

# Deployment during COVID-19

## Guideline

### Purpose

As Queensland Health's response to COVID-19 evolves, a need may arise to ask existing Queensland Health employees to work in a different setting or work location or to undertake a similar or different task or role. In the event that there are no available existing Queensland Health employees, a need may also arise to engage additional resources to respond to surges in demand for services.

The purpose of this guideline is to provide a set of principles to inform and support decision making regarding the appropriate deployment of employees as part of Queensland Health's response to COVID-19.

This guideline addresses deployment options and considerations for both clinical and non-clinical employees if deployment is required as part of the response to COVID-19.

### Contents

<b>1 Principles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 The health and safety of our workforce is paramount</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 Employees will be asked to only work within their scope of practice</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.3 Flexibility is vital to our response</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.4 Respectful and rapid consultation about temporary changes is required</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.5 Existing industrial entitlements will be maintained</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.6 All changes are temporary</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2 Relevant considerations for clinical staff</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3 Recommended order of consideration for deployment decisions</b>	<b>2</b>

## 1 Principles

The following list of principles is provided for guidance regarding the deployment of staff and other resources as part of Queensland Health's response to COVID-19.

### 1.1 The health and safety of our workforce is paramount

Queensland Health needs to balance the requirement to provide essential services with the wellbeing and safety of our workforce. Staff deployed to different locations or roles will be required to be appropriately experienced in the functions of the deployment role requirements; and in that deployed role receive appropriate training and induction related to safety requirements of the physical workplace as well as specific Hospital and Health Service policies and requirements.

The effective management of employee fatigue is crucial to Queensland Health's response to COVID-19. The current [Fatigue Risk Management System](#) and relevant industrial provisions relating to fatigue continue to apply during a deployment situation and employees are encouraged to discuss concerns they may have regarding fatigue with their line manager.

### 1.2 Employees will be asked to work only within their particular professional scope of practice for clinical staff or within the relevant competencies, skills, qualifications or experience for non-clinical staff

As part of the COVID-19 pandemic response, it is anticipated that clinical priorities and demands may rapidly change. In response to emergent operational need, Queensland Health will flexibly adjust staffing allocations to meet demand.

Changes to staffing allocations for non-clinical employees will be based on relevant skills, qualifications or experience.

It is essential that clinical staff only provide care to patients relevant to their professional registration and/or accreditation, competency and experience. It is expected that clinicians will continue to exercise their professional judgment as appropriate in relation to clinical requirements.

If an employee holds concerns regarding their ability to practice appropriately/safely in another area or when performing a task in the new area, they should discuss their concerns with their manager as soon as possible.

### 1.3 Flexibility is vital to our response

Queensland Health acknowledges that a flexible approach to temporary deployment is an essential part of our response to COVID-19.

Every effort will be made to reach agreement with relevant employees and unions about work in another location or another role. Employees will be provided with as much notice as possible, and early consultation with affected employees and unions will be undertaken to take into consideration individual needs and family/caring responsibilities.

### 1.4 Respectful and rapid consultation about temporary changes is required

As part of the response to COVID-19, employees may be required to work in a different setting or work location or to undertake a different task or role function. Employees may be requested or directed to work in an area outside their usual place of practice due to COVID-19 need/surge demand. Queensland Health will continue to work with any employees and union partners to ensure this occurs as smoothly as possible.

Managers should undertake early consultation with employees to ascertain their personal, family and community responsibilities and requirements. Management should seek information from employees regarding the impacts of the proposed change and employees should be given an opportunity to advise of any specific impact. Based on this consultation, managers should make informed decisions about who may be deployed if required.

Managers should develop a list of employees who are agreeable to being deployed to another location or role if required.

As new circumstances emerge which require amended work arrangements, managers should again engage with the affected employees and unions, and discuss the need to deploy them to another location, role or function to ensure their personal circumstances have not changed.

Where consultation has occurred, but no agreement can be reached between the manager and employee, an employee may be provided with a direction to work in another location or role provided this direction is reasonable. Employees should be provided with as much notice as possible of any change to their work.

### **1.5 Existing industrial entitlements will be maintained**

Queensland Health will ensure that existing and correct entitlements and remuneration will be maintained. Where an employee is deployed to a position or is undertaking tasks that would normally be remunerated at a lower rate of pay, the employee's existing classification and rate of pay will be maintained.

Where an employee is deployed to a position that is classified at a higher classification and subsequent higher remuneration, the employee will temporarily move into that classification and receive the higher rate of pay.

All existing shift allowances and penalty entitlements prescribed in the relevant awards and certified agreements will continue to apply and be paid when worked.

In the event that an employee is deployed to a role or location where they would not be in receipt of their usual shift allowances or penalty payments, consultation should occur to establish potential financial impacts to the employee. Such deployment should be done on a voluntary basis only.

### **1.6 All changes are temporary**

Changes to an employee's working arrangements which occur as part of the response to COVID-19 will be temporary during the pandemic only.

If a need is identified requiring continuation or extension of these working arrangements beyond the period of the pandemic response, the relevant consultation mechanisms provided for within the appropriate industrial instrument will apply unless otherwise agreed by the relevant parties.

## **2 Relevant considerations for clinical staff**

It is expected that clinical staff will continue to work within their scope of practice as required by the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and the relevant boards and/or colleges and will continue to exercise their professional judgment in relation to their clinical practice.

A specific set of principles to inform decision making regarding the employment arrangements for nurses and midwives during COVID-19 has been agreed and must be taken into consideration when deploying nurses and midwives ([Hyperlink to principles for nursing](#)).

### 3 Recommended order of consideration for deployment decisions

As part of the Queensland Health response to COVID-19, particular services may be reduced or suspended and as such, employees may be available for deployment to other services to support priority areas during the pandemic response.

As part of the system resource support planning for the COVID 19 pandemic response, the Department of Health (the Department) has sought broad expressions of interest from the community. An expression of interest advertisement was administered by the Department's Human Resource Branch with applications received from candidates from both clinical and non-clinical backgrounds. This pool of applications is known as the Department of Health Expression of Interest Pool (DoH EOI pool) and is coordinated by the Department's Human Resources Branch.

In addition to the DoH EOI pool employees from across the broader state Public Service have volunteered to be deployed within Queensland Health. This pool of potential deployees is called the Public Service Employee Pool (PSE Pool).

In addition to the DoH EOI pool and the PSE pool, employees from local governments have volunteered to be deployed within Queensland Health. This pool is known as the Local Government Pool (LG pool) and is also coordinated by the Department's Human Resources Branch.

Finally, in addition to the available pools of potential deployees, services may need to engage additional employees over this period and may seek to recruit independently from external sources.

The below guide outlines the recommended process for resource identification for deployment:

- Step 1** In the first instance services should look to their existing directly employed permanent, temporary and casual employees and to those directly employed who because of a reduction or suspension in services are available to be deployed to other parts of the HHS.
- Step 2** Once these permanent, temporary and casual pool(s) have been exhausted the remaining pools of available deployees should be considered, including in the first instance the PSE pool followed by the LG pool.
- Step 3** Once these internal government pools have been exhausted the DoH EOI Pool should be considered.
- Step 4** Finally, once the above pools have been reviewed, where the required resources are not available, external recruitment can be considered.