

A just culture guide

The purpose of these guide is to support conversations between Southern Cross Healthcare (SCH) managers about whether a staff member involved in a safety event requires specific support or intervention to work safely.

The guide can be used at any stage of the review and does not replace the need for a comprehensive review of the event to be undertaken.

It should be used where it is deemed that a member of staff may require some support to ensure safe working practices. Support for using the guide will be provided by the National Quality and Risk and People and Performance teams.

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What is a just culture?

If somebody makes a mistake, are they better off reporting it or covering it up? Human error is and always will be a reality. In a just culture, the focus is on addressing systems issues that contribute to errors and harm. While staff are held accountable for the choices they make, the reporting of errors, lapses, near-misses, and adverse events is encouraged. In a true just culture, all workers—both clinical and non-clinical—are empowered and unafraid to voice concerns about threats to patient and workers safety

There is a line between acceptable and unacceptable safety behaviours

- We accept people are fallible and do not punish them simply because they have made an error. However, we need to differentiate between error and action which could be regarded as reckless or deliberate.
- We do not support employees who wilfully or repeatedly make decisions, or show behaviours, that knowingly present a substantial and unjustifiable risk – a risk that most colleagues would recognise as being likely to lead to a poor outcome

Why a just culture matters

Our purpose, our values and our commitments will all benefit if we all consistently demonstrate expected or exemplary behaviours. Encouraging these behaviours and

responding appropriately to behaviours that are below expectations creates a culture that aids our success at Southern Cross Hospital.

Taking a just culture approach is an important step towards developing our safety culture. It develops trust and confidence and allows our workers to report events without fear of the consequences. Managing workers through fear and intimidation drives safety issues underground. You need to be able to recognise the difference between an honest mistake and wilful and deliberate action that has led to damage or harm.

About using this guide

This just culture guide is based on an algorithm for dealing with staff involved in safety errors, it is based on the work by Professor James Reason who's expertise and research has been on the management of human error and system failures in complex and high risk areas.

The user is guided through a series of structured questions about the individual's actions, motives and behaviour at the time of the event. It helps reduce unconscious bias when making decisions and will ensure all individuals are consistently treated fairly.

Deliberate harm test	In the overwhelming majority of safety events, the individual had another person's well-being at heart. However, the deliberate harm test helps to identify at the earliest possible stage those rare cases where harm was intended.
Health check	The health check helps to identify whether ill health or substance abuse caused or contributed to the safety event. The manager is asked to consider whether the employee was aware of their condition at the time, whether they realised the implications of their condition, and whether they took proper safeguards to protect others.
Foresight test	The foresight test examines whether protocols and safe working practices were adhered to. Managers tend to find this section the most challenging to work through, and the need for careful judgment and assessment of the facts is emphasised. Where the individual violated a sound protocol, the manager is advised to look at a range of factors, such as motivation, information available at the time, the speed with which a decision had to be reached, and the degree of

	awareness the individual had of the risk being created.
Substitution test	The substitution test helps to assess how a peer would have been likely to deal with the situation. This test also highlights any deficiencies in training, experience, or supervision that may have been a factor in the safety event and helps to assess whether the individual was properly equipped to deal with the situation.

The guide can only be used to take one action (or failure to act) through the guide at a time. If multiple actions are involved in an event they must be considered separately

This guide does not need to be used routinely but only if there is suspicion that an individual requires some support or management to work safely or as part of an individual practitioner performance/case review. It will highlight important principles that need to be considered before formal management action is taken.

Communicating your decision

This guide can be shared with individuals to explain the approach that will be taken if an event occurs and how you have arrived at your decision.

If the individual is being supported by a representative from People and Performance, you are encouraged to share the worked-through just culture guide with them. People and Performance have been involved in the development of the tool at national level and actively support its use.

If action is taken following an event, it is important to decide what and how to communicate with the individual's colleagues. Failure to communicate effectively leads to speculation and sometimes to hostility about the individual. A balance needs to be struck between honouring confidentiality and ensuring that temporary arrangements are understood by colleagues. Once a final decision on action has been taken, it is again important to determine how this should be communicated to the workers.

Involvement in a serious safety event can be highly traumatic. The situation can also be distressing for colleagues and bystanders. One of your first actions should be to ensure that those affected by the event have speedy access to appropriate counselling and support through the [Employee Assistance Programme \(EAP\)](#). The General Manager (GM) must complete the referral when an employee identifies a patient or family need for EAP. The following resources provide more information:

- [Second victim checklist for general managers](#)
- [Management of stress and fatigue guideline](#)

References

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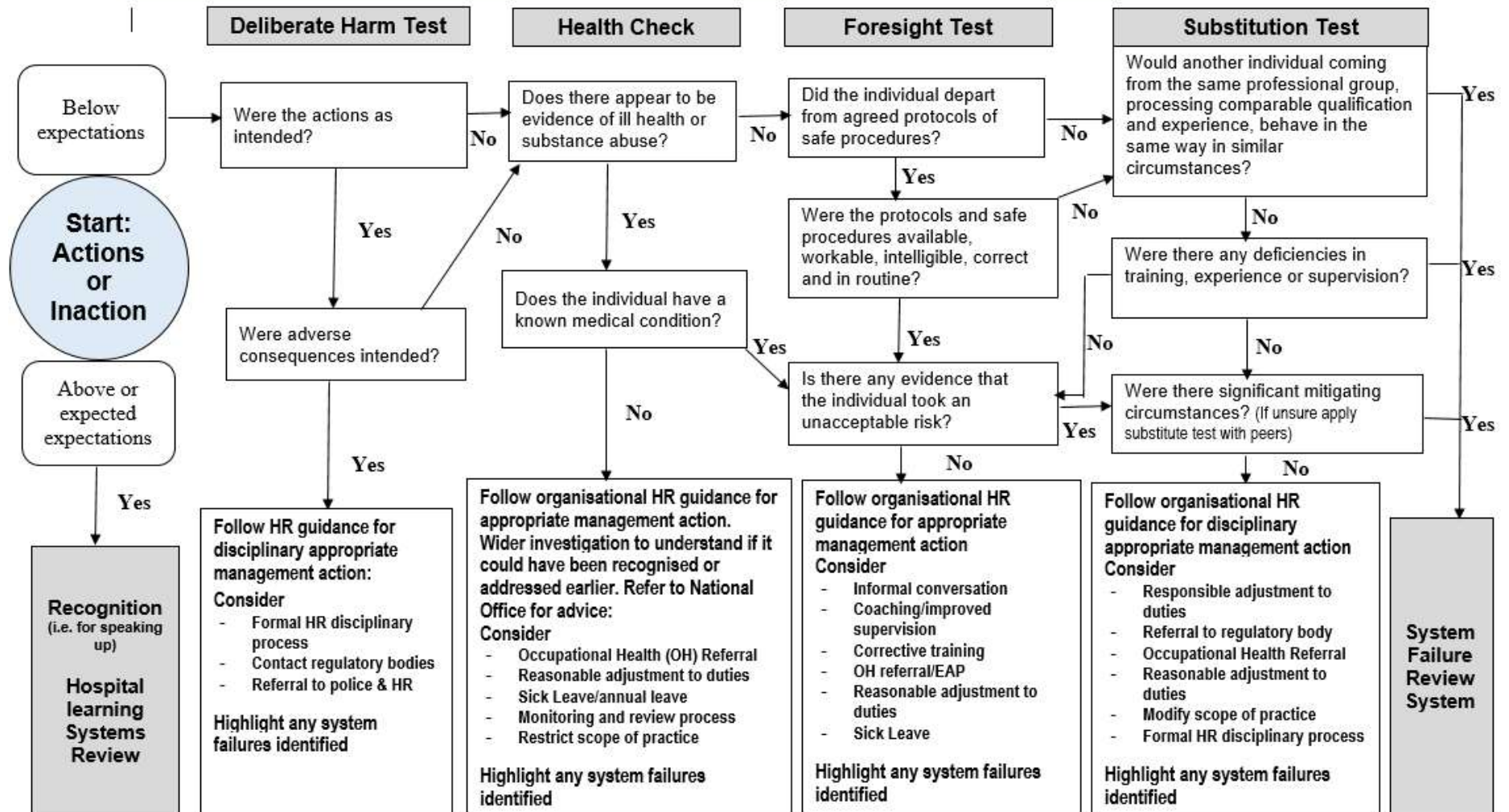
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**SOUTHERN CROSS HEALTHCARE JUST CULTURE GUIDE
BASED ON JAMES REASONS CULPABILITY MODEL**



Note: this guide should only be used when there is already suspicion that a member of staff requires support or management to work safely, or as part of an individual performance/case investigation