

**ST. CLAIR CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
SECTION D: STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

ATTENDANCE SUPPORT	PROCEDURE
EFFECTIVE: 2010 06 22 / 2014 03 25	

It is the policy of the St. Clair Catholic District School Board to expect regular and consistent work attendance by all employees. The Board is committed to supporting the health and well-being of its employees and when regular attendance has been compromised employees will be supported in improving and maintaining their attendance. The Attendance Support Program is a non-disciplinary process.

Attendance Support focuses on 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.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE:

1.0 Responsibilities and Expectations

- 1.1 Principals / Supervisors will orient their employees to the Attendance Support Policy and expectations, and ensure that absences are entered into the Smart Find Express (SFE) System.
- 1.2 All employees are expected to enter his/her absences in the SFE, and to participate in the process of Attendance Support.
- 1.3 The Safety and Disability Administrator / Human Resource Services will 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. The support program will be appropriate to the circumstances of each individual case. Attendance statistics will be monitored by Human Resource Services.
- 1.4 Employees will maintain regular attendance at work; however, they will follow appropriate policy and protocols in situations of communicable disease (i.e., Fifth disease, H1N1) and disability (Policy 4.22 - Remain at Work, Return to Work and Modified Work Program).

2.0 Principal/ Supervisor - Orientation of Employees

2.1 *Communication by Principal / Supervisor of attendance expectations with all employees*

Principals / Supervisors are expected to discuss the Attendance Support Program at the first staff meeting of the academic year. The Principal / Supervisor should identify the average rate of absenteeism for the School Board. Absenteeism statistics are available through Human Resource Services; consideration may be given to trends, issues, and concerns which may be leading to illness or injury.

The Principal / Supervisor can consult with the Safety and Disability Administrator for strategies to reduce overall absenteeism. The Principal / Supervisor should take a

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proactive approach to attendance management by examining the areas of safety training, ergonomics, and working conditions, and seek assistance where required. Principals / Supervisors can also take advantage of this opportunity to outline the preventive or proactive services available to employees through the Employee and Family Assistance Program.

When initiating these discussions with their employees, Principals/ Supervisors should be sensitive to individual circumstances and ensure they are not inadvertently creating conflict within the employees.

3.0 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 – Notification sent by Safety and Disability Administrator to employee advising of exhaustion of allotted sick days

Step 3 - 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 Policy 4.22 – Remain at Work, Return to Work and Modified Work Program.

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.

During this initial meeting, the Safety and Disability Administrator and Principal / Supervisor should listen to the employee and not challenge the validity of the absences. The employee will be reminded that he/she is able to access services through Employee

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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.

After the meeting, the Principal/ Supervisor will continue to ensure any future absences are entered into SFE, and will also advise the Safety and Disability Administrator directly of any absence.

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 4 - 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 3" 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. Discussion will focus on the impact of lost time on the work unit and co-workers, the importance of being at work, how much the employee is missed, and the relevance of his/her contributions. 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 Principal/ Supervisor should express confidence in the employee's ability to improve his/her attendance. It is important during this meeting to confirm the employee's understanding, and discuss an agreed-upon action plan, attendance goal and a follow-up meeting date.

Finally, 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 5 – 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 4" meeting are followed.

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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 6 – 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 letter will contain the following questions:

1. Is the employee currently able to fulfill his/her work expectations?
2. Does the employee have a medical condition requiring a leave of absence from work?
3. If so, what is the nature of the medical condition?
4. Provide a description of any medical restriction, and its duration, which the employee may have.
5. Given the past attendance record, what is the prognosis for regular and sustained attendance in the future?

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). It does, however, warn 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 7 - Termination for excessive absenteeism (blameless discharge)

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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 behaviour, 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 Superintendent responsible for Human Resource Services.

DEFINITIONS:

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 (based on the most recent yearly sick leave utilization data) 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.