

Continuing Professional Development for Rural General Practitioners Subsidy Program

Guidelines

Background

1. The Continuing Medical Education Program for Rural General Practitioners was established in June 1996 through a memorandum of understanding between the Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS), the Victorian Bush Nursing Hospitals Association, the Victorian Hospitals Association, the Australian Medical Association (Victorian Branch) and the Rural Doctors' Association of Victoria. The Program was a subsidy program to enable procedural general practitioners (GPs) in rural and remote areas access appropriate continuing medical education opportunities.
2. Previously, the level of subsidy provided was based on the principal of equivalent contribution by the Department, the Hospital and the GP, with a maximum Departmental subsidy of \$1993.33 per three years per discipline for each practitioner. A review of the program in 2002 found that poor uptake by GPs was largely attributed to cumbersome administrative arrangements and the restrictions placed on the topics available for subsidisation.
3. As a result of the review, subsidies are now expanded to include a diverse range of accredited procedural, clinical skills, public and community health topics. The program no longer requires a contribution from the hospital, and the maximum subsidy by DHS has increased to \$3,000 per GP per financial year. To reflect the change in focus, the program was renamed the *Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for Rural General Practitioners Subsidy Program*. The revised guidelines reflect the recommendations of the review and take effect 1 January 2003.

Key Principles

4. CPD is a targeted educational activity designed to improve the quality of medical practice.
5. A long-term objective of the program is to ensure that GPs appointed to undertake practice in designated clinical areas in rural and remote areas are supported in undertaking CPD appropriate to their area of practice relevant to community needs.
6. Key principles underpinning the CPD program include the following:
 - The content of the CPD should be designed to directly improve the quality of health service delivery by the practitioner.
 - Subsidies are only available for procedural training and non-procedural training that is in line with DHS priorities.
 - To ensure that the procedural training for which the GP is seeking a subsidy is in line with community needs, evidence of support from the relevant local health service is required.
 - If other funds (including Commonwealth funds) are received to support components of CPD, doctors will be ineligible to receive a subsidy for that component under this program.
 - The total contribution of the Department is capped and there are limits to individual

components of the subsidy.

- The CPD program aims to subsidise rather than fully fund the cost of professional development.

Who is Eligible?

7. General practitioners working in rural general practice in Victoria (RRMA 3-7) are eligible to claim subsidies for CPD activities.

In addition, rural stream registrars undertaking GP terms in RRMA 3-7 are also eligible to claim subsidies for CPD activities not funded through their vocational training.

Eligible Topics

8. Subsidies are available for ACRRM and RACGP accredited courses covering:
 - procedural training in anaesthetics, accident & emergency, obstetrics & gynaecology and surgery;
 - training in clinical skills, public & community health topics; and
 - non-health professional development training (eg. conflict resolution, financial management, role delineation etc).

The non-procedural health related training subsidised under the CPD program is based on DHS priorities, and the list of priority topics will be reviewed and updated periodically.

Rationale

9. All GPs are required to provide a statement that outlines the relevance of the training to the GP's rural practice and the community's health needs.
10. In addition, claims for procedural training require a statement of support from the relevant local health service, where this exists (see Appendix 1).

Subsidy Levels

11. The CPD Program is designed to support rural GPs undertaking training and therefore aims to subsidise the cost of professional development, as opposed to providing full cost recovery. The following guidelines are based on this fundamental principal. In accordance with public funding guidelines, original receipts will be required for all claims.
12. The total level of DHS subsidy will be capped at \$3,000 per GP for eligible training undertaken per financial year.
13. Subsidies are restricted to course fees, travel, accommodation and childcare expenses. Interstate and overseas training will only be supported for health related training in instances where local training is unavailable. International/interstate training will not be supported for non-health related training.
14. **Registration and course fees** – Support is provided towards registration costs of accredited training undertaken in Victoria. The Department subsidises up to 70 per cent of the registration and course fees related to rural procedural CPD. Procedural CPD is restricted to anaesthetics, accident & emergency, obstetrics & gynaecology and surgery. Registration and course fees costs for non-procedural CPD that meets DHS priorities will be subsidised up to 50 per cent.

15. **Travel** – Full subsidies will be provided based on a return trip from the GP's usual place of residence via the most direct and practicable route. The rate of reimbursement is 49 cents per km for car travel, and the by the cheapest economy airfare via the most direct route for air travel. Stopovers and additional journeys will not be covered.
16. **Accommodation** – Full subsidies will be provided up to \$140 per night irrespective of location (rural or metro). Accommodation at registered commercial premises attracts a subsidy. Private accommodation will not be subsidised.
17. **Childcare costs** – Childcare subsidies up to \$60 per day for a maximum of 5 days per year are available.
18. **Distance education** - Provision for reimbursements for costs related to distance education aides are available upon application. Claims will be reviewed by Workforce Policy and are subject to the Department's discretion. Claims for distance education software will only be paid where similar training is not otherwise available via lecture/seminar/workshop/conference or where it is not practicable to attend such courses. Claims for distance education comply with DHS priorities.

Administration

19. The list of health related topics eligible for support, as part of the CPD program is available on the web site and will be reviewed periodically. Subsidies for training will be restricted to these topics.
20. All GPs are required to provide a statement that outlines the relevance of the training to the GP's rural practice and the community's health needs.
21. GPs wishing to claim subsidies for procedural training are required to provide a statement of support from the relevant local health service, where this exists. A standard form for completion by the respective service is found in Appendix 1.
22. The CPD program is administered by the Rural Workforce Agency Victoria. All applications for CPD subsidies must be submitted within 60 days of completion /commencement of the activity.

Application process

23. The GP who attends the training must complete and lodge the claim form (*Appendix 2*). Claims should be accompanied by:
 - Original receipts for all claims made (detailing GP's name, name of training event, provider, dates and amounts paid).
 - Letter of support from the hospital/community health centre/multi purpose service (MPS) agencies (where applicable).
 - Proof of CPD attendance (copy of program and registration form).
24. Claims for subsidies should be forwarded directly to the Rural Workforce Agency Victoria within 60 days of attending a CPD event. Claims received beyond this time will not attract a subsidy. Claims should be addressed to:

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for Rural GPs – Subsidy Program
Rural Workforce Agency Victoria
PO BOX 7382
St Kilda Rd VIC 8004

Phone: 03 9349 7800
Fax: 03 9820 0401

Email: rwav@rwav.com.au

25. These guidelines took effect on 1 January 2003 and are subject to revision by DHS.

Evidence of attendance attached? <input type="checkbox"/>	
Endorsed by local health service? <input type="checkbox"/> If no, why not?	
Will or have other schemes been accessed to cover the cost in part or full for this CPD event? (please circle)	Yes No
If 'yes' please complete the following:	
Component subsidised:	Scheme accessed:
Amount received/to be received:	

Travel

Mode of transport (please tick): Public transport <input type="checkbox"/> Air <input type="checkbox"/> Car <input type="checkbox"/>		
From:	To:	
No. of Km's (return journey):		
<i>This section need only be completed if car travel is being claimed. Car travel subsidy is calculated at the rate of 49c per km from the GPs usual place of residence or practice to the location of the CPD via the most direct and practicable route.</i>		

Costs incurred					
Component	Receipt	Total cost (\$)	No of days	Amount claimed (\$)	For office use
CPD event – procedural*	✓				
Conference – procedural*	✓				
CPD event – non-procedural	✓				
Conference – non- procedural	✓				
GP travel – car	✓				
GP travel – other	✓				
GP accommodation	✓				
Childcare	✓				
Total					

The amounts should not exceed the caps specified in the guidelines.

Declaration

I certify that the above information is true and correct

Signature:	Date:
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- Procedural courses are subsidised at 70% while non-procedural events are subsidised at 50%.

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Statement of Support from Local Health Service (to be completed for procedural training only)

GP's details (To be completed by GP)

Name:
Practice:
Practice Address:

Local Health Service (To be completed by local health service):

Name of service:	
Address:	
Phone:	
Name of designated officer:	Position:
Phone:	Signature:
Endorsed (please circle): yes / no	Date:

