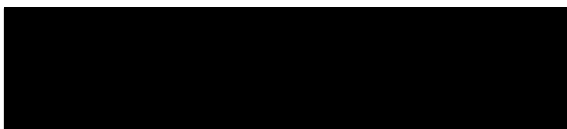


24 May 2022



Dear 

Re: OIA request – Investigations into any assaults on patients by staff

Thank you for your Official Information Act request transferred to us by the Ministry of Health on 11 March 2022 seeking the following information:

Can the Ministry of Health please email me aggregated staff investigations of assaults on patients i.e. staff fired, investigated and resigning before being fired / criminal charges being laid / withdrawn by victim?

At the time of transferring your request, the Ministry of Health advised that the timeframe was clarified as being for:

All DHB records and records before DHBs set-up.

The Ministry further advised that they had directed you to contact Archives New Zealand for information pre-dating the establishment of the DHBs.

Before responding to your specific questions, it may be useful to provide some context about our services.

Waitematā is the largest and one of the most rapidly growing DHBs in the country, serving a population of around 650,000 across the North Shore, Waitakere and Rodney areas. We are the largest employer in the district, employing around 9,000 people across more than 80 locations.

In addition to providing care to our own resident population, we are the Northern Region provider of forensic mental health services and child rehabilitation services, plus the metro Auckland provider of child community dental services and community alcohol and drug services.

In response to your request, we are able to provide the following information:

Can the DHB please email me aggregated staff investigations of assaults on patients i.e. staff fired, investigated and resigning before being fired / criminal charges being laid / withdrawn by victim?

Waitematā DHB encourages the reporting of any injury, near-miss or similar incident at work and promotes a policy of ensuring that the safety and security of staff and patients is approached in line with our organisational values, which are available on our website: <http://www.waitematadhb.govt.nz/about-us/our-promise-values/>

While the rate of allegations is extremely low given the size of our workforce, Waitematā DHB takes any such complaints seriously. We have robust policies and investigative processes in place.

The information we have provided relates to a five-year period from 2018-2022.

Prior to 2018, there was no centralised database of such investigations. To collate this information would require the review of each individual employee file from 2001-2018, including people no longer employed at the DHB.

As we currently employ around 9,000 people, this would be well in excess of 10,000 files. Due to the sensitivity of this information, Waitematā DHB staff would need to review the files and it would not be appropriate to use a contractor to review the records. This would take the staff away from their work and prejudice our ability to provide core services.

We have considered whether charging or extending the timeframe for responding to this aspect of your request would assist us in managing this work and have concluded it would not. We have, therefore, determined to refuse this element of your request under Section 18(f) of the Official Information Act due to substantial collation and research.

Due to the very low number of investigations between 2018-2022, we are withholding a detailed breakdown of the exact number in each category of outcome of an investigation under section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act to protect the privacy of individuals.

We have considered whether the public interest in releasing this information outweighs the need for individual privacy and have concluded that it does not.

We can advise, however, that the total number of investigations of alleged staff assaults on patients over this five-year period was 10, with the following outcomes:

- complaint could not be substantiated, no action required
- disciplinary action not including dismissal (e.g. formal warning)
- resignation
- termination
- criminal charges laid
- investigation/disciplinary process currently in progress.

I trust that the information we have been able to provide is helpful.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of the decisions made in providing this response. Information about how to seek a review is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Waitematā DHB supports the open disclosure of information to assist community understanding of how we are delivering publicly funded healthcare. This includes the proactive publication of anonymised Official Information Act responses on our website from 10 working days after they have been released.

If you consider there are good reasons why this response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider your views.

Yours sincerely



Director People and Culture
Waitemata District Health Board