

Working Alone and in Isolation Procedure and Policy



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Policy Statement

is committed to the health, safety, and wellbeing of our staff, and strives to ensure all appropriate safeguards are in place to protect staff who work alone or in isolation.

Purpose Statement

will provide a consistent approach to support staff who are working alone or in isolation.

Principles

Working alone or in isolation safely

Whenever a staff member is required to work alone or in isolation, they will coordinate with the physician employer or supervisor to:

- Conduct a hazard risk assessment to identify existing or potential hazards arising from the conditions and circumstances of the work.
- Establish an effective means of communication (e.g., telephone call or text message, or simply a call for help) between the employee and physician or other staff capable of responding to their needs.
- If an effective means of communication is not practicable or available, a timed check-in approach will be discussed.

To ensure the ongoing safety of our staff, will:

- Take all reasonable steps to eliminate any hazard(s) identified.
- Take all reasonable steps to control any hazard(s) that cannot be reasonably eliminated.
- Communicate the findings of the hazard risk assessment in writing to all affected staff.
- Investigate all accidents or incidents and take reasonable steps to prevent a re-occurrence.
- Report all situations, incidents, or near misses where being alone increases the level of inherent danger to the situation and make appropriate reasonable changes.
- Schedule higher risk work to be completed during regular business hours or when other staff are present to help.

Workplace hazard risk assessment

The physician and staff will perform a thorough workplace hazard risk assessment for any location or situation where staff may be required to work alone or in isolation. The workplace hazard risk assessment will investigate the following issues and identify practicable solutions to ensure the safety of staff:

- Determine the length of time the employee will be required to work alone or in isolation and establish reasonable limitations for the duration of this type of work.
- Determine whether it is reasonable or safe for the employee to work alone or in isolation, given the situation or location.
- Examine the length of time the staff will be required to perform the necessary work.
- Identify the time of day the staff must work alone or in isolation.

Communication

- Determine the methods of communication that are available.
- Determine the most appropriate form of communication.
- Ensure that all emergency communication systems are in proper working order.

Location of work

- Based on the location of the clinic, establish whether it is remote or isolated.
- Examine the security features of the workplace (e.g., security cameras, duress alarms, etc.) to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the staff.
- Where possible, ensure the staff is in a position of high visibility.
- Determine the accessibility of the clinic to emergency services.

Type of work

- Determine the level of risk associated, to determine whether it is safe to allow an employee to perform the work alone or in isolation.
- Establish any potential fatigue factors that may affect the safety of the staff and quality of work.

Identify the abilities of the staff working alone or in isolation

- Ensure the staff has received the appropriate levels of training and education required to perform the work alone.

Definitions

Working Alone: To work alone at a clinic in circumstances where assistance is not readily available in the event of an injury, illness, or emergency. If staff called for help, no one would answer their call.

Examples of working alone:

- Traveling alone.
- Working from home with no other people nearby.

Working in isolation: Other staff are present in the office but in different areas or separate rooms.

Examples of working in isolation:

- A physician is charting in an exam room at the rear of the building and the medical office assistant is at the front reception desk. If the physician called for help, the receptionist would respond.

Workplace violence: means the attempted or actual exercise by a person, other than a worker, of any physical force that cause injury to a worker and includes any threatening statement or behaviour which gives a worker reasonable cause to believe that the worker is at risk of injury.

Guideline Procedures for Working Alone or in Isolation

The procedures below are suggested guidelines for dealing with situations when staff may be working alone or in isolation for a finite period. To work alone or in isolation means to work in circumstances where assistance would not be readily available in case of an emergency, injury, or ill health.

Procedure 1: Staff working in isolation with colleagues at reception.

- Inform a colleague of where you are going (i.e., basement of clinic to file charts) and when you should be back (i.e., within 15 minutes) and provide your cell phone number or a phone number at the work location.
- If you are not back in the specified amount of time, the colleague will attempt to reach you by phone. If they cannot reach you by phone after the specified time, the colleague informs another person, if available, to decide actions to look for the isolated person while minimizing risks to all.

Procedure 2: Reporting to work for a shift or portion of a shift when staff will be working alone for periods of time and associated risks are low. For example, in a clinic an assistant or physician may come into the clinic before everyone else:

- Contact number provided, sign-in using the *Check in/check out log* in Appendix 3. Indicate your name, site, department, and the estimated number of hours you will be working.
- At the end of shift, sign-out using the *Check in/check out log*.
- Where possible, the supervisor will review *Check in/check out log* form during the shift.
- If you do not sign-out at the end of your shift, a designated personnel will contact the number provided to follow-up.

Appendix 1: Procedures

Provide staff training and education to limit the dangers of working alone or in isolation.

Check-in procedure

To ensure the safety of employees that must work alone or in isolation, the following check-in procedures have been developed with the joint health and safety committee or worker health and safety representative (where required) in compliance with [Part 4 of the Occupational Health and Safety \(OHS\) Regulations](#):

- The physician employer, in consultation with the staff working alone or in isolation, will be responsible for the preparation of a daily work plan to establish the duration of time the employee will be required to work alone.
- The employer will ensure that a phone is available for the staff to use for the check-in.
- The person designated to perform check-ins will be trained in these written procedures for checking the staff's wellbeing.
- Define the appropriate intervals of time for staff working alone or in isolation to check-in.
- In addition to the regular check-in schedule, staff must check out at the end of the work shift.
- Any staff working alone or in isolation will check-in at regular intervals as established in the daily work plan.
- Ensure the schedule of communication-based check-in is followed with a recorded log.
- Identify staff to act as the main point of contact for staff working alone or in isolation, as well as a back-up.

Emergency action plan

The emergency action plan as required in section 4.21(2) of the OHS Regulations will outline the procedures if an employee does not respond to a check-in.

- After missing a check-in, the person conducting the check-in will wait 15 minutes and attempt their check-in method again.
- If this check-in is missed, the person conducting the check-in will wait an additional 15 minutes and attempt their check-in method again.
- If the staff does not respond to the check-in within 15 minutes, the listed emergency contact will be called to verify if the staff is missing.
- If the emergency contact does not respond to the check-in, the police will be called and informed of the situation.
- After the police are called, they will take over all safety provisions.

Missing a check-in

- Staff required to be present for check-in must take all reasonable measures to ensure they are reachable.
- If a phone check-in method is used, the staff must ensure they have a charged mobile phone.
- If the employee must report to a specific location, they must be at that location at the time of check-in.
- If the employee misses their check-in, they must immediately contact the person who is responsible for check-in to stop the Emergency Action Plan.

Reviews

- This policy and any related procedures will also be reviewed if one or more of the following occurs:
 - There is a change in work environment that may adversely affect staff safety and wellbeing or the effectiveness of this policy; and/or
 - There has been a report or incident that indicates that the policy, procedures, or work environment is not working effectively.
- The review may indicate that an additional Hazard Risk Assessment should be performed.

Approval:

 Date

 Administration signature (Physician employer)

Appendix 2: Check-in/check-out agreement for employees working alone or in isolation

This form is to be completed by staff working alone or in isolation and requires sign-off by the physician employer or designate.

Name: _____

Check-in contact (supervisor): _____

Location where you will be working alone or in isolation:

Contact method: In person By telephone Other method:

Check-in Frequency: Every 30 min Every hour Every 2 hours

Every 4 hours At end of shift Other: _____

Your contact will attempt to get in touch with you within 15 minutes if you did not get in touch with them at the predetermined check-in time.

If your contact cannot reach you, they will make another attempt within 15 minutes. If your contact person cannot reach you after the second attempt, they will do the following:

1. Call the staff person's emergency contact (as indicated below) to confirm if they have been in contact with the unreachable staff.
2. If emergency contact is unable to locate you, move to step three and call 9-1-1.
3. If necessary, call 9-1-1 and request help locating you.

Staff emergency contact:

Name: _____ Phone number: _____

