

## ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT

### Background

The Board of Education is committed to managing employee attendance through a positive, supportive environment that promotes best possible attendance. Every employee has a responsibility to maintain regular attendance at work.

Note: Some sick leave will always be utilized. The expectation is that employees will use sick leave only when it is required. This guideline is not intended to limit an employee's right to utilize their sick leave for legitimate reasons.

These guidelines apply to all employees of the Northwest School Division No. 203.

### Responsibilities

#### *Administrator*

- Communicate the protocol for advising of absenteeism and expected attendance standards and obligations to staff
- Ensure staff are aware of patterns of usage, should an issue with absenteeism be observed
- Monitor levels of sick leave usage in their schools and offices and take appropriate action to correct absenteeism issues
- Maintain written documentation where absenteeism issues have been identified
- Identify unacceptable usage based on the individual situation
- Using the procedures outlined and guideline references, meet with the employee to discuss and resolve issues regarding attendance. In the case of an extended absence, the supervisor will arrange with the employee to maintain contact at a reasonable frequency determined by the Employer.
- Maintain communication with HR/Payroll Department

#### *Employees*

- To attempt best efforts to be physically and mentally fit for work
- Attend to personal affairs and obligations outside of working hours whenever possible
- Attend work, on time, for every scheduled day of work
- Provide reasons for absence, tardiness or leaving early
- Notify their supervisor as soon as possible when there is a reason to be absent from work
- Seek medical care when necessary

- Provide, as required, appropriate documentation to appropriate supervisor/designate, to support the absence and/or fitness to return to work.
- Maintain communication with their supervisor for each absence. This is critical when the employee is unable to return to work and the estimated length of illness is unknown.

#### *Human Resources*

- Provide advice to management on the provisions of these procedures and guidelines
- Work with Administration to identify the source of employee attendance issues, determine available resources and to facilitate return to work programs
- Provide advice on Human Rights, *The Saskatchewan Employment Act*, collective agreement provisions, and policy interpretations where applicable.
- Communicate NWSD expectations regarding employee attendance

#### **Definitions**

*Absence* – Is an incident of non-attendance at work.

*Culpable Absenteeism* – Absence problems for which the employee will be held responsible as the absences are within the employee’s power to address and correct; but not limited to: failure to notify, absence without leave, abuse of leave and coming to work late or leaving early without notification. Culpable absenteeism is grounds for discipline, up to and including dismissal.

*Non-Culpable Absenteeism* – The consistent inability for an employee to attend work on a regular basis due to circumstances beyond the employee’s control, including but not limited to: illness or non-occupational injury.

#### **A. Monitoring Attendance**

- i. Attendance records of employee attendance that include absences will be monitored on an ongoing basis.
- ii. All available information will be reviewed and considered before determining that an attendance problem exists.
- iii. A potential attendance issue will be considered when utilization appears to be above the norm, or where there are patterns of usage identified.
- iv. Once the immediate supervisor has determined that an attendance problem does, in fact exist, action will be taken in accordance with the guidelines outlined in this policy.

#### **B. Medical Evidence**

- i. Employees will not be required to reveal to the Employer the exact nature of an illness or disability (i.e. diagnosis).

- ii. Subject to the terms and conditions of the applicable collective agreement or Board policy, the employee may be required to provide a **Verification of Sickness** form when:
  - An employee is absent from the workplace due to illness or injury;
  - An employee's sick leave usage is above the average (as determined by the Employer);
  - Or when a potential attendance issue exists or is developing.
- iii. The **Verification of Sickness** form should state clearly the expected date of return to work. If any limitations or restrictions apply, please contact Human Resources Department for **Return to Work forms**. When requesting medical evidence, it is reasonable to request clarification from the physician verifying:
  - Whether the absence from work is medically required;
  - Whether restrictions exist;
  - Identification of specific restrictions to guide return to work decisions;
  - Whether treatments or medications have been prescribed that may affect the employee's ability to perform their required responsibilities;
  - Prognosis of expectation for recovery

#### **C. Confidentiality**

- i. Medical information received will be treated in a confidential manner and in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.
- ii. Medical information concerning employees will not be discussed or requested unless required in order to verify absence from work or to ensure the employee's capabilities and/or safety in carrying out his or her job duties, or verifying absence from work.

#### **D. Early Intervention**

Where an attendance problem has been identified, the immediate supervisor will commence early intervention in accordance with *Appendix A: Early Intervention*.

#### **E. Culpable Absenteeism**

Where early intervention does not produce improvement and the attendance problem is deemed to be *CULPABLE*; absenteeism may be grounds for discipline, up to and including dismissal.

#### **F. Non-Culpable Absenteeism**

Where early intervention does not produce improvement and the attendance problem is deemed to be *NON-CULPABLE*:

- If there is no verification of a disability as defined by *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*, the attendance problem will be managed through providing reasonable assistance and support as determined by the specific circumstances of each case.
- If there is verification of a disability as defined by *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*, the attendance problem will be managed through accommodation to the point of “undue hardship”.

## **G. Termination of Employment**

Termination of employment may be considered for situations of culpable absenteeism. In assessing the option of termination, the facts of each case will be assessed in relation to applicable laws and regulations.

References: Saskatchewan Human Rights Code  
Saskatchewan Employment Act

Approved: September 10, 2018

## **APPENDIX A: EARLY INTERVENTION GUIDELINES**

*Note: These EARLY INTERVENTION procedures are intended as guidelines only.*

The Board and Administrators will use their discretion to apply these procedures in a constructive, reasonable manner. The goal is to manage attendance issues to ensure appropriate attendance at work.

### ***Step 1: Initial Discussion/Meeting (Typically dealt with by the immediate supervisor)***

The immediate supervisor meets with the employee. The following provides a general framework for the discussion with the employee and is a guide to ensure the discussion remains focused:

- i. Plan the meeting:
  - Consult with appropriate sources (Human Resources, Director, Superintendent, Saskatchewan School Boards Association, etc.)
  - Organize information for the discussion including attendance records, appropriate average usage summaries, etc.
  - Note any patterns;
  - Identify incidents vs. days;
  - Identify any known reasons for absences and whether all absences are related;
  - Identify the negative impact on the work unit or workplace.
  
- ii. Meet with Employee:
  - Clarify the meeting is not intended in any way to be disciplinary;
  - Ensure privacy;
  - Describe attendance problem (trends/patterns, incidents vs. days, exceeding comparable averages, etc.);
  - Provide the employee with a clear explanation of how his/her absences are negatively impacting the work unit or workplace;
  - Be clear that the goal is improvement;
  - Identify that the confidential, voluntary services of the Employee and Family Assistant Program or Rehabilitation Services or other regional health authority or community services are available, where applicable;
  - Ask the employee if other types of support may be required

#### Establish Guidelines and Action Plan:

- Determine if the employee expects his/her attendance to improve and note responses – ask the employee to provide suggestions on how to improve their attendance and obtain their commitment to improvement;

- Re-communicate procedures and guidelines for reporting absences;
  - Establish a follow up date to review progress (*generally one to three months is a reasonable time period, but depending on the particular facts, the timeframe could be shorter or longer*).
  - Document your preparation notes, meetings, dates, timeline, etc. Consider the subjective interpretations of future discussions.
- iii. Follow Up:
- Meet with employee as per the previously agreed timeframe;
  - Provide positive recognition where improvement is the result.
  - Document conversation between employee and immediate supervisor

**Step 2: Discussion/Meeting followed by a Letter (Dealt with by HR & the Supervisor)**

The human resources designate and immediate supervisor will meet with the employee. The meeting should follow the following guidelines:

- i. Plan the meeting:
- Consult with appropriate sources (Director, Superintendent, Saskatchewan School Boards Association, etc.)
  - Organize information for the discussion including attendance records, appropriate average usage summaries, etc.
  - Note any patterns;
  - Identify incidents vs. days;
  - Identify any known reasons for absences and whether all absences are related;
  - Identify the negative impact on the work unit or workplace.
  - Review notes, timeline, action plan from the initial meeting with employee and supervisor
- ii. Meet with Employee:
- Ensure privacy;
  - Describe attendance problem (trends/patterns, incidents vs. days, exceeding comparable averages, etc.);
  - Provide the employee with a clear explanation of how his/her absences are negatively impacting the work unit or workplace;
  - Be clear that the goal is improvement;
  - Identify that the confidential, voluntary services of the Employee and Family Assistant Program or Rehabilitation Services or other regional health authority or community services are available, where applicable;
  - Ask the employee if other types of support may be required

Establish Guidelines and Action Plan:

- Determine if the employee expects his/her attendance to improve and note responses – ask the employee to provide suggestions on how to improve their attendance and obtain their commitment to improvement;
- Re-communicate procedures and guidelines for reporting absences;
- Establish a follow up date to review progress (*generally one to three months is a reasonable time period, but depending on the particular facts, the timeframe could be shorter or longer*).
- Please document your preparation notes, meetings, dates, timeline, etc. Please consider the subjective interpretations of future discussions.

iii. Follow Up:

- Meet with employee as per the previously agreed timeframe;
- Provide positive recognition where improvement is the result.
- Document conversation between employee and immediate supervisor

iv. The employee is advised a letter summarizing the meeting will follow.

**The following provides general guidelines for the specific items to be included in the letter:**

- Meeting date;
- Reference to previous discussions with the employee (including dates);
- Clear identification of the attendance issues discussed with the employee (trends/patters, incidents vs. days, exceeding comparable averages, etc.;
- Clear identification of the negative impact on the workplace or work unit;
- Clear identification of the expectations;
- The employee's explanation for the absences;
- Any commitments made by the employee, including his/her commitment to improve;
- The timeframe for follow up.

v. A letter is sent to the employee.

**Step 3 – Determining Absence Type (Dealt with by HR & the Supervisor)**

- i. Where attendance has not improved and the reasons for the absence are unknown an assessment as to whether the cause of the absence is culpable or non-culpable will be made prior to taking further action.
- ii. Another meeting is held with the employee. This meeting can be facilitated by the immediate supervisor or Superintendent and should follow the guidelines outlined in Step 1.

- iii. As the process is intended to assess the type of absence, the employee will now be required to produce medical verification of the absences.

In addition to the discussion items identified in Step 1 as noted above, the following additional discussion items and documentation are to be included at this step:

- Advise the employee that medical verification of the absence and medical confirmation of their ability to maintain regular attendance at work in the future is required;
- Provide the employee with a letter to take to their doctor;
- Emphasize that you are seeking prognosis information only, and will not accept diagnosis information;
- Emphasize that the medical information received will be kept confidential and confirm to whom the information is to be returned;
- Inform the employee that they will be required to attend a follow-up meeting to discuss the medical information received;
- Confirm that the intent of gathering the information is to assist the employee in maintaining regular attendance at work or to appropriately assess alternatives if a disability exists;
- Warn the employee that if the required medical information is not provided or the information provided does not verify the legitimacy of the absences, disciplinary action may be considered.