

Safety & Security

For Rural & Remote Health Professionals

A guide for employers & recruiting agencies

This Factsheet explores actions and processes managers with responsibility for Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) can take to establish and maintain safety and security in remote and isolated health workplaces.

Agencies engaged in recruitment for the remote and isolated health workforce are encouraged to seek relevant safety and security information from employing organisations and make this available to potential staff.

CRANApplus recommends that remote area managers familiarise themselves with relevant legislation and WHS responsibilities. Links to further resources are included at the end of this Factsheet.

1. Commitment to 'Always Accompanied'

Ensure clinicians are always accompanied when attending call-outs, particularly after hours.

- Ensure clinic services and accommodation are appropriately resourced, and include access to communication, on-call support workers and equipment
- Develop and resource 'always accompanied' policies and procedures
- When always accompanied policies are not followed, use governance and reporting processes to review and resolve procedural concerns
- Drive partnerships between the health service, community members, staff, and other community services to support a community-wide culture of safety and security.



2. Preparation for remote health practice

Ensure clinicians are professionally and personally prepared for remote and isolated practice. Promote effective interpersonal communication, prevention and de-escalation skills and support from collaborative stakeholders.

- Provide prospective and new staff with information on safety and security priorities specific to the workplace before arrival
- Facilitate a local community and cultural orientation on arrival at the workplace and prior to commencement of service delivery
- Include communication, de-escalation, and safety in professional development priorities
- Facilitate supportive, rapid response strategies for staff who have experienced critical incidents
- Drive partnerships between the health service staff, community members, and other community services to coordinate emergency responses
- Develop systems to support the community to alert health staff about transient hazards, contribute to policy development and participate in response.



3. Prioritisation of wellbeing

Ensure staff are personally and professionally resourced for the challenges of remote and isolated health practice.

- Provide remote area health managers with professional development opportunities to support the development of leadership and management skills
- Allocate scheduled and on-call workloads equitably
- Ensure the clinic and accommodation are fit for purpose, adequately equipped, and maintained in relation to safety and security, wildlife, and climate extremes
- Ensure staff have access to secure vehicle parking
- Develop a critical incident response and support strategy with staff
- Schedule regular staff leave for workforce sustainability
- Develop a local fatigue management strategy with staff
- Consider team employment models incorporating sustainable work/leave strategies
- Plan for and recruit to ensure a full complement of appropriately skilled staff.



4. Management and identification of risks and incidents

Lead a proactive schedule of reporting, monitoring, evaluation, and workplace audits to highlight and respond to hazards, risks, and incidents. Promote that work health and safety is the responsibility of all stakeholders.

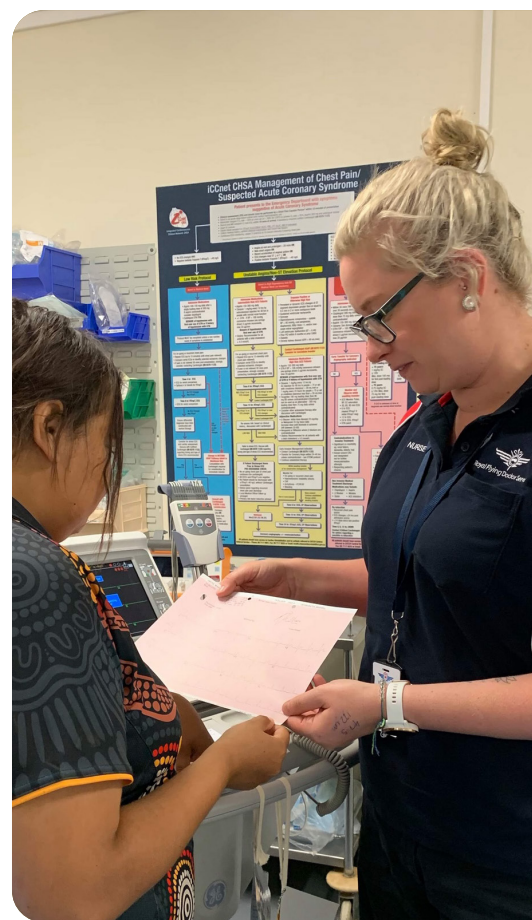
- Meet Workplace Health and Safety legislative obligations as required for a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU), including for psychological health
- Implement robust work health and safety governance processes, policies, and procedures across all business activities
- Develop and implement an on-call and business hours safety plan in consultation with staff and community
- Facilitate partnerships between the health service, community members, staff and other community services with a safety and security focus.



5. Building a sustainable and stable workforce

Build a sustainable workforce to support culturally safe, quality and reliable remote health service delivery.

- Recognise and value the safety and security of the remote and isolated health workforce as a recruitment and retention strategy
- Develop supportive human resource management capabilities across the service and staff (succession planning)
- Design recruitment and orientation processes to prepare staff for placement
- Ensure manager capacity to intervene before staff burn out, and reduce the potential for bullying within teams
- Plan clinician cover so staff can schedule leave entitlements
- Undertake structured exit interviews and develop responses at the service and community level
- Encourage reporting and respond to staff concerns regarding accommodation, safety and security, excessive on-call demands and availability of local resources for staff
- Facilitate partnerships between the health service, community members, staff, and other community services to make after-hours transport accessible for staff who have no local transport.



6. Communication and connectivity

Ensure reliable and effective communication and transport systems are available to the remote and isolated health workforce.

- Develop and implement an on-call communication system that monitors and records the location of staff and the duration of call-out in real time, 24/7
- Ensure that remote health services have reliable, effective phone and data communication onsite and in the community, including all vehicles and accommodation
- Undertake a robust maintenance schedule across the health service
- Facilitate staff training for safe and effective use of health service transport and communication equipment.

Resources

Would your service benefit from managers and staff learning more about WHS?

- Consider supporting management staff to undertake work health and safety professional development such as BSBWHS513 - Lead WHS risk management or similar.

Are you seeking guidance or resources around work health and safety in remote and isolated areas?

- Safe Work Australia has a range of resources on managing the work environment and facilities, workplace violence and aggression and psychological health and safety.

Are you unsure of the work health and safety laws applicable to your state or territory?

- Safe Work Australia provides links to work health and safety laws for all jurisdictions. [Read more here.](#)

Would your service benefit from managers and staff upskilling to effectively partner with the community?

- Consider supporting management staff to undertake professional development, such as CHCCDE011 - Implement community development strategies.

Visit crana.org.au/safety-security for more information.

