

Suicide Attempts in University Halls of Residence

What happens following suicidal behaviour by a student living in one of our halls of residence?

1. Each case is examined individually and a personalised individual care plan is agreed upon, which focuses on how best to assist the student's recovery.
2. Hall staff consult with mental health professionals, with the student themselves and, where possible, with the students' family, about what should happen next.
3. The student is encouraged to spend recovery time following a suicide attempt in a supportive environment away from the hall. This is generally with family. This respite break allows them to recover their emotional wellbeing and gives time for a longer term wellness plan to be developed.

The period after a suicide attempt can be a high risk time for a more serious attempt. In many cases, a hall environment is not an appropriate or safe place for a student recovering from a suicide attempt. Professional advice is that it is best to change the environment so there is reduced exposure to the triggers that precipitated the suicide event.

It is not appropriate to expect fellow residents or halls staff to watch over students who have attempted suicide or to provide the care the recovering student needs.

4. No student is ever 'evicted' from, or asked to leave, our halls of residence due solely to their mental health.
5. Support is provided to other residents and staff in the hall of residence, who may be traumatised by suicidal or intentional self-harm behaviour.
6. Students are treated with care and compassion, even if ultimately a decision has to be made that they are not happy with.
7. After a break, it would be very rare for a student not to be allowed back to the hall, provided an acceptable wellness plan was developed and all concerned thought it was realistic.

The process and principles outlined are followed in all cases involving suicide attempts in our halls of residence.

Find out more about student counselling services provided at Victoria University of Wellington here:

www.victoria.ac.nz/news/2018/09/student-counselling-at-victoria-university-of-wellington

www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support