

Feeling safe at work

Fact sheet

Feeling safe at work (also referred to as psychological safety) is important. It means that we feel trusted, respected, safe and accepted.

Employee and patient safety remain at the centre of everything we do at Queensland Health and safety will continue to be our focus as we respond to COVID-19.

We all share responsibility for maintaining a safe workplace and this fact sheet outlines what Queensland Health is doing, and what managers and employees can do to contribute to psychological safety at work during COVID-19.

Our wellbeing may be challenged as we deal with sudden changes in how and where we work, heightened infection risks and fears, higher workloads, grief and loss through our work or in our personal lives, pressure on relationships, and the need to adapt quickly to this emerging situation.

What Queensland Health is doing

During COVID-19, a range of initiatives are being implemented to make sure all employees feel psychologically safe at work including:

- access to reliable and up to date information and employee resources on COVID-19
- regular employee communications
- consultation with work areas to support business continuity and manage risks
- access to PPE and infection control protocols for employees in high-risk work areas
- access to special leave arrangements where this is required
- flexible and working from home arrangements where this is required
- resources to support employees working in a different location to their usual work setting
- consultation with individual employees who identify as vulnerable persons, including temporary reasonable adjustments for employees who identify as vulnerable persons
- expanding the workforce to support the surge in healthcare service provision
- employee assistance services comprising both individual counselling and crisis response counselling for teams.

Refer to the dedicated [staff COVID-19 QHEPS page](#) or [SharePoint site](#) for information, supporting resources and FAQs.

Contributing to psychological safety at work

Respect safe work practices

While there may be a lot of uncertainty and change at work, it is still important to work within established good work design principles including:

- continuing to follow safety procedures and good practices (e.g. standard hygiene precautions, infection control protocols, and ergonomics and manual handling practices)
- ensuring you do the required training for your work role
- continuing to work within systems and team protocols for patient and employee safety, and talk to your manager and team if you think something could be improved
- logging any work-related hazards, incidents or injuries in [Riskman](#) for follow up and management through risk control measures.

Manage your fatigue

Try to maintain the recommended amount of sleep (between 7–9 hours per night) by maintaining good sleep hygiene practices.

- Talk to your line manager about any instances where you may be feeling fatigued at work.
- Refer to the [Queensland Health Fatigue Risk Management Resource Pack](#) for self-assessment and supervisor tools to assist to identify and effectively address any instances of fatigue.
- Take the recommended breaks at work to manage any work-related fatigue.

Maintain respectful interactions

We may all be experiencing heightened fears, emotions and frustrations at this time and have individual needs. Being patient, kind and empathic will contribute to a positive working environment where everyone feels supported, including:

- behaving in line with the Queensland Public Sector Code of Conduct
- maintaining civility and respectful interactions with other employees and patients
- treating everyone with fairness and equity
- resolving any disputes constructively
- raising non-respectful behaviours or escalate issues to your manager, as required.

Support each other with changed work conditions

Many of us have changed working conditions including workloads, altered jobs or tasks or altered work locations. Be a supportive, inclusive, collaborative and flexible team member by:

- contributing constructively to team problem-solving
- helping colleagues set up new work and technological arrangements

- being patient while your team all finds their ‘new normal’ ways of working
- maintaining connections with colleagues working in isolation and on leave—check in regularly, include them in work information updates and team activities
- being respectful of each other’s flexible work needs—we may each face individual challenges balancing health, work, family and carer responsibilities.

Be attentive to your own mental wellbeing

Our mental state can not only affect our own health but impact our colleagues, friends, family and our work and home environments.

Tips to keep an eye out for your own mental wellbeing:

- be aware of your thoughts, feelings and behaviours
- try to keep things in perspective, problem-solve stressful situations, think positively
- if you are having prolonged feelings of stress (such as worry, fear, anxiety, sadness, anger or distress) seek additional support by reaching out for professional help.

How can managers contribute to psychological safety at work?

Managers can support psychological safety by:

- being clear about work expectations
- providing as much certainty as possible about work
- consulting with team members on any changes to work practices
- ensuring all employees receive timely information and access to resources
- treating all employees fairly and equitably
- role modelling respectful and inclusive behaviours in line with policies and standards
- monitoring team wellbeing by establishing regular wellbeing checks with each member of the team and ensuring employees are aware of available supports during this time.

How can I look out for my work colleagues?

To keep an eye out for your colleagues’ wellbeing, take notice if things seem to be worrying them or if they don’t appear to be their usual self, including but not limited to:

- any changes in their usual appearance, mood or behaviours that may be out of character for them
- if they are expressing difficulties or concerning thoughts and feelings
- if they are becoming withdrawn or socially isolated
- if there are any changes in their attention, concentration, or work performance.

Learn to ask [are you OK?](#) Ask, listen and encourage your colleagues to seek support and follow up with them. You don’t need to be an expert. Simply noticing and offering support is

often all someone needs to let them know you are there for them and for them to initiate getting some help.

Available support

There are a range of support and resources available for Qld Health employees including the [Employee Assistance Service \(EAS\)](#).

In a crisis, or where someone's safety may be at risk, call **000**.

[Wellbeing information is available on QHEPS](#), or talk to your [local workplace health and safety team](#) or [HR team](#) to identify any other local initiatives available to you and your team.