Spotlight on Duty of Care

Pre- and Post-Pandemic Considerations

2021 PULSE SURVEY

SIRVA®

Worldwide
Relocation & Moving

The concept of duty of care, generally defined as an organization's responsibility to protect its employees and ensure their safety and security, has been growing in importance in recent years and was already on the radar of most organizations.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought duty of care into sharper focus and generated higher visibility for mobility programs and mobility practitioners.

SIRVA conducted a pulse survey to explore how organizations approached duty of care before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, how organizations are listening more closely to their employees, and what the future of mobility programs may look like.

Our insights are based on the feedback from **116 mobility practitioners** from organizations of all sizes and industry sectors. SIRVA would like to thank and acknowledge all of the companies who participated in this pulse survey.

Current State of Mobility Duty of Care Support

When asked how their scope of responsibility regarding duty of care has changed since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, **62% of mobility practitioners said that they had more responsibility**, and another **28% said they had the same amount of responsibility**.

Not surprisingly, no respondents indicated that their responsibilities lessened, and this is not likely to change anytime in the near future.

62%
Have More Responsibility For Duty of Care

Pre-Pandemic Duty of Care Support and Current State Support

Booking through the company travel provider can serve multiple purposes:

- **Supports cost savings by leveraging discounted pricing for relocation travel**

- **Increases the ability to track employees**

While it is still too early to say that we are in the post–pandemic stage, we thought it would be interesting to take a look at how mobility programs supported duty of care before the COVID-19 pandemic, and in which areas they bolstered support.

What was interesting in the survey findings was that the top five elements of mobility support chosen pre-pandemic, and are being enhanced currently, are the same, but in a slightly different order of importance.

While providing mobility support is still important to organizations, the ability to track all employees became vital to organizations during the pandemic. Effectively tracking all employees on assignment is key to be able to provide better real-time support and ensure employee safety and security.

The tables below indicate increased support in several categories, tracking employees and providing support on assignment. The already important element of tracking employees on assignment gained even more focus as **63%** of respondents indicated that they increased their tracking of all employees on assignment, and another **48%** required booking through the company travel provider to help ensure accurate and timely tracking. These findings show not only an increased focus on tracking employees, but the growing importance of both tax and immigration compliance for the organization.

For direct employee support, providing mobility support (tax, immigration and relocation), which was already the number-one element of duty of care support pre-pandemic (**84%**), was increased by **48%** of respondents, followed by comprehensive healthcare (expanded by **46%** of respondents) and formal and ongoing support during short- and long-term assignments (expanded by **42%** of respondents).

DUTY OF CARE PRIORITIES PRE COVID-19

84%	Provide mobility support: Tax, immigration and relocation
77%	Track all employees on assignment
77%	Comprehensive healthcare package
70%	Require travel booking through company travel agency
59%	Formal ongoing support during short- and long-term assignments

INCREASED FOCUS ON PRIORITIES SINCE COVID-19

Provide mobility support: Tax, immigration and relocation	**48%↑**
Track all employees on assignment	**63%↑**
Comprehensive healthcare package	**46%↑**
Require travel booking through company travel agency	**48%↑**
Formal ongoing support during short- and long-term assignments	**42%↑**

Supporting New Duty of Care Responsibilities

Mental Health & Well-Being Support is the top employee-focused area of increased support

When we asked mobility practitioners how their organization was specifically supporting, or intending to support, new duty of care responsibilities, the responses were broken out similar to the additional areas of support in the tables above—employee tracking and employee support.

The number-one strategy organizations are deploying is to set travel restrictions and guidelines (**71%**), with another **47%** indicating that they are tracking all employees on assignment. The top employee-focused areas of increased support are mental health and well-being support (**65%**) and sanitizing services (**56%**).

Other areas of support for employees and their families include covering the costs of swab tests and covering vaccine costs for mobile employees and accompanying family members.

Expanded Duty of Care Support

One interesting note on employee tracking is that **59%** of organizations are not tracking employees differently than they were before the pandemic. On the one hand this could be an indication that most organizations feel that they already have an effective employee tracking process in place. On the other hand, it could just mean that they have not yet focused on adjusting their current tracking methodology.

More than three-quarters of respondents (**76%**) said that they provide the same duty of care provisions for all employees, and only **18%** said that they have implemented specific provisions for their remote workers.

71%
Travel Restrictions and Guidelines

47%
Tracking All Employees

65%
Mental Health and Well-Being Support

56%
Sanitizing Services

Top Challenges of Increased Duty of Care Support

Top 3 Challenges of Increased Duty of Care Support

60%
Increased Costs

60%
Differing Concerns Globally

54%
Expanding Scope of Work

The top challenges facing organizations trying to manage the increased duty of care support are the increased costs of the additional support, and the differing concerns facing mobility globally, both at **60%**. Over half of respondents (**54%**) indicated that the expanding scope of work caused by increased duty of care support is taxing the bandwidth of resources that are already stretched thin.

These responses show the need for organizations to put processes in place to get the increasing costs of duty of care support under control and to take a closer look at each region to address the unique duty of care needs in different areas of the globe and not just have a "one size fits all" approach.

Listening to Employees

One encouraging sign from survey respondents is that **59%** of organizations said that they are more open to listening to employee needs compared to before the pandemic. In these challenging times, it is important that employees not only feel supported, but feel valued and have their voices heard.

Delivering a positive experience for relocating employees is becoming an increased area of focus for organizations, and duty of care is an important element to the success of your mobility program.

Attracting and retaining top talent, and the fact that failed relocations are expensive (both in relocation cost and the cost to replace lost talent), are important reasons to listen to employees' duty of care concerns.

So, what are the top areas of additional support employees are seeking?

> In a 2020 SIRVA Mobility Survey, nearly half of organizations said that the highest priority of their overall culture was a people focus.

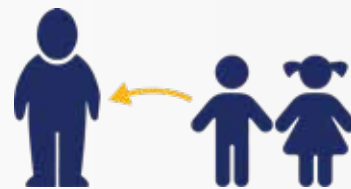**59%** of organizations are more open to listening to employee needs.

Employee Requests: Top Three Areas of Support

65%
Quarantine Support

60%
Extended Relocation Timelines

33%
Phased Assignments/ Family Arrives Later

Additional quarantine support, extended relocation timelines and phased assignments (where the family arrives later after the employee) are the top three areas of support employees are requesting. Employees are also seeking more clarity into the security and medical emergency support in place (**30%**), and more detail on the health insurance being provided by the organization (**26%**).

Supporting Post-Pandemic Mobility

As organizations continue to adjust to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and begin to remobilize, it is important to explore what mobility support will look like.

But first, we asked organizations if they had supported a remote worker population pre-pandemic. The results were fairly evenly split, with **38%** saying that they did support a remote workforce pre-pandemic and **40%** responding that they did not.

Of the organizations that answered yes, **62%** said that they allowed remote work for certain roles, but with some parameters. More than half (**53%**) of organizations indicated that remote workers had to be located somewhere in the same country where they are working.

Adding New Provisions to Support Post-Pandemic Mobility

While it is too early to say we are in the post-pandemic phase yet, organizations have already added, or will be adding, provisions to their program to support mobility.

While all of the new provisions have been a great support to employees during the pandemic, they will continue to be impactful as mobility adjusts to a post-pandemic or "new normal" model.

Top 5 New Provisions Added to Support Post-Pandemic Mobility

#1
Following Local Quarantine Requirements (68%)

#2
Providing Sanitizing Services (61%)

#3
Offering Mental Health Services (56%)

#4
Quarantine Support (53%)

#5
More Robust Tracking of Employees and Critical Information (49%)

Changes in Mobility Support for Increased Duty of Care

Organizations are being thoughtful & methodical in assessing need before approving extensions, and providing extensions for smaller increments of time.

When asked how mobility support has changed to support duty of care since the pandemic, the top two areas of increase were providing additional temporary housing if the relocation timeline is extended (**65%**) and extending benefits past a year (**54%**).

In our discussions with organizations, we have found that they are not simply granting extensions across the board, but really being thoughtful and assessing need and, when necessary, extending for smaller increments of time.

This approach addresses duty of care for employees while still keeping an eye on cost control.

Top Areas of Increased Support

Other areas of change in mobility support include providing sanitizing services (**37%**), requiring employees to book through the company travel provider (**31%**), support with coordinating temporary housing (**28%**), and providing virtual language and cross-cultural training options (**19%**).

65%
Additional Temporary Housing Support if Relocation Timeline is Extended
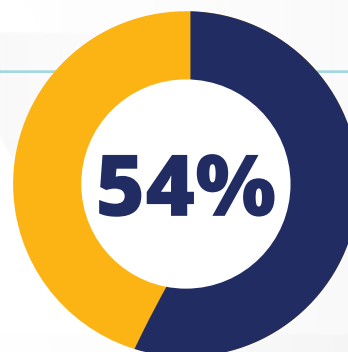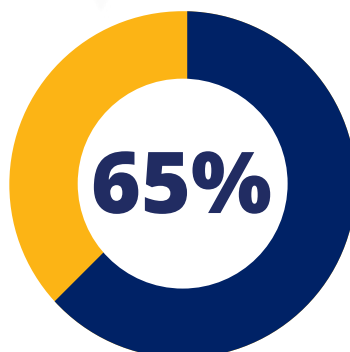
54%
**Extending Benefits Past a Year**

How are Organizations Approaching Mobility Policy Changes?

We asked organizations at what stage they were in for making changes to mobility policy, and **61%** said that they were updating or considering updating their mobility policies, and another **25%** were adding policies to specifically support their remote workforce.

It is interesting to note that several organizations indicated that, while they were not adding any policies or making policy changes, they have shown more flexibility with their existing policies. This may be an approach that more organizations are moving towards to provide flexibility to employees without updating their policies.

61%
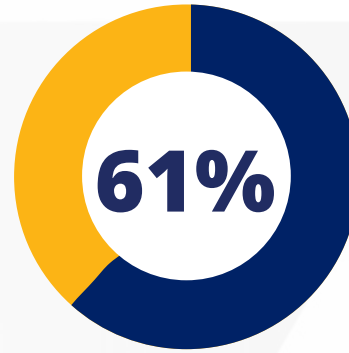
Updating or Considering Updating Policies

25%
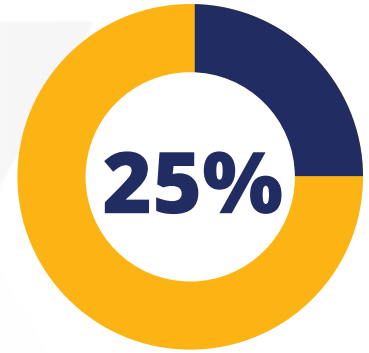
Adding Policies to Support Remote Workplace

Future of Remote Work

46%
Likely to Create a Permanent WFH/ Anywhere Appraoch

77%
Of Those are Adopting a Hybrid Model

Looking forward, **46%** of survey respondents indicated that they are likely to create a permanent work from home/work from anywhere approach and, of those companies, **77%** said they would adopt a hybrid model, with a balance between work from home and a proximate office location.

It is important to note that, even with hybrid roles, relocation will still be important to organizations. Having the right person, in the right role, at the right time is still critical to business success and mobility plays a significant role in supporting this priority.

Just over half (**52%**) of respondents said that certain roles may be remote, again, with parameters including working from within the same country (**51%**), working within a particular state borders (**44%**), and working anywhere there is an established entity (**35%**). Only **12%** of respondents said that workers could truly work from anywhere. It is important to note that the "work from anywhere" concept was more of an immediate response to the pandemic. Now that remote work has evolved, organizations can now have more realistic and fact-based discussions on a remote work structure that works for their workforce. One-quarter of organizations said that they are not likely to create a permanent work from home model. This could be due to many reasons, including the industry, types of roles (e.g., manufacturing or lab roles), or corporate culture.

Summary

While the future of post-pandemic mobility support and workforce models is still not completely clear, what is clear is that the focus on duty of care will continue to be an area of high visibility for organizations and mobility practitioners.

So, what can you do now to be ready for the future of duty of care?

We recommend that you review your mobility policies to determine if they need to be modified, and which areas you need to address. Conducting a voice of customer (VOC) survey with your employees and key stakeholders may be a timely tool to help you evaluate if you are providing the right level of duty of care and identify any areas of potential adjustment.

Please visit our [COVID-19 Center](#) and [Learning Center](#) for the latest global mobility resources.

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