

Youth justice custodial practice manual

Secure Services

Significant Event Case Notes

- Significant Event Case Notes are used to communicate young people's behaviours of concern.
- They are used if the young person's behaviour does not reach the threshold for a Client Incident Report, but is more significant than behaviours recorded in a standard case note.

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When to use this procedure

- When a young person's behaviour or circumstances cause concern for the safety of themselves or others, but do not reach the threshold for a Client Incident Report.

What else you need to know

Make sure you have read and understood the following procedures:

- [Client incident reporting](#)
- [How we deal with difficult behaviour](#)
- [Observation of young people in custody](#)
- [Preventing occupational violence and use of force](#)

Staff responsibilities

Find your role below to see what your responsibilities are:

- [All staff](#)
- [Unit Manager](#)
- [Operations Manager or General Manager](#)

All staff

After a significant event, or behaviour that is outside a young person's normal pattern of behaviour.

- Complete a Significant Event Case Note (SECN) in CRIS.
- Enter the most relevant subject line:
 - wellbeing
 - risk to self
 - risk to others
 - difficult behaviours
 - security concerns.
- In the case note:
 - **describe** the behaviour
 - **analyse** the behaviour
 - **comment** on the staff response to the behaviour
 - **describe** any actions
 - **note** any other actions.
- If force was used or the young person was restrained, clearly describe the force that was used as well as staff involved.
- If the young person has been isolated, select the tick box to indicate the isolation.
- Send the completed case note to the Unit Manager for endorsement with a 24-hour due date.

Unit Manager

When you receive a SECN

- If appropriate, approve the SECN.
- If follow up is required send a return note via CRIS outlining the actions required in response to the behaviour.
- Follow the instructions in this procedure to forward the SECN to precinct management.

Operations Manager or General Manager

When you receive a SECN

- If appropriate, approve the SECN.
- If follow up is required send a return note via CRIS outlining the actions required in response to the behaviour.
- Provide a copy of the SECN to the General Manager.

The procedure in detail

- [What is a SECN?](#)
- [When to complete a SECN](#)
- [Use of force, restraint and isolation](#)
- [What goes in a SECN?](#)
- [Recording a SECN on CRIS](#)
- [Standards for written records](#)
- [Categorisation of SECNs](#)
- [Wellbeing](#)
- [Risk to self](#)
- [Risk to others](#)
- [Difficult behaviours](#)
- [Security concerns](#)

What is a SECN?

A SECN allows youth justice to record, monitor and respond to significant behaviours exhibited by young people that do not reach the threshold for a Client Incident Report.

Reporting these types of behaviours is critical for case management and behaviour management planning.

The information contained in SECNs is also used in reports that go to the Youth Parole Board.

SECNs can be filtered to understand the frequency of concerning behaviours for individual young people and to look for trends.

This may trigger alternative behaviour management strategies, such as use of an Individual Behaviour Management Plan.

For example, the Youth Parole Board may be interested in how many times a young person has threatened abuse towards a staff member or has appeared substance affected.

Analysis of a young person's SECNs while in remand can be used to assist in classification to the appropriate unit once they are sentenced.

When to complete a SECN

A SECN should only be written when:

- a young person's behaviour has escalated
- a young person's behaviour is significantly different to their normal patterns of behaviour
- a young person's behaviour is such that unit management should be notified
- a young person's behaviour does not warrant a Category One or Two Client Incident Report but is of significant concern
- force was used or the young person restrained
- input from the Unit Manager or Operations Manager about an appropriate response is required
- a young person has achieved extremely poorly on their behaviour management record.

The normal CRIS case note function should be used for day-to-day behaviours generally expected from young people.

For example, if a young person usually bullies other people on the unit, this should be recorded in a case note. Only if the bullying becomes more intense should a SECN be considered.

SECNs are only to be used if there is a marked change in the young person's behaviour.

If a Key Worker is unsure whether to use a SECN or a regular case note, they should check with the Unit Supervisor.

Where a SECN relates to behaviour that is close to the threshold of a Category Two Client Incident Report, the Unit Manager must send it to the Operation Manager for advice on whether a Client Incident Report should be generated.

The Unit Manager must forward the SECN to the Operations Managers in all cases.

The SECN relates to the young person who exhibits the behaviour. If there is an identified victim of the behaviour, a SECN should also be written on them.

For example, if a young person has been persistently bullied:

- a SECN would be written regarding the perpetrator of the bullying under the 'risk to others' category
- a SECN would be written regarding the victim of the bullying under the 'wellbeing' category.

The perpetrator and the victim would require different responses from the Unit Manager.

If more than one person is involved as a perpetrator, multiple names can be selected in CRIS to be attached to the SECN.

If a staff member is the victim of persistent verbal abuse from a young person, a SECN should be written under the 'difficult behaviour' category.

If the Unit Manager receives the SECN and does not believe that it is warranted, they can ask the writer to mark the SECN as 'entered in error'.

Use of force, restraint and isolation

If force, restraint or isolation has been used to manage a young person, a SECN is required and the tick box on the case note window in CRIS must be selected to indicate an isolation.

The details of the use of force or restraint must be outlined in the SECN including:

- the reason for use of force or restraint
- the staff members involved
- if any injuries were sustained by the young person or staff
- the method of force or restraint used
- how long the force or restraint lasted
- if the young person was placed in isolation, how they were escorted there, for example they walked or were placed in an arm lock
- the length of isolation.

Information in the 'Isolation' tab in CRIS must also be completed for every isolation.

What goes in a SECN?

Information in a SECN should describe and analyse the behaviour and outline the staff response to the behaviour including indicating if force was used.

The information provided should be enough for the reader to gain a clear understanding of what happened, what may have contributed to or caused it, and what happened as a consequence.

As a reminder, it is useful to provide information that responds to the following prompts:

- who?
- what?
- where?
- when?
- how?
- why?

Staff should consider and document the following:

- what caused the behaviour
- details of use of force or isolation
- what the staff response was
- how the young person reacted
- if follow up was required
- if the health team was consulted.

The emphasis placed on each of these questions will vary based on the type of incident and the impact to the young person.

In addition, staff must ensure that the SECN is:

- well organised
- specific
- complete
- concise
- factual
- objective.

Recording a SECN on CRIS

Once a SECN has been written, the following steps must be completed by the Unit Manager:

- All SECNs must be recorded on CRIS with information added into the Action Detail tab, indicating what the unit is doing in response to the event.
- Where information is not provided in the Action Detail tab, the SECN will be returned to the Unit Manager for updating.
- For significant events that involve a young person being placed in isolation, there is an expectation that the **Isolation Report Completed** tick box has been ticked, and the entry of isolation confirmed.
- The confirmation by a Unit Manager that an isolation has been entered must be noted in the Action Detail tab as 'Unit Manager confirmed isolation entered'.
- If a restraint has occurred during the event, the Manner Placed in Isolation drop down box must be used in the Isolations page to record the use of force.

Standards for written records

As SECNs are a legal document, they must be:

- factual and non-judgmental
- legible
- logical and in correct order
- signed and dated
- appropriately cross-referenced – for example, if a Client Incident Report is developed, this should be case noted in CRIS
- completed in a black or blue pen – this is often a legal requirement.

Staff must not:

- use white-out to correct mistakes; mistakes must be crossed out with a line through the text and initialled
- use red pen as it may become illegible if it needs to be photocopied for a formal process, such as an investigation by police or the coroner
- archive or store documents in plastic sleeves which can cause printed information to deteriorate
- file faxes or documents on thermal paper as these deteriorate over time; these documents must be copied onto standard paper before filing
- use jargon – avoid acronyms or abbreviations to ensure information is clear to any reader
- use initials, abbreviations or nicknames of staff or young people.

Categorisation of SECNs

SECNs are categorised into five key areas:

- wellbeing
- risk to self
- risk to others
- difficult behaviours
- security concerns.

Wellbeing

A marked change in a young person's usual presentation

The young person:

- has received an upsetting phone call
- appears markedly unhappy, unsettled, or anxious
- is isolated or withdrawn, spending all their time alone
- has experienced significant bullying and harassment

- reports a history of abuse.

Example case note

'At 11:20 am today John was observed on the telephone. It was not clear who he was talking to. He appeared to be distressed, this was evidenced by his whispered voice, clenching of his fist and pacing. This behaviour is a marked change in John's usual, friendly, light-hearted phone banter with his family.

After the phone call concluded the writer approached John and asked if he was ok. John responded that his mother has been and unwell and had just told him that she will need to have an operation. The writer consoled John and told him that he would make arrangements for him to call his mother again tonight to check on her progress.

The writer alerted the Unit Health Coordinator who advised that John be placed on frequent observation'.

Risk to self

Behaviour that places the young person at risk

Where there has been:

- self-harm that does not warrant a Category One or Category Two Client Incident Report for example where medical attention was not required
- suspected drug use that does not warrant a Category One or Category Two Client Incident Report
- an accidental injury to a young person.

Example case note

'When Emily's bedroom door was opened at 8.00 am, the writer noticed that she immediately covered her arm.

The writer asked Emily if she had self-harmed during the night. Emily showed her arm, there were approximately five superficial scratches about three centimetres long on her inside left arm. As per Emily's care plan she was asked to wipe the scratches with a medical swab.

There was no blood and a cover was not required. Emily's room was searched and her ruler was removed. However, it appears that the scratches were made by her fingernails.

The Supervisor contacted the Unit Health Coordinator to advise of the behaviour'.

Risk to others

Behaviour that places others at risk

The young person has been involved in:

- an assault of another young people where no injuries were sustained
- inciting incidents
- threatening behaviours
- significantly disruptive behaviours
- behaviour that poses an unacceptable risk to the safety of the young person or others
- behaviour that has to be managed by force, despite reasonable direction by staff.

Example case note

'During the community meeting, staff discussed the new rules around school attendance with the young people. Many young people discussed their displeasure at having to attend school during the day. When it was Callum's turn to speak in the meeting he starting shouting at staff members and was stamping his feet and banging on the wall.

Callum was asked to stop this behaviour; however he kept up the momentum encouraging other young people to join in.

After approximately two minutes, staff removed the young people who were not participating in the shouting from the community meeting space.

The young people who were participating in the shouting stopped after a few minutes and were also removed from the space into another wing.

Callum was left in the lounge room and continued to shout and scream, pacing in the room.

Callum lunged at YJW1 Smith with a clenched fist, at which point Smith and YJW1 Johns deployed approved defensive technique.

It was necessary to implement the 'bear hug' restraint technique to lower him safely to the floor.

Once restrained on the floor, Callum continued to yell out and struggle, yelling 'I will kill you all'.

Callum was informed that he would be placed in isolation because he was placing others at risk.

Callum was asked if he could move to isolation without assistance, which he agreed to. Smith and Johns escorted Callum to isolation and he was placed on constant observation. Refer to Isolation Report'.

Difficult behaviours

Behaviour that is persistent which threatens others or is offensive or degrading

The young person has engaged in:

- persistent bullying of other young people, verbal name calling and insults
- significant graffiti and tagging
- property damage, for example pulling out silicon around windows or pulling the sprinkler
- significant and persistent verbal abuse and threats directed at staff and young people
- persistent play fighting
- sexualised behaviour not fitting a Category One or Two Client Incident Report, for example, persistently raising sexual topics after having been asked not to.

Example case note

'When Julian's bedroom was inspected in the morning after his unit chores, the writer noticed that there was a significant amount of graffiti in his room.

The side of the bed had been scratched, exposing the grain wood underneath. Approximately 40 per cent of the area was affected.

The silicon around the window frame had also been picked out completely. There was scribble in black texta on approximately 12 bricks.

The writer provided Julian with a bucket and scrubbing brush and assisted him to scrub the wall of the black texta. During this process the writer discussed the consequences of property damage.

The writer also provided Julian with loose white paper and suggested that he use this to scribble on at night.

As a consequence, Julian will receive a low grade today for 'Taking care of yourself and your room' on the Promoting Positive Behaviour record'.

Security concerns

Behaviour that breaches the safety and security of the unit/precinct

The young person:

- is found with prohibited item such as lighters, mobile phones, tobacco, matches
- returns late from unescorted temporary leave
- cannot be located for lockdown
- is acting suspiciously.

Example case note

'During the 4.00 pm lockdown, the smoke detector alerted staff to smoke in bedroom four.

The writer noticed the distinct smell of marijuana when approaching room four.

Mohamed was asked if he had a cigarette, lighters or any other contraband and he stated that he did not.

Mohamed did not appear to be drug affected. The writer and supporting staff member Miller asked Mohamed to come to the staff room to undergo a frisk search.

The frisk search uncovered a lighter. Mohamed was compliant through the search.

He stated that it wasn't his and he was holding it for someone else, however he wouldn't say who.

Mohamed's bedroom was searched and nothing was found.

As a consequence, Mohamed will receive a low grade today for 'Taking care of yourself and your room' on the Promoting Positive Behaviour record'.

Additional Information

- [Significant Event Case Note CRIS instruction \(546.5 KB, MS Word\)](#)

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Youth justice custodial practice manual

Secure Services

Client incident reporting

This section outlines procedures for reporting incidents related to young people in the precincts.

Click to hide all content

When to use this procedure

- Following an incident involving a young person who is in youth justice custody – including incidents that occur outside of the precinct.

What else you need to know

Make sure you have read and understood the following procedures:

- [Emergency procedures](#)
- [Operational debriefing](#)
- [Significant Event Case Notes](#)

Staff responsibilities

Find your role below to see what your responsibilities are:

- [All staff](#)
- [Most senior staff member to witness an incident or to whom the incident was reported](#)
- [Unit Manager or Operations Manager](#)
- [General Manager](#)

All staff

At all times

- Be aware of your incident reporting responsibilities.

Most senior staff member to witness an incident or to whom the incident was reported

Following a critical incident involving or impacting on a young person

- Ensure that all young people and staff involved in the incident are safe and being cared for.
- Complete a Client Incident Report, following the guidelines in this procedure.
- Submit the Client Incident Report to the Unit Manager or Operations Manager for checking and endorsement on CRIS.

Unit Manager or Operations Manager

Once a Client Incident Report has been completed

- On receiving the Client Incident Report, record a brief description of the incident in 20 words or less, and:
 - record the local action in response to the incident and, if appropriate, the action planned to prevent recurrence
 - check the Client Incident Report for quality, ensuring that appropriate incident type, category, young person and location were

recorded.

- Send the Client Incident Report to the General Manager on CRIS.

General Manager

On receipt of a Client Incident Report from Unit Manager or Operations Manager

- Check the report, review any outstanding issues and forward it to the Director Secure Services on CRIS within the applicable timelines.

The procedure in detail

- [The aims of client incident reporting](#)
- [What is a critical incident?](#)
- [When is a Client Incident Report required?](#)
- [Reporting a critical client incident](#)
- [How to choose an incident type and category](#)
- [Incident review](#)

The aims of client incident reporting

The overall aims of client incident reporting for all program areas of the department are to:

- ensure timely and effective responses are taken to address the immediate safety and wellbeing of young people
- be accountable to young people for actions taken immediately and planned in response to their experience of a critical incident
- ensure due diligence and responsibilities to young people are met
- support the provision of high-quality services to young people through the full and frank reporting of adverse events
- assure and enhance the quality of service and supports to young people by monitoring and acting on individual incidents as well as trends identified through the analysis of incident reports
- support organisational consistency
- ensure that identified deficits in service and support are addressed
- inform the appropriate ministers, the secretary, executive directors, directors and regional directors of significant incidents affecting young people in a timely and accurate manner.

What is a critical incident?

A critical incident is an event where there are significant concerns for a young person's safety and wellbeing.

There are two categories of critical incidents – Category One and Category Two.

Incidents are categorised into the following types:

- absent or missing young people
- behaviour
- breach of privacy confidentiality matters
- community concerns
- death
- drug or alcohol
- escape
- illness
- injury
- medical condition known – deterioration
- medication error
- physical assault
- poor quality of care
- possession
- property damage or disruption
- self-harm
- suicide attempted
- sexual assault.

When is a Client Incident Report required?

A Client Incident Report is required for all critical incidents that occur at the service or during service delivery which involve and/or impact upon young people.

This includes all critical incidents that occur:

- while a staff member is with the young person
- when the young person attends a service provider's premises, including offices, residential services, respite facilities or day services
- when a staff member is escorting a young person on leave or supporting them in the community on the Pre-release Program
- onsite at the service, including inside and around the building and locations that are within view of staff.

For a service providing 24-hour care, including the custodial precincts, a report is required for all incidents involving young people of this service regardless of the location of the incident.

Reporting a critical client incident

Respond to immediate needs of the young people and staff involved

In the case of any incident the first step is to make sure young people and staff are safe.

Once that has been achieved a Client Incident Report must be completed. The report must include immediate actions that have been taken and planned follow-up actions.

Completing the Client Incident Report Form

The most senior witness to the incident or, if there were no witnesses, the staff member to whom the incident was reported must complete parts one to four of the Client Incident Report Form on CRIS.

The Client Incident Report should record all necessary factual details including:

- who was involved
- what happened
- how, where and when the incident occurred
- who was injured and the nature and extent of injuries (if there were any)
- what action is being taken in response to the incident.

Use of force, restraint and isolation

If force, restraint or isolation was used to manage a young person a SECN is required and the tick box on the case note window in CRIS must be selected to indicate an isolation.

The details of the force or restraint must be outlined in the SECN including:

- which staff were involved
- if any injuries were sustained by young people or staff
- the method of force or restraint used
- how long the force or restraint lasted
- if the young person was placed in isolation, how they were escorted there, for example they walked or were placed in an arm lock
- the length of isolation.

Information in the Isolation tab in CRIS must also be completed for every isolation.

Objective language must be used. Refer to **Writing an effective Client Incident Report** for further guidance.

Submitting the completed Client Incident Report

After parts one to four of the Client Incident Report form have been completed the Unit Manager or Operations Manager records a brief description of the incident in 20 words or less, and:

- records the local action in response to the incident and, if appropriate, the action planned to prevent recurrence
- completes the staff to client assault section if applicable
- check the Client Incident Report for quality, ensuring that appropriate incident type, category, client and location details were recorded.

The Unit Manager or Operations Manager sends the Client Incident Report to the General Manager on CRIS. The General Manager completes part six and seven, checks it, reviews any outstanding issues and forwards it to the Director Secure Services.

The General Manager and the Director can revoke a Client Incident Report if it is thought to be inaccurate. The Director must be advised of all Client Incident Reports revoked by the General Manager.

Timelines

The Client Incident Report must be forwarded to the Director Secure Services within the following timelines:

- Category One – as soon as possible and at the latest within one working day of the incident or one working day from first being told of the incident
- Category Two – as soon as possible and at the latest within two working days of the incident or two working days from first being told of the incident

incident.

Alleged criminal acts

In addition to the incident reporting process, any alleged criminal acts that occur during service delivery must be reported to the police as soon as practicable.

Additional details

The need to quickly submit the Client Incident Report may conflict with the time required to develop long-term or complex responses.

In such cases the Client Incident Report must be submitted to meet the set timelines with a note on the form stating that a response is still being developed.

Once a Client Incident Report has been completed and made final the incident description must not be changed or altered in any way or for any reason.

If another witness or individual disagrees with the content of the report the alternative views must be put in writing as a file note and attached to the completed Client Incident Report.

Third-party information

A Client Incident Report may include personal information from a third party to an incident – that is, someone who is not a young person in custody or staff member but who witnessed or was involved in the incident. This could include program providers or visitors to the precinct.

The person should be notified that the information is being collected by the department for the purpose of service improvement and, in particular, to try and prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future. It may not be necessary to name witnesses.

Do not send information by email

There are particular risks in sending messages via the internet. Client Incident Reports must not be sent by email but should be completed and submitted for endorsement on CRIS.

How to choose an incident type and category

Incident type

An incident type is simply a descriptor. For each incident only one incident type must be selected. There is a set list of incident types that can be used in Client Incident Reports.

When choosing an incident type, choose the incident type with the definition that best describes what happened in the incident, or the behaviour or circumstance that had the greatest impact.

Refer to **Incident type categorisation table 2011** to assist in selecting the most appropriate incident type.

Category

There are two categories of reportable incidents. In grading an incident, give consideration to the actual impact or apparent outcome for the young person and the likelihood that the behaviour or circumstances will occur again.

Category One incidents are the most serious. A Category One incident is an incident that has resulted in a serious outcome, such as a young person's death or severe trauma.

Category Two incidents involve events that threaten the health, safety and/or wellbeing of young people or staff.

It is expected that senior staff will use their professional judgement in considering the sensitivity and appropriate grading of incidents being reported.

The Critical Client Incident Management Summary Guide and Categorisation Table assists staff to select the appropriate reporting category.

Factors to consider in determining whether an incident is reportable

Senior unit staff must exercise professional judgement to assess whether a Client Incident Report is needed.

The following factors should be considered when determining whether an incident is reportable:

- Was the young person hurt in the incident? To what extent?
- Are they still at risk?
- Does service delivery to the young person have to change substantially as a result of the incident?

These factors are considered in more detail below.

Severity of outcome

Consider:

- the nature and extent of the trauma
- the level of distress caused to the victim.

If a young person is admitted to hospital as an inpatient (requiring an overnight stay) as a result of a physical or sexual assault, accident,

sudden illness, injury, self-harm or possible overdose, the event is reportable as a Category One incident.

Vulnerability of the young person

Consider:

- the age and stage of development, culture and gender of the young person
- the balance of power or position between the alleged perpetrator and victim and the potential for exploitation
- the young person's individual mental and/or physical capacity, understanding of potential risks and communication skills.

An incident is likely to be reportable if it involves the conduct of (or negligence by) a staff member that significantly impacts on or places at risk the health, safety and wellbeing of a young person.

Pattern and history of behaviour

Consider:

- the history and pattern of offending or being offended against
- the young person's risk-taking behaviour
- the frequency of the event
- the likelihood of recurrence.

Significant Event Case Note (SECN)

A SECN must be written if the incident is not serious enough to warrant a Category One or Category Two Client Incident Report, but is still an incident of concern – particularly where it relates to an ongoing behaviour. The Significant Event Case Note procedure provides guidance on how to do this.

Young people receiving multiple service types

Many young people in custody are also supported by a number of other service providers or government departments. This includes young people who are also receiving services from Child Protection or Disability Services.

Information regarding a critical client incident may be disclosed to the other service providers for the purpose of:

- service improvement
- lessening or preventing a serious or imminent threat to a young person's life, health, safety or welfare
- trying to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future.
- The Unit Manager should notify the Area Youth Justice Worker and, where relevant, Child Protection or Disability Services of any reportable incidents involving young people.

Incident review

Secure Services needs to review incidents for quality improvement purposes.

Following the Director's endorsement of a Client Incident Report, the details are recorded on the TRIM database and are analysed monthly. Data relating to the time, type, categories and location of incidents is analysed to identify themes and systemic issues requiring attention.

Following Category One incidents and selected Category Two incidents, operational debriefs are conducted to review the circumstances surrounding the incident and to learn from the incident to prevent recurrence.

All Category One and selected Category Two incidents are audited on a six monthly basis by Secure Services.

Additional Information

- [Client Incident Reporting](#)

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