

Reviewing incident reports

Victorian health incident information system (VHIMS)

A guide to effectively reviewing incident reports

7-steps to an effective incident management process¹



The *Victorian health incident management system policy guide* identifies seven steps in an effective incident management process. These seven steps are illustrated above.

The review process completes the prioritisation, investigation, classification, analysis and action, and feedback steps of the incident management process, and ensures all relevant information is documented in the report.

This information sheet is a guide on how to effectively review an incident report. It is an extension of the guide to *Writing effective incident reports*. This guide can be found at www.health.vic.gov.au/clinrisk/vhims.

Elements of an effective incident report review

A good incident report should reflect the best available information on the; who, what, when, where, how, why.

After an effective review process, the incident report should provide a comprehensive picture of the follow-up actions taken, the type of investigation or review process, feedback provided and any recommendations made.

In addition to the elements of a good incident report, the report review should specifically address:

Element	Questions as part of the review process	Relevant VHIMS data label
Who	Who is currently aware of the incident?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review history (bottom of the page)
What	What additional information is required to clarify what happened?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journals and actions → Add new journal entry
	What were the immediate actions to resolve the incident and provide a safe environment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What happened → Immediate actions taken
	What type of investigation or review process was conducted?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incident Follow-up → Internal reviews
	Is the severity of the incident correct?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incident assessment → Set severity rating
	Is the incident classification correct?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is it classified → Primary classification
Why and how	What factors contributed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incident follow-up → Possible contributing factors
	What follow-up actions were required?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incident follow-up → Controls to prevent recurrence

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Purpose of the incident report review

Where possible the incident report should be reviewed by a senior or independent person, in collaboration with the staff member who reported the incident. In many instances this may be the direct line manager.

A reviewer will receive an incident report. It is the role of the reviewer to:

- read the incident report
- ensure the details are accurate including the incident severity rating (ISR) and classification
- update the details in the incident report as necessary (a copy of the original report will still be available)
- commence the incident investigation or review and document the status
- ensure appropriate feedback processes are in place for the incident and documented in the report.

The incident review process should be guided by your organisation policies and procedures.

Characteristics of an effective incident report review

An effective review will ensure the report is factual and complete

New information may become available as part of the incident investigation and review. It is important that the report continues to be factual and complete. If necessary, update the narrative and pre-defined data items.

An effective review will ensure the report has the appropriate classification/priority

Particular attention should be given to the accuracy of the classification and ISR fields.

For incidents with a higher ISR rating, additional fields are required before the report is complete. These additional data entry fields are denoted by a red number **1** in the incident report.

Appropriate classification of the incident is essential and may affect what additional information is required. For example, if you select the incident class 'medicines' more information about the medication is requested.

An effective review will ensure the report is internally consistent

An effective review will result in a report that is logical from the incident notification to the investigation phase.

For example:

Internally inconsistent – an ISR of 1 is recorded but the 'internal review' type recorded is 'aggregate review'.

Internally consistent – an ISR of 1 is recorded and the 'internal review' type recorded is a 'root cause analysis'.

An effective review will ensure information is documented across the 7-steps

An effective review will ensure that information from the incident, to the investigation or review process, to the subsequent findings are documented. A factual, complete, logical incident report is one means of demonstrating that effective incident management processes are in place.

More information

Information on the ISR and the incident management process can be found in the *Victorian health incident management system policy* and the accompanying *policy guide*.

More information on VHIMS can be found at www.health.vic.gov.au/clinrisk/vhims.

¹ Department of Health 2011, *Victorian health incident management policy guide* p.8 <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/clinrisk/vhims>.