



AFP Practical Guide on attending self-administered drug overdoses (ACT Policing)

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1. Disclosure and compliance

This document is classified **UNCLASSIFIED** and is intended for internal AFP use.

Disclosing any content must comply with Commonwealth law and the [AFP National Guideline on](#)

[disclosure of information](#).

Compliance

This instrument is part of the AFP's professional standards framework. The [AFP Commissioner's Order on Professional Standards \(CO2\)](#) outlines the expectations for appointees to adhere to the requirements of the framework. Inappropriate departures from the provisions of this instrument may constitute a breach of AFP professional standards and be dealt with under Part V of the [Australian Federal Police Act 1979](#) (Cth).

2. Acronyms

AFP	Australian Federal Police
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3. Guideline authority

This guideline was issued by the Chief Police Officer, ACT Policing using power under s. 37(1) of the [Australian Federal Police Act 1979](#) (Cth) as delegated by the Commissioner under s. 69C of the Act.

4. Introduction

This guideline sets out the circumstances where members should attend a self-administered non-fatal drug overdose consistent with a harm minimisation approach.

5. Policy on harm minimisation

The underlying philosophy of the National Drug Strategy is that of harm minimisation. Law enforcement agencies recognise that resources should be directed at suppliers rather than users, and the enforcement of self-administration laws should be limited to exceptional cases and only where absolutely necessary.

ACT Policing acknowledges that the preservation of life is the overriding priority for police in drug related incidents. Consistent with this, it is imperative that we encourage victims, and others in attendance at a drug overdose, to overcome their fear of prosecution and call an ambulance when necessary.

6. Police actions

Members should only attend the scene of a drug overdose when:

- it occurs in a public place (e.g. public toilets)
- the overdose resulted in death
- there are allegations raising a suspicion that the overdose occurred in suspicious circumstances (e.g. attempted murder)
- ambulance officers request assistance.

6.1 Deaths

In the case of a drug overdose death, members must fully investigate the matter on behalf of the Coroner and treat the relevant location as a crime scene in accordance with the [ACT Policing: Practical Guide: Deaths](#).

6.2 Other cases

In cases where members are called to assist at the scene of a self-administered non-fatal overdose they should leave the scene once medical assistance is rendered.

There may be evidence of other drug related activity by the person involved. In these circumstances, members must exercise discretion in determining whether to investigate further after considering if it is in the public interest. Members must also consider if the person meets the criteria for the drug diversion program outlined in the [AFP Practical Guide on drug diversions \(ACT Policing\)](#).

6.3 Administration of drugs by others

This guideline does not cover circumstances where someone administers a drug to another person. Particular caution must be applied by members where any evidence exists to suspect that an overdose (or drug related death) may have been caused other than by self-administration.

7. Further advice

Queries about the content of this guideline should be referred to the Officer in Charge, ACT Policing Operations.

8. References

AFP governance instruments

- [ACT Policing: Practical Guide: Deaths](#)
- [AFP Practical Guide on drug diversions \(ACT Policing\)](#)