Verbal Assault/abuse	14	35	53
Staff to Staff: Sexual Harassment	1	1	0
Grand Total	346	526	480

The 2017 information above does not include the reports for the period January to March 2017. This information was reported using a previous safety management system and is provided below. We are not able to break these reports down further to determine whether they were perpetrated by patients or staff. These numbers could include incidents between visitors/family members and patients and could include incidents that do not meet the definition of verbal or physical abuse.

Reports for the period 1 Jan to 31 March 2017		
Incident Classification	Specific Incident Type	Total
SAFETY/SECURITY/CONDUCT	abuse gesture	3
	abuse verbal	24
	assault physical	45
	inappropriate behaviour	67
SAFETY/SECURITY/CONDUCT Total		139
Grand Total		139

In order to provide you with further context in terms of the information you have requested please note the following:

We take the safety and wellbeing of patients, visitors and staff on our premises very seriously and do not tolerate assault or harassment in any form.

If we suspect any criminal behaviour has taken place on our premises, Police are immediately involved and all steps taken to assist them and ensure a safe environment. We provide considerable support for any victims and their families.

To help manage risk around safety on our sites we have a safety management system to record incidents, including incidents of violence or abuse directed at another person whilst on our premises.

The incidents are logged by staff members and so it is not always possible to differentiate from the record those incidents that involved a member of staff and/or a patient, from those incidents reported that may have been between patients or between visitors.

We employ over 11,000 people; more than 12,000 people are seen by our emergency department each year and more than 750,000 outpatient attendances (as detailed in our annual plan 2018/19)

We have provided the following definitions when sourcing this information:

- By “reports” we mean a report or complaint logged into one of our safety management systems or Employment relations data base which the organisation has chosen to act on by way of further investigation and/or corrective action. The same incident may have been reported by more than one staff member or reported about a patient or visitor. A report does not necessarily infer that the complaint has merit or that it meets the threshold of what would otherwise be described as bullying and/or harassment. Complaints made by patients or family members to our consumer liaison office have also been included
- By “physical assault” we mean the intentional use of force by one person (either a staff member or a patient) against another, resulting in physical injury or personal discomfort. It excludes physical assault by visitors or family members.
- By “verbal assault” we mean angry, intimidating, threatening, insulting, confrontational, hostile, sarcastic, disrespectful or derogatory remarks that may have offended another person. (either a staff member or a patient) It excludes unintended unprofessional, inappropriate remarks that could demonstrate a lack of compassion or empathy and excludes texts. It excludes verbal assault by visitors or family members.
- By “Psychological assault” we mean remarks directed at another person with the deliberate intention to cause harm.
- By “Racial assault” we mean expressions of hostility/contempt or ridicule towards another person on the grounds of their colour, race, ethnic or national origins.

From the reports logged it was not possible to separate all the Psychological and racial assault reports from the verbal assaults. For this reason these are included in the verbal assault numbers.

Some of the specialised services we provide involve caring for vulnerable patients with sometimes challenging behaviours. Caution is needed when comparing these numbers between different DHBs unless it is clear the clinical caseload is of similar complexity.

I trust this information answers your questions.

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 response, may be published on the Auckland DHB website.

Yours faithfully



Ailsa Claire, OBE
Chief Executive