



Mandatory notifications: What you need to know

Myth busting mandatory notifications

March 2020

Mandatory notifications are an important part of your obligations as a registered health practitioner. The circumstances in which you may need to make one rarely occur. It's important however, that you know when to make one.

Below are some common myths about mandatory notifications followed by explanations of the actual requirements for mandatory notifications for registered health practitioners, treating practitioners, employers, education providers and registered students.

For more information, there are a range of resources on the Ahpra website including videos, FAQs and case studies which also help as a guide on when to make a mandatory notification.

All registered health practitioners can also seek advice from their indemnity insurers and/or professional association.

Myth 1

'If a mandatory notification is made about me I will immediately lose my registration.'

Reality

Mandatory notifications are treated in the same way as all notifications received by Ahpra.

The mandatory notification obligations are intended to protect the public and public safety is our first priority.

When we receive a notification, we look at whether the practitioner is practising appropriately and safely. The fact that a mandatory notification has been raised does not automatically affect a practitioner's ability to practise. A National Board will take action to restrict a practitioner's registration only if it believes this is necessary to protect the public

For more detail on the notifications process, see [Concerns about practitioners](#) on the Ahpra website.

Myth 2

'If I seek treatment for a health condition which is impacting me personally, I will likely be the subject of a mandatory notification.'

Reality

The vast majority of health practitioners are able to seek advice and/or treatment for their health without the need for a mandatory notification. In fact, they are encouraged to seek advice and treatment as needed.

Ahpra and the Boards do not need to know about the health issues of practitioners. Health issues that are well-managed do not need to be reported to us. We are only concerned about impairment that carries a risk to the public.

A practitioner-patient may practise with a well-managed mental illness, a physical health condition or physical illness without triggering a mandatory notification.

Myth 3

'It's always better to report something so that I don't get into trouble.'

Reality

We understand that deciding whether to make a mandatory notification may be a difficult decision and requires careful consideration of the relevant risk factors.

A mandatory notification should not be made based on a fear of a penalty for not notifying. Mandatory notifications should be made when you think the threshold for notifying is met.

The mandatory notification obligations are intended to protect the public and public safety is our first priority.

If in doubt, we encourage potential notifiers to seek advice. You can speak to your insurer, legal advisor, or professional association. You can also call Ahpra on 1300 419 495 for clarification or to seek more information about making a notification.

Myth 4

'Ahpra receives a large number of mandatory notifications.'

Reality

Mandatory notifications are not common; they make up a small minority of total notifications made to National Boards and Ahpra.

Data from 2018/19 shows that out of a total of 15,858 notifications, 1,807 mandatory notifications (11%) were made across Australia.

Myth 5

'I've seen my colleague get very drunk on the weekend, so I think I should make a mandatory notification.'

Reality

If a practitioner is intoxicated in their personal time and not while practising, then a mandatory notification does not need to be made.

If the practitioner has gone to work while still intoxicated or the practitioner is on call, then this is grounds for a mandatory notification. If a practitioner is on call, they are practising and should not be intoxicated.

Myth 6

'As a student, if my performance is not up to scratch I may receive a mandatory notification.'

Reality

A student's performance is not a basis for a mandatory notification. The only ground for a mandatory notification about students is impairment.

Practitioners and education providers only need to notify us when they have a 'reasonable belief' that a student has an impairment that, when undertaking clinical training may place the public at substantial risk of harm – this a very high threshold for reporting risk of harm to the public.

Performance issues in students are managed by their education provider.