



Attendance Support

Date: 2010 06 22 / 2014 03 25 /2022 05 31

Administrative Procedures

1. Responsibilities

1.1 Principals / Supervisors:

- 1.1.1. Orient their employees to the Attendance Support Policy and expectations and ensure that absences are entered into the Smart Find Express (SFE) System.
- 1.1.2. Communicate attendance expectations to all employees through a regular review of the Attendance Support Program at the first staff meeting of the school year.
- 1.1.3. Consult with the Safety and Disability Administrator for strategies to reduce overall absenteeism.
- 1.1.4. Maintain regular contact with absent employees.
- 1.1.4. Engage in a proactive approach to attendance management by examining the areas of safety training, ergonomics, and working conditions, and seek assistance where required.
- 1.1.5. Describe preventive or proactive services available to employees through the Employee and Family Assistance Program.
- 1.1.6. Participate in all meetings as outlined in the Attendance Support Program and provide input into the development of individualized attendance goals for each employee involved in the process.
- 1.1.7. Provide positive reinforcement to employees who reach their attendance goals.

1.2 Employee:

- 1.2.1. Maintain regular attendance.
- 1.2.2. Report absences through normal reporting procedures.
- 1.2.3. Participate actively in all levels of the attendance support process.
- 1.2.4. Cooperate in setting personal attendance goals.
- 1.2.5. Provide any appropriate medical documentation, during any level of the process in accordance Collective Agreements, to describe the nature of the illness/injury and relevant/limitations to support absences.

1.3 The Safety and Disability Administrator (or designate):

- 1.3.1. Communicate attendance support thresholds to all employees at the commencement of the school year.



- 1.3.2. Guide and support Principals/Supervisors and employees through the Attendance Support Program with the goal of maintaining the health and well-being of employees and their regular attendance.
- 1.3.3. Serve as a resource to employees and Principals/Supervisors.
- 1.3.4. Monitor attendance statistics and identify employees who exceed the threshold level of absences.
- 1.3.5. Advise employees of resources available to them.
- 1.3.6. Facilitate meetings.
- 1.3.7. Provide assistance on the development of individualized goals at the conclusion of each meeting, taking into account all circumstances identified during each meeting.
- 1.3.8. Provide a written outcome of each level meeting with copies to the employee, Principal/Supervisor and employee representative, if applicable.

2. Expectations

- 2.1 Attendance Support focuses on non-culpable (innocent) absenteeism which are absences that occur when an employee through no fault of his/her own, is absent from work due to injury or illness.
- 2.2 Attendance Support is not an appropriate vehicle to address an employee's performance issues.
- 2.3 Attendance Support is not an appropriate process where medical reasons that are the exclusive cause for the absence suggest an accommodation. However, attendance support may be appropriate when there are medical reasons that do not warrant an accommodation but contribute to the poor attendance.
- 2.4 Employees shall continue to follow Board wide procedures / plans for communicable diseases (i.e., Fifth disease, H1N1).
- 2.5 The attendance support process shall be initiated when:
 - i. An employee has exceeded predetermined attendance threshold subject to consideration of mitigating circumstances
 - ii. Thresholds to be used;
 - o Threshold to initiate an Attendance Alert Letter
 - o Threshold to initiate individual Attendance Support Meetings
- 2.6 Notification will be sent by Safety and Disability Administrator to employee advising of exhaustion of allotted sick days.
- 2.7 When an employee is participating in the Attendance Support Program, and he/she has met the established attendance goals, he/she can exit the attendance support process.

3. Steps for addressing attendance concerns directly with individual employees

These steps are guidelines and based on the unique circumstances of the situation, the steps may be altered or adjusted.



Step 1 – Attendance Alert Letter sent by Safety and Disability Administrator to Employee

The Safety and Disability Administrator will monitor Board absenteeism rates and will initiate Attendance Alert Letters for those employees who have:

- exceeded the predetermined attendance threshold subject to consideration of mitigating circumstances

Step 2 - Review of individual attendance with employee

The Safety and Disability Administrator will monitor Board absenteeism rates and will initiate discussion with the Principals / Supervisors for those employees who have:

- exceeded the next predetermined attendance threshold subject to consideration of mitigating circumstances

If the Principal / Supervisor is aware of mitigating circumstances that resulted in one lengthy absence (i.e., recovery period following surgery), the Principal / Supervisor, and the Safety and Disability Administrator will decide together as to whether this step will apply. In this case, it may be more appropriate to use the Disability Management procedures outlined in the Board's Remain at Work, Return to Work and Modified Work Program Policy.

In cases where there are no mitigating circumstances and the employee has met the above noted criteria, a review between the Principal / Supervisor, employee and the Safety and Disability Administrator is conducted. At this review meeting, the employee will be advised that his/her level of attendance has triggered his/her participation in the Attendance Support Program. The employee's attendance record will be reviewed, and he/she will be encouraged to improve his/her attendance. An attendance goal will be set, and the employee will be advised that his/her attendance record will be reviewed in 3 months. If the attendance goal has been met the process will conclude; however, if the goal has not been achieved there will be a formal review meeting to which the Union representative will also attend.

The employee will be reminded that he/she is able to access services through Employee and Family Assistance Program, or his/her physician if the employee reports medical factors as the reason for the absences. If other reasons are identified by the employee that can be explored or addressed through other means (i.e., ergonomic issues, work conflict) it may be appropriate to discuss next steps to review solutions.

The Safety and Disability Administrator will prepare a letter to the employee which documents that the meeting has occurred, specifying the agreed upon goal(s) and next steps.

Step 3 - Second review of individual attendance with employee

A second review meeting will be held when the employee has not met the attendance goal established in the "Step 2" meeting. Usually this will be following a 3-month period; however, if absences escalate then a meeting may be required at an earlier date. This review meeting will be arranged by the Safety and Disability Administrator, and the relevant Union representative will attend.



At this meeting the Principal / Supervisor with input from the Safety and Disability Administrator will emphasize that the attendance support process is non-disciplinary. An attendance target will be set for the next 3 – 6 months. It will also be noted that resolution of this issue is important and improvement is required.

During the discussion period, the employee will be advised that if he/she has a medical condition causing him/her to be absent from work that he/she should submit documentation from his/her physician indicating any on-going medical restriction.

The employee will be offered support through the Employee and Family Assistance Program, and other wellness resources / information.

The results of the discussion will be documented in a letter to the employee prepared by the Safety and Disability Administrator with input from the Principal/ Supervisor, and the relevant Union will be copied.

Step 4 – Third review of individual attendance with employee

During this meeting, if the agreed upon attendance goal was met the Principal / Supervisor should provide positive feedback to the employee. A brief discussion will focus on strategies to sustain the success.

However, if the attendance goal was not met and if no medical documentation had been submitted by the employee, the same steps outlined for the “Step 3” meeting are followed.

At any time, if medical information is submitted by the employee, a meeting may be held with the Principal/ Supervisor, the employee, the Union representative and the Safety and Disability Administrator to determine an appropriate course of action. With consent from the employee, it may be necessary to gain further medical information to consider if an accommodation for medical reasons is required. Timelines for this step will vary based on the individual’s specific medical situation and the strategies used for improving attendance. Depending on the issues being dealt with, an appropriate timeframe could range from a few weeks to a few months.

There may be cases where absence concerns continue, and medical documentation is submitted but it does not suggest a need for an accommodation. In these cases, the attendance support process continues with the goal of supporting the employee in his/her health and regular attendance.

This step becomes formalized with a letter to the employee prepared by the Safety and Disability Administrator with input from the Principal/ Supervisor, and the relevant Union will be copied.

Step 5 – Fourth review of individual attendance with employee

If the agreed upon goal was met the Principal / Supervisor should provide positive feedback to the employee and the discussion will focus on ways to sustain the positive attendance record.



However, if the goal was not met a fourth meeting will be arranged by the Safety and Disability Administrator, and the same steps as outlined for the earlier meeting will be followed. The employee will be encouraged to improve his/ her attendance and he/she will be supported in improving his/her attendance.

The employee will be provided with a letter to take to his/her physician. The letter will advise the physician that the employee has been participating in an Attendance Support Program, and it will describe the absence concerns to the physician.

The Safety and Disability Administrator will provide the employee with a summary letter. As with the previous letters, this letter is also non-disciplinary and does not question the validity of the absences (non-culpable). The letter, however, warns the employee that continued absence from work may result in a blameless discharge. The Principal / Supervisor and the Safety and Disability Administrator will establish another follow-up date.

Step 6 - Termination for excessive absenteeism (blameless discharge)

If the employee continues to have excessive absences and cannot be accommodated consideration may be given to termination for excessive absenteeism. This is a blameless discharge for non-culpable behavior and does not call into question the validity of the absences. Where objective medical information indicates the Board has an obligation to accommodate the disability of an employee, duty of accommodation processes must be initiated.

The decision whether or not to terminate is made by Human Resource Services in consultation with the senior administrator responsible for Human Resource Services.

4. Additional Information

The St. Clair Catholic District School Board is committed to the principles of equity and inclusive education, consistent with our Catholic teachings, which value and promote human rights and social justice in all Board policies, programs, guidelines, operations and practices.

Definitions

Non-Culpable (Innocent) Absenteeism: relates to absences as a result of illness or injury that arise due to circumstances beyond the employee's control. These absences are not dealt with through a progressive discipline model; instead, the employee is supported through the Attendance Support Program. The Attendance Support Program recognizes that employees with non-culpable absenteeism may require assistance to attend work regularly and meet attendance expectations.

Culpable Absenteeism: relates to those absences for which employees can be held accountable. Failure to attend work without notifying the employer, lateness for work or leaving early and abuse of leave are examples of culpable absences. Employees with culpable absences are subject to progressive discipline, in accordance with the associated policy and procedures. These absences are not dealt with through the Attendance Support Program.



Mitigating Circumstances: Circumstances relating to medical matters or illness which are beyond an employee's control and could significantly impact attendance. Mitigating circumstances may include an absence of consecutive days for medical reasons such as surgery.

Threshold Level: The threshold is a number of sick days identified by Human Resource Services each year for which it is reasonable that employees not exceed, unless there are special circumstances substantiated by medical documentation. Thresholds will be reviewed annually.

Attendance Goal: The attendance goal set at any review meeting conducted under the Attendance Support Procedure takes into consideration the threshold level, submitted medical documentation on the case, time frame for the specific goal, and any mitigating circumstances for the situation.