

Checklist for connecting new allied health practitioners to their local communities and assisting organisations plan for their professional development needs

health

For managers of new allied health practitioners

Background

There are significant allied health workforce shortages across multiple sectors including health, disability and education, which are expected to worsen in the foreseeable future¹. These shortages are also more significant in regional and rural areas². The impact of these shortages is significant and has been linked with reduced access to healthcare services, poorer health outcomes and increased mortality rates².

Recent studies have recommended organisations develop a multifaceted approach to improve allied health recruitment and retention and this should focus on areas of: improving the organisational environment, supporting the professional needs of allied health practitioners, and supporting the integration of new allied health practitioners into local rural communities^{3,4}.

Purpose

The aim of this document is to assist organisations with connecting newly appointed allied health practitioners to their local communities and to assist organisations to plan for the professional development needs of their allied health workforce. It seeks to achieve this by providing a checklist of activities to assist with the orientation and support of allied health practitioners in these areas. These activities have been identified from research^{5,3,4} as being successful in supporting allied health recruitment and retention and it is anticipated the implementation of this checklist by organisations with newly appointed allied health practitioners will improve retention rates with these staff members.

Recent studies also show that for allied health practitioners who have relocated to work in a regional setting, poor retention can be attributed to social isolation amongst other factors. The evidence also reveals retention rates are poorest in rural settings compared to regional. Listed below are some key areas and examples that may help to improve a new staff members' sense of connectedness to your local organisation and community.

In your local organisation

- ☐ Have you initiated an orientation process for your new employee?
- ☐ Have you offered a professional mentor? What are the mentoring requirements for the allied health practitioner? Are they requiring allied health discipline specific mentoring or interprofessional mentoring? Does your organisation have a mentoring policy? *The Department of Health funds a mentoring program, please contact your Regional Allied Health Works Program Manager for further information.*
- ☐ Have you considered clinical supervision/support for your new employee? If your organisation has limited capacity to offer clinical supervision/support, have you considered a partnership with another organisation to provide this?

¹ Keane, S., Smith, T., Lincoln, M., & Fisher, K. 2011. 'Survey of the rural allied health workforce in New South Wales to inform recruitment and retention.' *Australian Journal of Rural Health*, 2011: 19.

² Buykx, P., Humphreys, J., Wakeman, J., & Pashen, D. 2010. 'Systematic review of effective retention incentives in rural and remote areas: Towards evidence-based policy' *Australian Journal of Rural Health*, 2010: 18.

³ O'Toole, K., Schoo, A., & Hernan, A. 2010. 'Why did they leave and what can they tell us? Allied health professionals leaving rural settings.' *Australian Health Review*, 2010: 34.

⁴ Chisholm, M., Russell, D., & Humphreys, J. 2011, 'Measuring rural allied health workforce turnover and retention.' What are the patterns, determinants and costs? *Australian Journal of Rural Health*, 2011: 19.

⁵ Smith, T., Brown, L., & Cooper, R. 2009. 'A Multidisciplinary Model of Rural Allied Health Clinical-Academic Practice: A Case Study' *Journal of Allied Health*, 38; 4

- ☐ Does your organisation conduct entry and exit surveys for allied health practitioners? Is this information used to inform the development of organisational policies for supporting allied health recruitment and retention? *An example of health professional entry and exit surveys can be found at;*
<http://www.grhc.org.au/allied-health/managers>
- ☐ Have you discussed a Professional Development / Career Plan with the allied health practitioner? For example;
<http://www.business.vic.gov.au/busvicwr/assets/main/lib60188/retention-professionaldevelopmentplan.doc>
- ☐ Have you linked the allied health practitioner in with relevant professional networks in your region / sub-region? These may be allied health discipline specific or special interest groups or networks.
- ☐ Have you provided the allied health practitioner with information on available professional development? Have you linked them into this? This includes interdisciplinary professional development such as those offered by Regional Allied Health Works Program. Please contact your Regional Allied Health Works Program manager for further information.

In your local community

- ☐ Can the local Council assist your new staff member with a tour of the town or local area?
- ☐ Does your local council have a New Residents/Welcome Kit?
For example; <http://business-investment-lifestyle.ararat.vic.gov.au/living-working/new-residents-kit>
<http://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au/about-ballarat/new-residents.aspx>
- ☐ Does your community have a Young Professional Network?
For example; <http://www.ypn.net.au/>
- ☐ Does your local community have a Newcomers Club?
For example; <http://www.milduranewcomers.com.au/>
- ☐ What are the interests/hobbies of your new recruit?
For example, link into local clubs/networks in your local community through Council contact above?
- ☐ Did your new recruit move to the local area with family? If so, consider their needs?
For example, spouse/children's needs, family interests.
- ☐ What services and resources do you have access to in your area for supporting overseas trained allied health practitioners?
For example, Regional Migration Officers or various cultural groups and associations.
<http://www.liveinvictoria.vic.gov.au/about-us/publications>

Sustainability

- ☐ Have you followed up on new staff member at regular intervals?
 - After one month from date of commencement
 - After three months from date of commencement
 - After six months from date of commencement
 - After 12 months from date of commencement
 - Have you planned for beyond 12 months

Other helpful resource

The Victorian Attractive Employer Framework for the Health and Community Services Sector. Available at;
<http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/The-Victorian-Attractive-Employer-Model-framework>

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