

02 September 2020

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Re: OIA request – Assaults on health workers within the last three years

Thank you for your Official Information Act request which was transferred to Waitematā DHB from the Ministry of Health on 21 July 2020 seeking information about the number of reported complaints by health workers regarding assaults in the workplace.

On 14 August, we notified you of the need to extend the timeframe on responding to your request to 1 August due to amount of work involved and the pressures of COVID-19 planning on the staff involved in preparing the response.

On 1 August, we notified you of the need for a further extension to 4 August due the same reasons.

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

Waitematā DHB serves a population of more than 630,000 across the North Shore, Waitakere and Rodney areas, the largest and one of the most rapidly growing DHBs in the country. We are the largest employer in the district, employing around 8,500 people across more than 80 locations.

In addition to providing services to our own population, we are also the metropolitan Auckland provider of forensic psychiatry, child disability services, child community dental services and community alcohol and drug services.

Our employees deal with a broad cross-section of the community in their day-to-day work and this often involves reaching out to people when they are at their most vulnerable and anxious, including those with mental health conditions, which can result in unpredictable behaviours. Therefore, caution is advised in comparing raw event numbers between different district health boards unless it is clear the breadth of service-delivery and clinical caseload is of similar complexity.

Waitematā DHB encourages the reporting of assault or inappropriate behaviour and promotes a policy of ensuring that the safety and security of staff and patients is approached in-line with our organisational values which can be found on our website: <http://www.waitematadhb.govt.nz/about-us/our-promise-values/>

The information you have requested involves a total of more than 800 records over three years. To provide the level of detail requested would require the individual review of each complaint. We have considered whether extending the time for responding to your request or charging for the time involved would assist us in providing a response but have concluded that it would not.

We are, therefore, declining this request under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act 1982 due to substantial collation or research.

However, we are considering what level of detail we may reasonably be able to provide. The people involved in the consultation required to make this decision are currently focussed on planning around the Auckland metro-DHB response to COVID-19. We will notify you next week of our decision on this. In the meantime, we are able to provide total numbers of assaults in each area over the past three years as follows:

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

Our Specialist Mental Health and Addiction Service is the largest of its kind in the country, by volume of service-users seen. It comprises Adult Mental Health Services, Child Youth and Family Mental Health Services, Takanga a Fohe (Pacific mental health and addictions), Whitiki Maurea (Kāupapa Māori mental health and addictions) and Community Alcohol and Drug Services (CADS).

All of our addictions services cover the greater Auckland region (from Mercer to Wellsford). Mental Health Services for Older Adults sits within Waitematā DHB's Speciality Medicine and Health of Older People Division.

Information on complaints from mental health workers includes the following services:

- Adult Mental Health Services
- Mental Health Services Older Adults
- Child, Youth & Family Mental Health Services
- Regional Forensic Psychiatry Services - Mason Clinic
 - This service covers the Northland and greater Auckland regions
 - The forensic intellectual disability service catchment (Pohutukawa unit) extends from Northland to Taupō
- Community Alcohol and Drug Services (CADS).

1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018	1 July 2018 – 30 June 2019	1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020
132	233	272

2. The number of complaints made by health workers who have alleged they were assaulted while working at the emergency departments over the last three 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**

1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018	1 July 2018 – 30 June 2019	1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020
39	69	58

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

Details about the number of complaints from health workers in our maternity services who have made allegations that they were assaulted while working are withheld due to the very small numbers of incidents which would potentially make those involved identifiable.

We have considered whether the public interest in knowing this information outweighs the need to protect privacy and have decided it does not. We are, therefore, declining this aspect of your request under section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act 1982.

We have aggregated the figures as follows:

1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018	1 July 2018 – 30 June 2019	1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020
1-5	1-5	0

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

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

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



Fiona McCarthy
Director Human Resources
Waitematā District Health Board