

Oral Health Services Waiting Lists

Queensland Health Guideline

QH-GDL-269

1. Purpose

This guideline provides recommendations to support management of dental waiting lists for Queensland Health oral health services to promote consistent and equitable access to public dental care for eligible adults throughout Queensland.

2. Scope

This Guideline provides information for all Queensland public health system employees (permanent, temporary, and casual) and all organisations and individuals acting as its agents (including partners, contractors, consultants and volunteers), with particular relevance to those individuals involved in the delivery of public oral health services.

3. Related documents

Procedures and guidelines

- Oral Health Services Waiting Lists Procedure
- Standard Range of Oral Health Services Guideline
- Oral Health Services Eligibility Guideline

4. Guideline for oral health services waiting lists

4.1 Principles

It is recommended that:

- a) Dental waiting lists are managed so that waiting times are similar across the geographic areas and facilities of a Hospital and Health Service (HHS) to facilitate equitable access to comparable services for all eligible patients.
- b) All oral health facilities use the Information System for Oral Health (ISOH) for managing dental waiting lists and scheduling appointments.
- c) Patients are allocated to a waiting list at a facility according to their preference regardless of their place of residence; for example, a person residing in one HHS may prefer to attend a public dental clinic in another HHS as their usual place of care because it is closer to where they live.

- d) Patients are not allocated the same type of waiting list at multiple facilities.
- e) Patients are only allocated to a waiting list at a facility with the capability and credentialed staff to provide the dental care required.
- f) Waiting lists are not maintained for services that are not provided at a given facility, with alternative arrangements made for patients already on a waiting list.
- g) Patients are offered care in the order in which they are placed on the waiting list (treated in turn) taking into consideration clinical need and urgency.
- h) Patients who are transferred from a waiting list at one facility to another facility within Queensland Health should maintain their original Date Placed On. It may be appropriate to immediately book an appointment for a patient if their waiting time is outside the desirable timeframe.
- i) Any local work instructions created to support the management of oral health services are consistent with this Guideline.

4.2 Patient assessment

When patients initially contact a HHS oral health service, they will be assessed to determine their clinical need and urgency.

Assessment type	Description	Recommended timeframe
Administrative assessment	<p>Patients contacting a HHS oral health service without a referral should initially undergo an administrative assessment.</p> <p>This may occur in person at a public dental clinic or over the phone, including via a call centre.</p> <p>Following administrative assessment, patients may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) given access to emergency dental care, or b) allocated for a clinical assessment, or c) allocated to a dental waiting list. 	Not applicable
Clinical assessment	<p>A clinical assessment is a brief review by a dental practitioner for the purpose of prioritising patients' dental care according to their clinical needs.</p> <p>Clinical assessment may be completed via a virtual health solution (e.g. telehealth) or in-person consultation.</p> <p>Priority groups requiring a clinical assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people b) Patients with a disability c) Refugees and asylum seekers d) Homeless people e) Residents of aged care facilities f) Eligible patients aged 0 to 3 years 	1 month for assessment

Assessment type	Description	Recommended timeframe
	<p>Clinical conditions requiring a clinical assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Denture related concerns: request for new / replacement denture(s), missing upper front teeth, missing all upper and/or lower teeth and no denture(s) b) Medical conditions significantly affected by or impacting on a patient's oral health status <p>Following a clinical assessment, patients may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) given access to emergency dental care, or b) allocated to a dental waiting list, or c) referred to another facility If they cannot be offered care at that facility, or d) advised they do not require dental care. 	
Referrals	<p>Referrals received from health providers should be reviewed by a dental practitioner.</p> <p>A referral does not guarantee priority care. A dental practitioner will assess what follow up is required.</p> <p>Patients with a referral may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) given access to emergency dental care. b) allocated for a clinical assessment. c) allocated to a dental waiting list. d) referred to another facility If they cannot be offered care at that facility, or e) advised they do not require dental care. 	1 week for review

4.3 Waiting list types

There are several types of waiting lists for HHS oral health services. Patients should be allocated to a waiting list according to their clinical need and urgency.

Waiting list type	Description & allocation criteria	Recommended timeframe
General	The general waiting list is for patients who require a non-urgent general dental examination and treatment, i.e. routine dental check-up.	2 years
Clinical assessment	The clinical assessment waiting list is for patients who require a brief review by a dental practitioner for the purpose of prioritising dental care according to their clinical needs.	1 month

Waiting list type	Description & allocation criteria	Recommended timeframe
Recall	<p>The recall waiting list is for patients waiting for review of a specific clinical need within a defined timeframe.</p> <p>Patients may be provided with follow up dental care from a recall examination as required.</p>	As required
Priority	<p>The priority waiting list is for priority, specialised or specialist dental care, including dentures. Patients should only be allocated to the priority waiting list by a dental practitioner following clinical assessment, dental care, or referral.</p>	
	<p>1. Dental care required prior to the commencement or progress of urgent medical treatment</p>	1 month
	<p>2. Dental care required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> for a condition causing significant physical or social dysfunction, or disability to manage medical conditions significantly affected by or impacting on a patient's oral health status 	3 months
	<p>3. Dental care required for a condition causing minimal or no pain, dysfunction or disability, which is unlikely to deteriorate quickly</p>	12 months
General anaesthetic	<p>The general anaesthetic waiting list is for patients who require general or specialist dental care under general anaesthetic in a hospital operating theatre.</p>	
	<p>1. Dental care required prior to the commencement or progress of urgent medical treatment</p>	1 month
	<p>2. Dental care required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> for a condition causing significant physical or social dysfunction, or disability to manage medical conditions significantly affected by or impacting on a patient's oral health status 	3 months
	<p>3. Dental care required for a condition causing minimal or no pain, dysfunction or disability, which is unlikely to deteriorate quickly</p>	12 months

5. Document approval details

Document custodian

Chief Dental Officer

Approval officer

Deputy Director-General, Clinical Excellence Queensland

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Version Control

Version	Date	Comments
1.0	1 January 2015	New Guideline
2.0	1 April 2018	The Guideline was reviewed and amended: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clarified principles behind the guidelines• Recommended administrative and clinical oversight• Clarified processes regarding patients seeking future care following completion of a course of care.
3.0	1 December 2023	The Guideline was reviewed and amended: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amended priority groups requiring a clinical assessment• Amended allocation criteria for priority and general anaesthetic waiting lists• Moved procedure sections to a separate document