COVID-19 Safe Workplace Plan

Rural Medical Education Australia Ltd

Contents

Plan Overview

RMEA is committed to the ensuring a safe and healthy work environment for staff and visitors upon the return to the physical work environment as restrictions are eased regarding COVID-
19. This plan enables this commitment to be operationalised in line with the requirements of Work Safe Australia National COVI0-19 safe workplace principles.

Safe Workplace Principles

Safe Work Australia has issued National COVID-19 safe workplace principles which were agreed to by the National Cabinet in late April 2020, along with accompanying resources to assist business resume operations at workplaces following the strict isolation requirements relating to COVID-19. These resources can be found at the Safe Work Australia Website.
Worksafe Old has provided guidance to employers and workers about keeping your workplace safe, clean, and Healthy which can be found here.

These principles are as follows:

1. All workers, regardless of their occupation or how they are engaged, have the right to a healthy and safe working environment.

2. The COVID-19 pandemic requires a uniquely focused approach to work health and safety (WHS) as it applies to businesses, workers, and others in the workplace.

3. To keep our workplaces healthy and safe, businesses must, in consultation with workers, and their representatives, assess the way they work to identify, understand, and quantify risks and to implement and review control measures to address those risks.

4. As COVID-19 restrictions are gradually relaxed, businesses, workers and other duty holders must work together to adapt and promote safe work practices, consistent with advice from health authorities, to ensure their workplaces are ready for the social distancing and exemplary hygiene measures that will be an important part of the transition.

5. Businesses and workers must actively control against the transmission of COVID-19 while at work, consistent with the latest advice from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC), including considering the application of a hierarchy of appropriate controls where relevant.

6. Businesses and workers must prepare for the possibility that there will be cases of COVID-19 in the workplace and be ready to respond

immediately, appropriately, effectively, and efficiently, and consistent with advice from health authorities.

7. Existing state and territory jurisdiction of WHS compliance and enforcement remains critical. While acknowledging that individual variations across WHS laws mean approaches in different parts of the country may vary, to ensure business and worker confidence, a commitment to a consistent national approach is key. This includes a commitment to communicating what constitutes best practice in prevention, mitigation and response to the risks presented by COVID-19.

8. Safe Work Australia (SWA), through its tripartite membership, will provide a central hub of WHS guidance and tools that Australian workplaces can use to successfully form the basis of their management of health and safety risks posed by COVID-19.

9. States and Territories ultimately have the role of providing advice, education, compliance, and enforcement of WHS and will leverage the use of the SWA central hub in fulfilling their statutory functions.

10. The work of the National COVID-19 Coordination Commission will complement the work of SWA, jurisdictions and health authorities to support industries more broadly to respond to the COVI 0-19 pandemic appropriately, effectively, and safely.

Employer Requirements

Employers are required to take action to protect workers and others at the workplace from the risk of exposure to COVD-19 so far as is reasonably practicable. This includes implementing the public health measures issued by health authorities including Queensland Health and the Australian Government Department of Health. These requirements include but are not limited to:

  - having a plan in place to respond to issues related to COVID-19 in the workplace.

  - reviewing exposure and infection control policies and procedures, actively promoting social distancing, good hand and respiratory hygiene, and increasing cleaning of common areas within the work environment.

  - identifying risks and develop and implement safe systems of work (in consultation with workers and/or their Health and Safety Representatives (HSRS) that take into account directions and advice provided by health authorities.

  - monitoring the COVID-19 situation as it develops, relying on

information from authoritative sources such as public health authorities.

- providing hand washing facilities and ensuring these are kept clean, properly stocked and in good working order.

- providing soap or alcohol-based hand sanitiser, tissues and cleaning supplies.

- promoting good hygiene practices, e.g. displaying hand hygiene posters.

- Keeping the workplace clean and hygienic.

- managing psycho-social risks for workers; and

- communicating, training and supervising workers on workplace measures to address COVID-19.

Employee Requirements

All employees must take reasonable care for their own health and safety, and the health and safety of others in their workplace. They must co-operate with any reasonable policy or procedures that relates to health or safety at work. Employees are required to ensure a high standard of cleanliness and hygiene is maintained in the workplace.

Employees are required to:

- Stay home if unwell. Do NOT attend the workplace if you are feeling unwell and/or have any signs or symptoms of a respiratory disorder or COVID-19.

- Maintain 1.5m social distancing. Observe rules of social distancing both within and outside the workplace.

- Ensure good hygiene.

- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitiser

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or bent elbow when coughing or sneezing, dispose of used tissues immediately after use in a bin and wash your hands or apply hand sanitiser.

- Avoid touching your face, nose, and mouth.

- Abstain from shaking hands.

- Frequently clean and disinfect communal areas and shared working spaces.

Notification Requirements For COVID-19

In the event that there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 (in the workplace), Queensland Health will be notified by the medical professional who confirms the diagnosis.

To avoid duplication and confusion in what is a challenging time for industry, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ) will not enforce any legislative requirement for workplaces to separately notify WHSQ. However, WHSQ will continue to respond to all information received regarding potential non-compliance in workplaces and where necessary secure compliance where workers are exposed to unacceptable WHS risks.

WHSQ will continue to monitor this arrangement and liaise with Queensland Health as events unfold. Further information can be found here.

Managing Risks
Health, Safety and Environment Risks

RMEA will identify and work with the management team to identify COVID-19 specific risks in the workplace and establish a program of mitigation strategies to minimise the risks. RMEA staff members will ensure their work areas are kept up to date and provided with information and processes regarding safe work practices and minimisation of the impact of COVID-19 within the work area.

Risk Minimisation Strategies

The Minimisation strategies will be agile and evolve over time as new priorities occur and emerging risk arises. Initial strategies will include but are not limited to:

- Staff education and information including ongoing promotion of social distancing and safe hygiene practices

- Reminders for staff to wash hands with soap and water very regularly and sanitise it not possible to wash.

- Provision of essential hygiene products for all work areas

- Increased cleaning activities, involvement, and instructions

- Oversight of staff health

- Carefully planned workstations to ensure social distancing is maintained

- Graduated return to work in line with a staged approach recommended by the government for vulnerable and or

immunocompromised staff

Staff Education and Information

- Staff will be informed of the Safe Workplace Plan prior to returning to work

- All staff will be advised of their obligations to ensure safety for themselves and others in the workplace

- Relevant training and all return to the workplace information will be made available and accessed through RMEA internal intranet page and will be updated on a regular basis.

Cleaning and Hygiene Products

All office, public and staff workplace areas will have cleaning and hygiene products available for maintaining a safe work environment.

RMEA will provide each office with access to antibacterial wipes, hand sanitiser, disinfectant spray, paper towels and any other equipment to ensure we are providing the cleanest working environment possible.

Cleaning and Disinfecting the Workplace if a staff member in the workplace has been diagnosed with COVID-19
The areas affected will be closed off until cleaning has been carried out per the guidelines provided by Work Safe Australia available here.

Each office has an offsite cleaner who provides cleaning services at a minimum of once per week. These cleaners are responsible for maintaining high standards of hygiene within all areas of our offices including wiping down of individual workspaces, meeting room tables and chairs, removing rubbish from the offices and kitchen areas.

All Staff will be responsible for incidental cleaning and/or disinfecting (if required) of all surfaces they have touched or come into contact with including but not limited to:

- Individual work areas

- Company vehicles - wipe down all surfaces, spray seats upon leaving

- Opening and closing doors - office, meeting rooms etc,

- Light switches, Water cooler etc,

- Office equipment - meeting tables, chairs, desks, computers,

keyboards, photocopies, computers and video conference equipment in meeting rooms,

- Kitchen equipment - benches, cutlery, crockery and other dishes, dishwasher and fridge, tables, and chairs.

Monitoring Staff Well-Being

- RMEA will continue to encourage our staff to maintain their health during the return to office period

- Staff are not to attend the workplace if they are sick or have any signs of respiratory illness. Staff will be required to check in with their line manager if they are unwell.

- Vulnerable or immunocompromised staff are able to request continuation of their flexible work arrangements through their line Manager.

- Contact your line manager or CEO for Employee Support Assistance.

- Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service provided by Beyond Blue.

Social Distancing in the Workplace
Staff are required to practice a high level of awareness in maintaining physical distancing whilst in the workplace. This Checklist will assist in guiding staff of the requirements.
Specifically, these are

COVID-19 Safe Workplace
Plan Teaching Sessions:
- Universities and other higher educational institutions such as TAFEs and RTOs must ensure there is no more than one person per 4 square metres in **large lecture** settings.

- The condition in paragraph 9 (contact information) does not apply.

- *Note – smaller education and teaching sessions, such as group seminars, tutorials, practicals and laboratory-based learnings, and vocational training sessions are not subject to the one person per 4 square metres rule. Physical distancing should be observed to the extent possible.*

- Catering – no buffet service

Office Work:
- One (1) person per 4 square meters in enclosed spaces -, the

measurement can be calculated by measuring the length and width of the closed space (perhaps this is an office or meeting room) and multiply these two figures. The total square meters can then be divided by 4 and that will provide the number of people allowed in that enclosed space. For example:

- A meeting room has the following measurements (example only)
  - Length = 5 metres, Width = 4.5 metres
  - Area in square metres: 5 x 4.5 = 22.5
  - Maximum number of people: 22.5 ÷ 4 = 5.6
  - Round it down to 5.

- Maintain 1.5m distance between each person. Where there are known areas that are used by multiple staff who are sometimes waiting for use of a facility such as a photocopier or kitchen bench, floor markings will assist to provide a 1.5 metre span.

- Examples of other considerations staff should be considerate of are:

  - When travelling in a vehicle together - consider if both staff are required to attend the destination; is there an alternative method of meeting; can the task or event be modified; does it require the use of two vehicles.

- Conduct meetings via video/teleconference where possible or a mix of mediums

General Information and Resources

We encourage ALL staff to review our RMEA Covid-19 webpage and keep updated with the latest information available from the Public Health Units, Department of Health and Queensland Health. Please see information below for external links:

Resources

- RMEA COVID-19 management plan
- RMEA Health Accommodation Management plan
- Department of Health
- Queensland Health: GOV ID-19 information
- Australian Government. Department of Health: COVID-19 information
- Public Health Unit
- World Health Organisation (WHO}
- National COVI0-19 Safe Work Principles
- Queensland Health 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84)
- National Coronavirus Health Information Line: 1800 020 080