


# Ngā Rau Rākau Unauthorised Leave/AWOL Procedure

## MHAPPM/8513

<b>Approved by:</b>	General Manager – Mental Health & Addiction	<b>First Issued:</b>	February 2004	
<b>Signature:</b>	David Warrington	<b>Review Date:</b>	September 2022	
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## Purpose

The purpose of this document to:

- Describe the procedure to be followed when a tāngata whaiora under the Mental Health (Compulsory Assessment & Treatment) Act 1992 (MHA) is absent without leave (AWOL) from the service.
- Describe the procedure to be followed when a tāngata whaiora is voluntarily admitted to the Mental Health Inpatient Service and has significant and imminent risks identified at the time they are unable to be located.

This document is to be used in conjunction with MHAPPM/8953 – [Mental Health and Addiction Group Policy](#) which outlines the shared vision and expectations for the direction, values, principles, attitudes and ways of working to deliver a values based service.

## Principles

All Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand, Te Matau a Māui Hawke’s Bay documents are based on and link back to our values; **He Kauanuanu** (respect), **Ākina** (improvement), **Raranga Te Tira** (partnership) and **Tauwhiro** (care), and are detailed so all persons are provided with clear information on the way they are expected to practice and undertake tasks.

## Scope

All Mental Health Service staff.

## Definitions

Refer to the Mental Health Service Definitions Glossary [\\FS3\share\Public\All Users\MHS Policy review\DEFINITIONS FOR WORDS AND TERMS IN USE WITHIN THE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE.docx](#).

## Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Allocated Nurse	Responsible for coordinating the process for attempting to locate the tāngata whaiora, notifying the Duly Authorised Officer (DAO) if the tāngata whaiora is under the MHA, completing the Electronic Event Report, communication checklist, the health record entry in ECA and notifying all identified parties.

Role	Responsibility
Duly Authorised Officer (DOA)	<p>For all tāngata whaiora under the MHA a DAO may take reasonable steps to return an inpatient absent from hospital without leave under section 40(2)(b). If a tāngata whaiora is likely to pose a serious risk to self or others it is appropriate for the DAO to request Police assistance to help return the tāngata whaiora to hospital.</p> <p>If it is necessary to use more than minimal force to return a tāngata whaiora absent without leave, or if entry onto premises is required, a DAO should request assistance from Police</p>

## Procedure

Te Whatu Ora, Te Matau a Māui Hawke's Bay has a responsibility for the safety of people in its care undergoing compulsory assessment and/or treatment under the MHA and that following the discovery of a tāngata whaiora on unauthorised leave or absent without leave (AWOL), a clear process is followed in a timely, sensitive and thorough manner.

Every effort will be made to ensure the tāngata whaiora under the MHA remain in a place of safety and/or receive the follow up they require in accordance with the section of the MHA they are subject to.

That risks are mitigated for those voluntary tāngata whaiora who are missing or absence from the ward where significant and imminent risks have been identified.

### 1 Ngā Rau Rākau Inpatient

- a) Establish the tāngata whaiora is definitely missing by checking the locale - systematic search of the unit (inpatient) and immediate surrounding areas.
- b) Check with family, next of kin and the tāngata whaiora own contact number in order to attempt to locate.
- c) If the tāngata whaiora is subject to the MHA, discuss with person's Responsible Clinician and implement procedure below at the direction of Responsible Clinician
- d) A registered clinician decides when the person is missing and is of concern. This is done in conjunction with the person's Responsible Clinician / Clinical Manager, Duty Manager or, if specified, other relevant persons as outlined in the tāngata whaiora current Go To Plan.

### 2 Notification

The registered clinician must assess the risk associated with the tāngata whaiora absence; taking into account their current MHA status, Go To Plan, mental state, previous history etc and, after discussion with the Responsible Clinician (if under the MHA) or Treating Clinician or delegate out of hours, and/or the Clinical or Associate Nurse Manager/Duty manager, notifies:

### 3 For all tāngata whaiora under the MHA on unauthorised leave (AWOL)

- a) The DAO to be notified via contact with Emergency Mental Health Services and AWOL form completed and sent through to the nominated DAO
- b) The DAO may take reasonable steps to return an inpatient absent from hospital without leave under section 40(2)(b). If a tāngata whaiora is likely to pose a serious risk to self or others it is appropriate for the DAO to request Police assistance to help return the tāngata whaiora to

hospital or if it is necessary to use more than minimal force to return the tāngata whaiora, or if entry onto premises is required, the DAO should request assistance from Police.

- c) If the DAO requires police assistance then they are to email the AWOL form and S41 Request for Police Assistance form to [FMCCR@police.govt.nz](mailto:FMCCR@police.govt.nz) if the tāngata whaiora is under the MHA and absent without leave.

#### 4 For all voluntary tāngata whaiora Missing Persons

Do not complete a report to Police unless genuine and imminent fears for safety to themselves or others exist. If the person is not subject to the MHA, staff who have assessed the person (or GP or family member) within 3 days may complete sections 8a and 8b if clinically indicated.

#### 5 For tāngata whaiora Assessed as Serious Risk

- a) Call Police Emergency 111 – Clearly provide information as to why this person is considered a serious risk for example violence, self-harm, at risk behaviour.
- b) Complete Police Missing Person Notification Report in full and email to Eastern District File Management Centre [easterndistrict.fmc@police.govt.nz](mailto:easterndistrict.fmc@police.govt.nz)

#### 6 For tāngata whaiora assessed as Low Risk

- a) Complete Police Missing Person Notification Report in full and email to Eastern District File Management Centre [easterndistrict.fmc@police.govt.nz](mailto:easterndistrict.fmc@police.govt.nz)
- b) If electronic/email systems are down, contact the District Command Centre assigned mobile number **021 222 7607**.

#### 7 Other Notifications (where appropriate)

- Relatives, carers, significant others listed on the person's health record
- Clinical Nurse Manager / Associate Clinical Nurse Manager
- Shift Coordinator
- Duty Manager (out of hours)
- Community Mental Health Team key worker as relevant
- Email AWOL form to Emergency Mental Health Service
- Notify DAMHS office if person subject to MHA

#### 8 Documentation

- [AWOL Form](#)
- Police Missing Person Notification Report
- Request For Police Assistance Form (if under MHA)
- Electronic Event Report
- Entry in the tāngata whaiora health record on ECA
- MHA if indicated

## 9 Review

- a) The risk assessment of the tāngata whaiora is reviewed each day the tāngata whaiora is absent.
- b) The process for discharge from the unit following a missing person is specific for each tāngata whaiora and is a complete MDT decision.
- c) The decision to discharge and the rationale behind this decision will be clearly documented in ECA by the person's treating doctor including a list of all people notified of the plan for discharge.

## Measurable Outcomes

All unauthorised leaves are followed up in a timely and appropriate manner

## Related Documents

MHAPPM/8953 – [Mental Health and Addiction Group Policy](#)  
[Mental Health \(Compulsory Assessment & Treatment\) Act 1992](#)  
[AWOL Form](#)

Police Missing Person Notification Report

Request For Police Assistance Form

## References

No references

## Keywords

Absent  
AWOL  
Absent Without Leave  
Unauthorised Leave

***For further information please contact the Clinical Nurse Manager –  
Mental Health Intensive Services***