

COVID-19 Workforce frequently asked questions (FAQs)

This document has been developed to assist staff with questions they may have regarding coming to work, or leave arrangements, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[If the Australian Government and/or Queensland Government announces that schools and childcare facilities are to be closed, what leave arrangements can I access in these circumstances?](#)

Employees who need to care for children or a dependent member of their household must liaise with their line manager at the earliest possible opportunity to explore options for working from home. Alternatively, where working from home is not appropriate, the employee may access carer's leave which is debited from the employee's sick leave accrual. Once sick leave is exhausted, employees may then access the Special Pandemic leave provided in PSC Directive 01/20 up to a maximum of 20 working days for full-time employees (pro rata for part-time employees). If additional leave is still required, employees may access recreation leave and then long service leave.

[What leave should be used for staff who returned from overseas after 15 March 2020 and have been directed to self-isolate, but are not exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms?](#)

An employee who has been directed to quarantine themselves and is not exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms, may discuss options for working from home with their line manager during the quarantine period, where appropriate. Where the employee's responsibilities do not suit a working from home arrangement and no other meaningful work can be provided to the employee during the quarantine period, line managers may endorse the employee's application for Special Discretionary Leave ensuring that the document directing them to quarantine is attached and that it indicates the last day of the quarantine period. At the end of the quarantine period, Public Health will provide an employee with clearance to return to normal activities (via phone call) if they have not displayed any symptoms during the quarantine period. Managers are therefore to expect that employees will return to duty at the end of the quarantine period. Employees who fall ill during the quarantine period will receive further direction to isolate themselves.

[I have started feeling ill/showing symptoms for COVID-19 during the quarantine period. How do I notify my workplace?](#)

Employees in quarantine are required to inform their manager once there is change in their condition, particularly if tested and the outcome is positive. Employees will need to access sick leave in accordance with HR Policy C64 Sick Leave when the illness commences. Employees are not to resume duty or enter the workplace until cleared to do so by the Public Health Unit.

[If a member of my immediate family is directed to quarantine themselves, will I have to go into quarantine too? What leave options do I have?](#)

Other members of the household only need to go into quarantine if the family member directed to isolate is tested and confirmed to have COVID-19.

Employees in this situation will need to inform their line manager at the earliest opportunity and provide a copy of the written direction to quarantine. Where there is a direction for the employee to quarantine themselves, the line manager may require the employee to work from home. Where working from home is not suitable, the line manager may determine the appropriateness of granting leave and the type of leave to access.

I am caring for a sick family or household member. Am I entitled to access the Special Pandemic leave?

An employee who is the primary carer for a sick family or household member is to access carer's leave during the period of absence. Carer's leave is drawn from the employee's sick leave accruals. Recreation leave in lieu of carer's leave may be accessed once sick leave accruals are exhausted.

If the family member is unwell with confirmed COVID-19 illness, the employee may also apply for the paid Special Pandemic leave when the sick leave accrual is exhausted. Supporting evidence will need to be attached (e.g. written direction to quarantine).

Employees and line managers are to consider the appropriateness of working from home arrangement in lieu of carer's or paid Pandemic leave.

I am currently on approved leave with plans to travel abroad. Should I proceed with traveling abroad?

The Australian Government has issued a Level 4 – Do Not Travel advice for all Australians. Line managers should encourage staff to adhere to the travel advice not to travel overseas.

I have just returned from an overseas trip and I have been directed to quarantine for 14 days from arrival into Australia. Am I entitled to apply for leave to cover the quarantine period?

Employees returning from overseas who have been directed to quarantine must notify their line manager at the earliest opportunity to discuss whether a working from home arrangement can be implemented. Where the employee's duties and responsibilities cannot accommodate a working from home arrangement, the employee can apply for Special Discretionary Leave for up to ten (10) days in accordance with the policy on Special Leave C7. However, if an employee becomes unwell during the quarantine period, they are to apply for sick leave from the date when the illness commenced.

Do staff who are currently off work with a cold or flu-like symptoms (other than COVID-19 related) need a medical clearance to return to work?

Staff accessing sick leave of more than three (3) days are required to provide a medical certificate. The certificate should include the date(s) the employee is or was unfit for attendance at work. Therefore, a separate medical clearance would not be required.

Employee's returning to work from long term sick leave may require a medical clearance in order to return, particularly if information regarding the employee's medical condition is not current.

An employee who has returned from overseas or who has been in close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case and has been directed to self-quarantine is required to inform their line manager and provide a copy of the direction to quarantine.

Will applications for flexible working arrangements be considered while the COVID-19 pandemic is in place?

Employees are still able to request flexible work arrangements in accordance with the *Industrial Relations Act 2016* and GCH policy POL1424 Flexible Working Arrangements. Requests are to be submitted to the employee's line manager in writing and will be assessed on a case by case basis in accordance with operational requirements.

What are the requirements for Working from Home and associated Work Health and Safety Self-Assessments? Employees applying to work from home or who have been directed to work from home should follow the requirements provided in the Telecommuting guideline (GL0258). The employee will be required to complete a Self-Assessment Form and Computer Workstation Self-Assessment Checklist to

enable GCH to undertake its duty of care in ensuring the home work environment is safe and suitable. Notwithstanding any approved telecommuting agreement, an employee may be required to return to the workplace where necessary.

If staff have the ability to work from home, is it recommended in order to reduce the risk of contact with COVID-19?

The current advice is for employees to continue working at their primary place of work, unless they have been directed otherwise. This advice may be subject to change as the Australian and/or Queensland Governments continue to respond to the COVID-19 situation. However, employees may request in writing to work from home as a flexible work arrangement. Line managers will assess requests against operational requirements in accordance with the Telecommuting guideline (GL0258).

Should employees who already work from home for part of the week as part of an approved flexible working arrangement, increase the frequency of working from home to a full week to reduce the risk of contact with COVID-19?

Telecommuting and work-from-home arrangements are currently managed in accordance with the Telecommuting guideline (GL0258) that provides for a maximum of 3 days per week (pro rata for part-time) working from home arrangement.

I have been directed by my line manager to work from home. Am I still required to complete the telecommuting forms required in the Telecommuting guideline (GL0258)?

Yes, all employees undertaking work-from-home arrangements are required to complete the forms required in the Telecommuting guideline (GL0258). Line managers are required to review the information provided and assess any potential risks before approving any arrangement for the employee to work from home.

As a line manager, how do I monitor the work that my staff are doing while they are working from home?

Prior to entering into a telecommuting agreement, the line manager will need to confirm the Communication Strategy as well as the Work Management Strategy with the employee. The Work Management Strategy will need to specify the category of work that the employee will be doing while under a work-from-home arrangement and how performance will be measured. Key Performance Indicators need to be agreed and implemented for employees to work from home.

Have any conversations been held with Unions regarding possible impacts to staff workloads and staff to patient ratios which may occur as a result of GCH's COVID-19 response?

Employees that have concerns regarding workload or staff to patient ratios are to raise these concerns with their line manager in the first instance. Line managers and roster managers will still roster and allocate employees in accordance with the employee's terms and conditions of employment.

Will the deadline for the Going for Gold survey be extended to allow staff more time to complete the survey?

The deadline to complete the online survey has been extended to 3 April 2020. Staff are able to access the survey at home if it is not possible to complete this while at work.

What process should be followed if an employee does not want to work in a specific area due to concerns of contact with COVID-19?

Employees who have concerns regarding their work arrangements are to raise these concerns to their line manager in the first instance. Line managers are to assess and address these concerns against operational requirements and appropriately manage any risk to the employee and patients.

Where work, health and safety concerns have been addressed, the employee will need to comply with the management direction to attend work.

[Are older members of our workforce required to come to work? If not, what leave arrangements can be accessed?](#)

Expert medical advice on COVID-19 will inform workforce management, particularly with regard to older members of our workforce. Employees who have any concerns regarding their work arrangements are to raise these concerns with their line manager in the first instance. Line managers are to assess and address these concerns against operational requirements and appropriately manage any risk to the employee and patients. Employees who have been assessed as being at greater risk of exposure to COVID-19 may be redeployed to lower risk areas that do not have direct contact with COVID-19 confirmed patients.

[Where can we get more information regarding the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) to wear, particularly if there is a confirmed COVID-19 case in our ward?](#)

Employees are to refer to their infection control training and raise any work-related concern to their line manager in the first instance. Line managers are able to seek further assistance from an Infection Control Nurse or Infection Control Services.

[There is increased demand in my work unit and I need more staff to cope with the current COVID-19 response. What do I do to request additional staff? Can the recruitment be fast-tracked?](#)

Line managers and delegates are encouraged to plan ahead to determine their resourcing requirements so that recruitment processes can be commenced at the earliest possible time.

A redeployment register will be maintained by HR Services. All staff who are required to self-isolate or are redeployed to another area in the Health Service will be captured on the register. Line managers are encouraged to advise all staff who may meet this criteria.

Line managers will need to seek approval from their Senior Director or Service Director prior to requesting additional staff.

In addition to the above, Talent Pools may also be utilised to fill vacancies, where available.

[I am a health professional working in a non-clinical role. Will I be required to provide clinical support in a clinical role or unit?](#)

Employees may be temporarily deployed into another role or work unit based on their skill, knowledge and expertise. Employees will be provided with sufficient notice of the deployment before this is implemented.

[I work in a non-clinical or non-frontline area and I would like to offer my availability to help in other areas of the hospital where needed. How can I do this?](#)

Employees offering to be deployed to areas of need or high demand are to discuss their intention with their substantive line manager. The employee will then need to contact the Redeployment Team to indicate their current responsibilities, skills and competencies, availability as well as any potential risks to them (e.g. immunocompromised). Where the employee is suitable for deployment to another role, the Redeployment Team will contact the employee and their substantive line manager to discuss further.

[I'm a line manager and some of my employees will be deployed into other areas. What factors should I consider before proceeding?](#)

Line managers are to provide employees with sufficient notice before implementing the deployment. Employees directed to be deployed may lodge reasonable objections to the deployment. Line managers are to assess the objections according to risk and operational requirements. Where risks are appropriately managed and the employee's concerns have been responded to, then the deployment may proceed.

[I have been told that I will be redeployed in another work area, but I have some concerns for my personal safety. Can I refuse the redeployment?](#)

Employees are encouraged to discuss their concerns with their substantive line manager and the Redeployment Team. Employees are assured that safe working conditions is always a primary consideration in any work environment. PPE will be made available in line with Australian Government and Queensland Government infection control guidelines. Where reasonable concerns are addressed, employees are required to comply with management direction.

[Can I be redeployed in another work area/location to do work that is different to my substantive role?](#)

Yes. However, line managers are required to ensure the employee is qualified to do the alternate work and the alternative work environment complies with workplace health and safety requirements.

[I am being redeployed to backfill a role at a higher level. Would I be entitled to higher duties?](#)

An employee backfilling a role at a higher level may be entitled to higher duties pay where the requirements of HR Policy B30 Higher Duties are met.

[I am reliant on public transport to travel to work, however, public transport has been suspended. Can I apply for leave and what leave arrangements would apply?](#)

Concerns that may impede the employee's ability to attend work will need to be raised with the line manager in the first instance as soon as possible. The line manager may explore car pooling and other options to enable the employee to attend work. Where this is not possible or appropriate, a working from home arrangement may be considered subject to meeting the requirements in the Telecommuting guideline (GL0258). Where the employee's responsibilities do not suit a working from home arrangement, the employee may apply for special leave in accordance with HR Policy C7 Special Leave.

[I have been called on to fulfil my role as a community volunteer in relation to the pandemic. Am I entitled to leave?](#)

Employees who are members of any emergency volunteer service (e.g. Red Cross, SES, etc) may access special paid leave for emergency attendance in accordance with HR Policy C7 Special Leave.

[I am a line manager and one of my employees has started showing flu-like symptoms while at work. Can I direct the employee to go home?](#)

Yes, a line manager can send an employee home to ensure the employee's safety and welfare as well as the welfare of other employees in the work unit.

A line manager may require an employee to undergo medical assessment and testing (where the testing criteria is met). This rule is to be strictly enforced to stem the spread of COVID-19.

Where appropriate, and if the employee's symptoms are mild, flexible work arrangements such as working from home may be implemented. The employee may also apply for sick leave during the period of the illness. The line manager may require the employee to provide evidence of clearance from a medical practitioner before returning to work.

My employee is claiming to have recovered from COVID-19 or was caring for a family member who has recovered from COVID-19. Can I allow the employee to return to work?

An employee's Quarantine Notice will guide decisions on when the employee may be able to return to work. However, further advice should be sought from Gold Coast Public Health Unit prior to the employee returning to the workplace.

I am unable to attend work because my work unit/facility has been closed down for reasons such as quarantine or lock down. Can I work from home instead?

Employees who are willing and ready to attend work but have been directed not to attend their primary workplace may be directed to attend work at another location or may be directed to work from home.

Employees who are approved to work from home must ensure they comply with the requirements for working from home provided in the Telecommuting guideline (GL0258).

More information

Where do I go for more Public Health information?

The latest information on coronavirus is available on the [Queensland Health website](#). Public queries should be directed to the telephone advice line 13HEALTH.

Where do I go for more clinical information?

Our [intranet site](#) includes a link to the [Guidelines for Queensland Clinicians](#) where you will find up-to-date information for clinicians. This information is updated as new details come to hand. Please refer to this page to ensure you are receiving the most current information.