

Guidelines for the treatment of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Queensland Health Oral Health Services

Office of the Chief Dental Officer

Queensland Health Oral Health Services (QH OHS) aims to reduce the burden of oral health disease for Refugees and Asylum Seekers through the provision of publicly funded oral health services.

This guide is to assist oral health staff with the:

- processing of referral forms for Refugees and Asylum Seekers from relevant authorised agencies, and
- processes for provision of treatment.

1. Definitions

People who are Refugees:

- have experienced political, religious, social or gender-based persecution in their country of origin and have been accepted into Australia on a permanent residency Visa,
- often have very poor oral health status and may not have had access to oral health services in their country of origin; and
- are eligible for Medicare and a Health Care Card (HCC).

People who are Asylum Seekers:

- have refugee-like backgrounds and experienced political, religious, social or gender based persecution in their country of origin,
- often enter Australia on a valid Visa (such as a tourist or student Visa) and have subsequently applied for a

protection Visa as a refugee to remain in Australia,

- often have very poor oral health status and may not have access to oral health services in their country of origin; and
- are ineligible for a HCC.

2. Eligibility

People who are Refugees:

meet the eligibility criteria by holding a current HCC. They are eligible to receive treatment at publicly funded Queensland oral health facilities.

People who are Asylum Seekers:

do not meet the normal eligibility criteria to receive public oral health services. However, under the *2006 FMPM Circular 01/2006 – 'Public Hospital Services for Medicare Ineligible Asylum Seekers in Queensland'*, health fees are automatically written off on the basis of financial hardship. Under this guideline Asylum Seekers are entitled to public oral health services.

Both groups are entitled to receive dental treatment within the first 12 months of arriving in Queensland and subsequently based on their eligibility.

3. Service Provision

Once a Queensland Health Oral Health Service clinic has received a referral form from an authorised refugee support agency or community health clinic, Refugees and Asylum Seekers are entitled to one priority general Course of Care (CoC), including specialist services that are considered normal practice within the first 12 months of arrival in Queensland, without being placed on the Assessment List.

4. Process for Provision of Services

1. Referral forms have been developed for agencies assisting both Refugees and Asylum Seekers. Agencies that provide support to Refugees and Asylum Seekers must refer clients to the Queensland Health Oral Health Services dental clinic using one of the following forms:

- Refugee Referral form
- Asylum Seeker Referral form.

On finalising the referral of Refugees and/or Asylum Seekers, the referring agency, which varies for each Health Service District, will forward the completed form to their local dental clinic by either email or fax.

**Local communication processes may need to be adopted to suit local needs*

2. Refugees and Asylum Seekers, including both adults and children, are entitled to one priority general CoC (which may include specialist services) in Queensland public adult or school based oral health clinics within the first 12 months of arrival in Queensland.

The treatment provided will consist of a full mouth examination and any follow up treatment identified by the treating health practitioner. This may include cleaning, restorations, extractions, prosthetics and any specialist dental treatment that is considered normal practice.

3. On receipt of the form, the dental clinic will:

- ensure all parts of the referral form have been completed correctly,
- register the client within ISOH with the appropriate eligibility/ID type:
 - HCC for Refugees; and
 - ASYLUM for Asylum Seekers

Note: **Valid From date** = date of arrival

Valid To date = 12 months from the **Valid From date**

- assign the client to the Referral list with an External Provider referral of the referring agency and appoint the client from the Referral List and book the relevant interpreter (if required);

- confirm the appointment with the nominated staff member from the referring agency either by fax or email,
- send a letter confirming the appointment with the client, and
- ensure copies of all relevant documentation are placed in the clients chart.

On checking in for their appointment, Refugees and Asylum Seekers will need to present a copy of their Referral Form and additional eligibility if relevant (i.e. HCC for refugees). **NOTE: Asylum seekers do not require a Health Care Card.** (Please see Section 2 - Eligibility)

4. On completion of the CoC, Refugee and Asylum Seeker clients may be placed on the Assessment list for future treatment subject to eligibility requirements.

NOTE: *If the client's eligibility expires before the completion of the CoC, oral health services are obligated to complete the CoC.*

5. Emergency Treatment

If the client is in need of an immediate emergency appointment, the authorising agency has been advised to contact their local dental clinic as soon as possible to access their emergency service.