Fact sheet

Locum orientation checklist

Generally, a locum will be an experienced general practitioner (GP) so can be expected to be competent in the needs of your patients. However, preparing for the arrival of your locum combined with a comprehensive orientation will not only provide a smooth transition for the locum and your patients, providing quality care, but will also encourage the locum to return to your organised practice for future placements.

Prepare for the locum’s arrival

• Confirm placement dates and provide a brief overview of work to be undertaken by the locum.
• Ensure payment terms and frequency of payments have been agreed between the locum and the practice.
• Provide a locum placement schedule or contract.
• Verify the locum’s Medicare Provider Number(s), including location, start and end dates and any restrictions.
• Arrange admitting rights and emergency department credentialing to the local hospital(s) if required.
• Arrange suitable accommodation – See Accommodation for more information.
• Provide the locum with a map and directions to the accommodation, general practice and hospital. Highlight local shops, cafes etc.
• Confirm the locum’s arrival time, accommodation arrangements, parking arrangements and key collection.

First day orientation

• Organise a staff gathering to welcome the locum. Provide a list of names, roles and contact details for any staff members not in attendance at the gathering.
• Provide a tour of the waiting, consultation and treatment rooms, work areas and staff facilities.
• Familiarise the locum with the practice policies and procedures, including evacuation and emergency procedures, grievance and harassment procedures and occupational health and safety guidelines.
• In accordance with risk management policy, locums should not be expected to supervise other medical personnel, including medical students and general practice registrars without prior agreement.
• Discuss the daily routine of the practice, including clinic hours, lunch times and access to coffee and tea, incoming and outgoing mail including clinical results.
• Outline the patient demographics of the practice; include information on health issues that impact on the practice, e.g. drug and alcohol problems, aged care.
• Discuss patient billing arrangements, policies etc.
• Describe the practice expectations including values, culture and protocols.
• Advise of any building access requirements including internal and external security systems.
Practice equipment

- Provide a tidy, comfortable and suitably equipped consulting room, ensuring that equipment is working and drugs are in date.
- Provide information on storage and availability of vaccines, dressings, drugs and emergency equipment.
- Advise the process for ordering supplies.
- Provide an overview of the practice information management processes, including internal and external mail, practice software, passwords, desktop shortcuts and useful websites.
- Outline availability of clinical resources, relevant journals and key text books.
- Provide contact details for local specialists and allied health professionals.
- Describe how to use office equipment including telephone systems, fax machine and photocopier.

Clinical records and patient care

- Ensure a detailed clinical handover has been given to assist the locum. If the practice GP will have already left the practice for his/her leave, arrange detailed handover notes of any chronic care patients.
- Outline systems for storage and maintenance of patient records and data.
- Describe the services provided by the practice to the hospital outpatient department, nursing home and aged care facility, including hours and visits required.
- Provide contact details for the ambulance service and palliative care service.
- Outline the allied health services available within the practice and town.
- Describe the process for pathology and radiology requests, results and collection, including billing and item numbers.
- Provide information on Workcover and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Workload

- Allow longer appointments for the first day of consulting to allow familiarisation with practice processes and systems.
- Describe expectations on patient bookings, frequency and standard appointment times.
- Explain on call and visiting medical officer (VMO) responsibilities including any nursing home or hostel visits.
- Provide contact details for colleagues within the practice or town from whom the locum can seek clinical advice and support.
- Describe the support available from the practice nurse (if available).
- Outline the paperwork responsibilities of the locum and the administration assistance available.

Local information

Where applicable, provide the locum with:

- A map of the town.
- Details of emergency services including police, hospital, ambulance and fire brigade.
- Information on local business trading hours, location of banks, supermarkets, cafes, hotels and other retail outlets.
- Information relating to places of worship, sporting and social clubs, local tourist attractions and information centres. Locums often like to feel part of the community so any “what’s on” information can really be appreciated.
- A welcome parcel is a great gesture. This might include samples of local wine or produce. Other suggestions are vouchers for local restaurants, local tourist or retail vouchers.
Accommodation

The practice should arrange accommodation for the locum that is:

- Self-contained, fully furnished with kitchen and laundry facilities. If this is not possible, make sure the locum is aware of this before their arrival.
- Fully serviced with linen and towels provided (unless otherwise agreed).
- Within reasonable proximity to the surgery (or transport provided).
- Available for the duration of the locum placement. It is not acceptable for the locum to relocate to alternative accommodation at any time during the term of the placement except in the case of emergency.
- Provide instructions for the use of household items, e.g. air conditioning, security system, garbage disposal, garbage collection times.
- Provide a list of emergency and domestic contact numbers, e.g. electrician or plumber.

Other things to consider

- Does the accommodation have internet access?
- Is there home and contents insurance in place?
- If the locum accommodation offered does not meet the locum’s requirements, then the practice may need to find suitable alternative accommodation.
- In circumstances where the host doctor’s private residence is offered to accommodate the locum, pets or farm animals belonging to the host doctor should not be the responsibility of the locum without prior agreement. Equally, the host doctor must not be expected to accommodate a locum’s animals or pets without prior agreement.
- It is not appropriate for the locum to share the accommodation with any of the host doctor’s family during the term of the placement.
- The locum will be responsible for the cost of all meals throughout the term of the placement (unless otherwise arranged by the practice). In circumstances where no cooking facilities are available, and if requested by the locum, practices are encouraged to negotiate with the local hospital to provide access to meals.
- Consider a welcome pack as locums generally arrive in town after most retail outlets have closed. Practices are encouraged to provide a small portion of basic items for the locum at the accommodation, e.g. toilet paper, tea, coffee, milk, bread, butter, something for supper and breakfast etc.

Vehicle

Where the locum is without a personal vehicle, it is recommended that the practice provides a vehicle that is:

- Roadworthy;
- Registered;
- Comprehensively insured; and
- Clean.

OR

- Provide a hire car.

The cost of fuel in both cases is usually the responsibility of the host practice but should be clarified in the locum agreement.

For more information on how Rural Health West can support your practice please contact:
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