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Six must-have workplace policies for your practice

Practice owners who employ staff should have clear HR protocols that apply to your business or working arrangement.

HR protocols are made up of various workplace policies, procedures, checklists and information documents that guide various aspects of your practice, including outlining clear expectations and providing a consistent approach to managing workplace issues.

Policies and procedures are developed to ensure compliance with various legislation and to mitigate risks to your business or staff.

Below are the six key workplace policies private practice owners or sole traders must have in their HR protocols. Employees or independent contractors should expect to be able to access and understand these policies.

1. **Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) Policy**, highlighting any potential workplace risks or hazards
2. **Anti-Discrimination Policy**, promoting equal employment opportunity
3. **Privacy Policy**, regarding the protection or disclosure of an employee's personal details
4. **Leave Policy**, outlining the guidelines and requirements for accessing leave entitlements
5. **Complaints & Grievances Policy**, with options for conflict resolution and employee assistance
6. **Performance Management Policy**, outlining the process for performance management, counselling and discipline of employees

The above-mentioned policies are an umbrella for several other essential policies, including:

WHS

- **Appropriate Workplace Conduct or Code of Conduct**, discussing respect and responsibility
- **Bullying & Harassment Policy**, including sexual harassment and family & domestic violence
- **Mentally Healthy Workplace Policy**, promoting employee wellbeing and providing support
- **Pandemic Policy**, preventing and responding to an outbreak, including infection control
- **Building Evacuation Policy**, including your safety procedure for an emergency evacuation
- **Mandatory Reporting**, notifying the WHS regulator in your jurisdiction of certain health and safety incidents

Anti-Discrimination

- **Disability Access and Inclusion Policy**, promoting equal opportunity for people with disabilities
- **Diversity Policy**, promoting gender parity and cultural diversity

Please note that some policies such as Family & Domestic Violence and Appropriate Use of IT & Social Media could fall under both WHS and Anti-Discrimination policies.

Practice owners and sole traders should regularly review their HR protocols to ensure compliance with current employment legislation. They also need to reflect your unique workplace culture. For example, some practices may choose to specifically include policies around LGBTI Inclusion, Vaccination, Working from Home, Sustainability, Smoking, Alcohol & Drugs and/or Use of Company Property.

To ensure procedural compliance, practice managers should implement checklists. Examples of checklist topics include recruitment, probation, onboarding,

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termination, pandemic prevention and response, psychosocial risk prevention and response, and industry-specific checklists e.g., Aged Care Quality & Safety Standards.

Don't assume that your managers and staff already know the policies and procedures.

If you employ staff, it is important to provide them with a copy of your HR protocols, such as an employee handbook. Information sheets and additional resources in the employee handbook may include Equal Employment Opportunity, Employee Assistance Program, Hygiene & Infection Control, and WHS for Remote Employees, to name a few.

When reviewing and updating HR protocols, practice managers should ensure all employees understand the changes. Running a refresher training or info session is the best way to ensure staff are well informed.

HR protocols should always be kept up to date with current regulations and tailored to the unique circumstances of your practice. If you need help, you can contact an HR consultancy that works closely with the allied health sector such as WorkPlacePLUS.

Anna Pannuzzo is the Director of WorkPlacePLUS.

As the preferred national HR/IR provider for Occupational Therapy Australia, WorkPlacePLUS provides support to OTA members on employment matters affecting your practice, including developing workplace policies, employment contracts and independent contractor agreements. For more information, contact Anna Pannuzzo on (03) 9492 0958 or visit www.WorkPlacePLUS.com.au