



UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Attendance Management Program Guidelines

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Introduction

The University is committed to an environment that values and depends on employee attendance. Regular attendance on the job is a reasonable expectation. It is a shared responsibility of the supervisor and staff member to ensure that this expectation is clearly understood. The University wishes to manage employee attendance through a positive, supportive environment that promotes attendance.

This handbook has been developed to provide supervisors and support staff with guidelines and support in addressing issues or problems that might be affecting a staff member's ability to attend work on a regular basis. It contains four main sections:

1. Attendance Management Roles and Responsibilities
2. Types of Absences
3. Attendance Monitoring
4. The Attendance Support Process

Absenteeism results in operational difficulties. It affects not only individual employees, but also co-workers and the operations of the organization as a whole. Managing attendance issues in a timely and effective way can contribute to improved service, increased productivity, a better quality of life and retention of staff. Although regular attendance is expected, it is recognized that circumstances do occur where legitimate factors make it impossible or impractical to do so. The University believes that helping staff maintain their health, safety and well-being promotes a healthy and productive workplace. With this in mind, the University will make every reasonable effort to provide accommodation, assistance and rehabilitation.

The Attendance Management Program is designed to promote and achieve high standards of attendance and must be administered in a fair and consistent manner with consideration for both the Department and the employee. The program is not intended to be punitive, but is designed to assist employees who exhibit chronic absenteeism to reduce the absences to acceptable levels.

Objectives of the Attendance Management Program

- To raise awareness of the importance of attendance;
- To provide opportunities for supervisors, managers, and Human Resources staff to encourage employees to stay healthy and use the supports available to help them attend work on a regular and reliable basis;
- To ensure fair and equitable treatment of employees in matters of attendance;
- To offer the necessary supports to ill or injured employees to help them return to work or to help employees remain at work;
- To provide guidance to supervisors and managers responsible for dealing with attendance issues; and
- To ensure consistent procedures for handling attendance concerns.

Attendance Management Roles and Responsibilities

Reasons for an Attendance Management Program

Employee absenteeism has a direct impact on the level of service the University provides. High levels of absenteeism leads to inferior quality of service, lost productivity, and reduced morale of co-workers. Consistent management of attendance problems can have highly positive effects on the workplace. An attendance management program can:

- reduce overtime costs;
- improve planning and organization of work;
- increase employee morale;
- improve employee/employer relations;
- reduce the amount of time absorbed by attendance problems.

Attendance management is the function of many individuals, and its success is dependent upon the commitment of all participants. Outlined below are some of the key responsibilities of the various groups who will impact the success of this program.



The Employee has the responsibility to:

- a) attend work when scheduled or otherwise expected to be at work;
- b) improve personal health and adjust lifestyle, where necessary, to maintain regular attendance;
- c) report illness or injury promptly to supervisor in accordance with departmental reporting procedures;
- d) attend to personal issues and obligations (including medical appointments, physiotherapy, chiropractic treatment etc.) outside of regular work hours, whenever possible;
- e) provide all necessary documentation to justify absences (including adequately completed medical certificates, as required);
- f) fully participate in the University's timely and safe return to work initiatives;
- g) implement and adopt improved attendance strategies with the manager/supervisor where the need for improved attendance has been identified; and
- h) maintain regular contact with the manager/supervisor and provide information on expected duration of absence and possible return to work date.

The Manager/Supervisor has the responsibility to:

- a) inform employees about the University's Attendance Management Program and departmental reporting responsibilities;
- b) implement the Attendance Management Program;
- c) monitor, document, and report the attendance of all employees;
- d) request reasonable information related to an employee's absence and maintain confidentiality of the information received in accordance with the Personal Health Information Act;
- e) maintain regular contact with an employee who is absent from work;
- f) carry out attendance reviews when necessary and in a fair and consistent manner;
- g) coach and support employees on attendance matters which may include reasonable accommodation;
- h) refer employees to appropriate supports or resource for improving attendance; and
- i) seek the advice of senior management and Human Resources when regular attendance is not achieved following informal attention to situation.

Human Resources have the responsibility to:

- a) provide training on the University's Attendance Management Program and advice to managers/supervisors as required;
- b) discuss particular employee attendance concerns with the manager/supervisor;
- c) schedule Attendance Management Meetings and Attendance Management Hearings and notify all parties;
- d) maintain historical attendance records and data;
- e) maintain confidentiality of the information received in accordance with the Personal Health Information Act;
- f) monitor ongoing attendance management concerns; and
- g) ensure appropriate consultation with unions, if applicable.

Employee Wellness has the responsibility to:

- a) provide support to employees and managers/supervisors with respect to sick leave and disability case management;
- b) provide advice, as required, on the University's Attendance Management Program and on attendance issues, generally;
- c) act as a resource and support when an identified or suspected medical problem prevents an employee from performing his/her regular duties;
- d) manage the University's timely and safe return to work process;
- e) work collaboratively with managers/supervisors, employees and unions in developing rehabilitation programs; and
- f) maintain the confidentiality of employee information received in accordance with the Personal Health Information Act.

The Occupational Health Coordinator has the responsibility to:

- a) provide support to employees and managers/supervisors with respect to Workers Compensation related case management;
- b) act as a resource and support when an identified or suspected work- related medical condition prevents an employee from performing his/her regular duties;
- c) work collaboratively with the Workers Compensation Board (WCB), managers/supervisors, employees and unions in developing rehabilitative programs; and
- d) maintain the confidentiality of employee information received in accordance with the Personal Health Information Act.



Types of Absences

Absences that will require some type of Employer intervention are split into two distinct categories; **Non-Culpable** and **Culpable**. It is essential that we differentiate between these two types of absence, record them separately and resolve them differently. Attendance Management Program measures are used to address non-culpable absences and are designed to be constructive and assist employees reduce their level of absenteeism. Disciplinary measures are to be used to address absences that are determined to be culpable.



Non-Culpable or Innocent Absenteeism

Non-culpable Absenteeism (Innocent Absenteeism) is an absence resulting from factors generally considered to be outside of the control of the employee, such as illness or injury. Situations where an employee is away from work too frequently, yet has genuine and documented reasons for the absences are presumed to be innocent. Although the employee may be capable of doing the job when at work, excessive absences create problems for the department. As a result, the employee is not fulfilling the requirements of the employment contract.

In general, innocent absenteeism cannot be grounds for discipline as it would be unfair to punish someone for conduct that is beyond their control and not their fault. However, in certain very serious situations, particularly excessive absenteeism may warrant termination of the employment relationship (discharge in a non-punitive sense). The fundamental rationale behind such thinking is that the employment relationship is contractual and the employer has a right to expect regular and reliable attendance, and performance of work duties for which they are paying.

Examples of innocent absences may include:

- excessive sick leave, with or without pay (even though there is medical certification);
- excessive outside appointments during working hours;
- excessive absences from work to deal with ongoing family problems.

While an employee is not subject to discipline in cases of innocent absenteeism, an employee can be subject to termination in a non-disciplinary sense if:

- the frequency or past record of absences is excessive;
- the absences are disruptive to the efficient operation of the organization; and
- it can be reasonably determined that the employee is incapable of regular attendance.

There are additional types of innocent absences that require special attention since they are more difficult to categorize, or raise other considerations. Two of these are identified below.

Disability Absenteeism is a category used to define absences that result from an identified condition of disability. These absences are considered to be innocent. Supervisors should consult with Employee Wellness on these situations to address opportunities for accommodation. Departments are required to accommodate employees with a disability, within the meaning of the legislation, to the point of “undue hardship”. This type of absenteeism may also require special, personalized attendance goals which may be below the norm as part of the employment accommodation.

Pattern Absenteeism refers to absences that occur on particular days of the week or adjacent to scheduled days off, week-ends etc. and therefore appear on the surface to be suspicious. Pattern absenteeism is presumed to be “innocent absenteeism” unless there is evidence to the contrary since there is the possibility of a legitimate explanation for the absence. However, if after investigating the situation, it can be confirmed that the absenteeism pattern indicates abuse (i.e. no reasonable explanation is given for the absences and it is not substantiated by medical documentation) the absences may be considered culpable and disciplinary action may be required.



Culpable Absenteeism

Culpable Absenteeism (Blameworthy Absenteeism) is an absence from work without reasonable justification, such as:

- i. lateness/leaving work early including break times;
- ii. failure to notify of absence;
- iii. absence without approval;
- iv. abuse of the sick leave benefit;
- v. failure to provide an explanation for an absence satisfactory to the University; or
- vi. absence not supported by medical information.

Where absences are culpable in nature (i.e. the employee is able to attend but chooses not to) the employee is not eligible for pay for the time not worked and the basic principles of progressive discipline should be followed and administered in accordance with the University’s disciplinary policy and/or collective agreements. Ongoing consultation with Human Resources is required.

However, it is important to recognize that most absences are legitimate. Nevertheless, any absence is potentially disruptive for a department and supervisors should be concerned about every instance of absence. Furthermore, excessive absence is a strong indication that a problem may exist. The way in which a supervisor deals with employee absences will play a critical role in effective attendance management and the prevention of attendance problems from escalating.

Attendance Monitoring and Identifying Attendance Problems

High standards of attendance can be achieved through active management involvement and regular attention. Through accurate record keeping, ongoing review of employee attendance, positive counseling interviews, reinforcement of employee responsibilities, and offers of assistance, positive change in an employee's attendance can be realized.

It is accepted that a limited amount of employee absence is a normal part of an employment relationship. However, when an employee's absences from work exceed the norm, an attendance problem may exist that requires intervention.



Monitoring Attendance

Recording Absences

Identifying attendance problems begins with monitoring the attendance of all employees periodically and in a consistent manner. Promoting and maintaining regular attendance and assisting employees overcome difficulties which reduce consistent attendance is dependent on early identification of attendance problems. In this regard, it is essential that supervisors keep up-to-date records of employee leaves, and monitor attendance regularly.

Absences Included and Excluded from Innocent Absenteeism Statistics

Supervisors need to keep in mind that certain absences are excluded from statistics used to calculate absenteeism rates for the purposes of attendance management. These absences still need to be recorded; however, they should not be included when calculating an employee's absenteeism.

**Absences to be included in
"absenteeism data"**

- ✓ Sick leave with pay
- ✓ Sick leave without pay
- ✓ WCB sick leave
- ✓ MPI sick leave

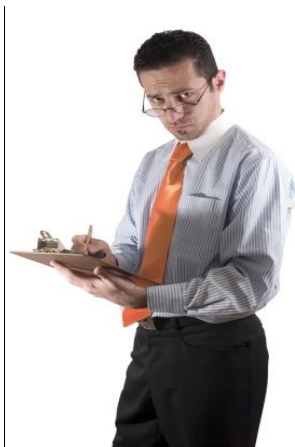
**Absences to be excluded from
“absenteeism data”**

- ✓ Vacation leave
- ✓ Bereavement leave
- ✓ Maternity/ Paternity leave
- ✓ Adoption leave
- ✓ Jury duty
- ✓ Family Illness
- ✓ Compassionate leave
- ✓ Disciplinary leave
- ✓ Other approved absences with or without pay

Removing Culpable Absences

While absences which are identified as **culpable** form part of the attendance record, they are not included when calculating an employee’s innocent absenteeism rate. It is important that culpable absences are dealt with in accordance with the principles of progressive discipline.

Identifying a Potential Attendance Problem



When an employee’s absenteeism record reaches the “triggers” identified below, this signals that there is a potential attendance issue that requires management.

At this point the supervisor needs to review all available information to determine the appropriate course of action. It is important to recognize that each employee and situation is different and that each case must be assessed independently with some consideration and flexibility given to the particular circumstances. Therefore, once we have identified that there is a potential attendance issue, we must consider all available information including the following before deciding how to best intervene.

Triggers to Identify Attendance Concerns

Supervisors should monitor and discuss attendance with all employees on an ongoing basis. The supervisor will review the number of incidents and days absent for all employees, and identify attendance concerns. If the supervisor identifies an attendance concern but is aware of special mitigating circumstances, he or she may document the information and take no further action. If further action is required, the supervisor will follow the procedural steps as detailed in the University’s Attendance Management Policy and Procedures.

The following triggers will be used to identify attendance concerns:

1. An employee has missed 10 days/shifts in the preceding twelve-month period.
2. An employee has been absent on 3 occasions in a 3 month period.
3. An employee has been absent on 4 occasions in a 4 month period.



Criteria:

- *Any absence for at least ½ day is counted as one occasion of absence.*
- *Absences of one or more consecutive days are counted as one occasion of absence.*
- *Recurrences for up to one day will be counted as same absence.*
- *Recurrences > one day will be counted as a new absence.*

It should be noted that an employee's absences from work does not necessarily constitute problem absenteeism simply because they have an above average number of absences. It is the supervisor's responsibility to review the available information and assess whether an absenteeism problem actually exists.

Supervisor's Review:

- The supervisor will review the number of incidents and days absent for all employees and identify attendance concerns
- If the supervisor identifies an attendance concern but is aware of special mitigating circumstances, he or she may document the information and take no further action.
- If further action is required the supervisor will follow the Attendance Support Process detailed in Section 4.

The Attendance Support Process

There are four steps in the Attendance Management process, which are designed to raise awareness about an employee's attendance problem and to encourage improvement. The objective is that through the encouragement and support of the supervisor and the use of the available resources, the employee can be successful in achieving and maintaining an acceptable level of attendance.

There are a number of points which are common to each step:

- Any step of the process can be extended, repeated or suspended all together if circumstances warrant, such as sufficient attendance improvements are noted.
- The review period in between the steps of the attendance management program will not be less than 3 months, and will not normally be longer than 6 months.
- If an acceptable attendance record is not maintained over the review period, then the employee will progress to the next step.
- If the attendance record continues to improve and is maintained at an acceptable level in line with the University average for a period of 12 months, then the attendance problem is considered resolved. The employee is commended on their success and is removed from the program.
- If the employee, after having been removed from the program, is required to re-enter the program due to excessive or patterned absenteeism within one year of their removal, they are re-entered into the program at a Step that reflects the employee's prior history in the program.
- If the employee indicates at any step that there is a medical condition or disability contributing to their attendance challenges, then the supervisor should discuss the situation with Employee Wellness so that appropriate steps can be taken.

In instances where an attendance concern has been identified, the supervisor will need to meet with the employee to address the attendance issue. Many attendance issues are resolved during the informal attendance review step and, in such cases the supervisor continues to encourage the employee and provides on-going monitoring and feedback. In other cases, the employee shows no improvement and absences continue to be excessive. A series of subsequent meetings may be required in these situations in order to facilitate a solution to the attendance problem.

What follows is an outline of procedures for supervisors dealing with non-culpable (innocent) attendance issues. It is important to note that:

- these guidelines should be administered with flexibility and discretion in order to allow the supervisor to deal effectively with the numerous types of attendance issues that may arise. For instance, in some situations it may be advisable to repeat one or more of the stages;
- the sample letters provided in *Appendix 2* are offered as guides to assist the supervisor in letter preparation and, as such, may require editing to be suitable for a specific situation;
- supervisors should be aware that unionized employees have the right to union representation at meetings, if requested by the employee;
- supervisors should be cautious when dealing with disability absences (see page 8). The supervisor will need to consider whether a disability accommodation is the appropriate response. Supervisors should contact Employee Wellness for assistance when dealing with such absences;
- Human Resource Consultants are available to provide assistance and advice throughout the process.



Corrective action Steps to be taken in the Attendance Support Process:

STEP 1 - Informal Attendance Review

Where attendance suggests an emerging absenteeism problem, the supervisor will conduct an informal interview with the employee. The attendance concern may have arisen due to the number of days absent, the number occurrences of absence, or the identification of a pattern of absenteeism. The purpose of the informal interview is to:

- a) identify concerns with attendance;
- b) reinforce the importance of being at work;
- c) determine the nature of the problem that has caused the absences;
- d) determine if the absences are "culpable" or "non-culpable"*;
- e) discuss resources available for assistance; and
- f) provide expectations for improvement

See “Appendix 1: Attendance Management – Interview Checklist” on page 20 for a summary of items to be discussed at the attendance review interview.

Every conversation, meeting, telephone call or email message should be documented and maintained by the supervisor.

If the informal attention has not resulted in improvement in regular attendance, it may be necessary to take a more formal approach and proceed to "STEP 2".

**Note: at any Step in the procedures, once a determination is made regarding the culpability of absences, the following is applicable:*

- 1) *Where absences are non-culpable in nature (i.e. the employee wants to attend work but is unable to due to situations that appear to be beyond his/her control) a progressive non-disciplinary approach should be followed. Activities will include some, or all, of the following:*
- 2) *request for medical documentation and/or information about any medical restrictions;*
- 3) *explore the possibility of reasonable accommodation;*
- 4) *inform the employee of the type of options available (i.e. leave of absence, reduction in hours, move to casual status); and*
- 5) *communicate to the employee that promotions to other positions may be affected while efforts to improve attendance are ongoing.*

STEP 2 - Attendance Review Meeting

Prior to conducting a formal meeting with the employee, the supervisor must consult with a Human Resource Consultant to discuss the nature of the situation and the next steps to be taken. Following this consultation the supervisor will meet with the employee to discuss the absences. The employee is entitled to bring a representative from his or her union to the meeting. The purpose of the Attendance Review Meeting is to:

- a) advise the employee of the attendance concern;
- b) review the employee's attendance record;
- c) provide the employee with an opportunity to discuss the situation;
- d) determine if the absences are "culpable" or "non-culpable";
- e) discuss the possibility of improvement and identify attendance expectations;
- f) offer assistance where possible - remind the employee of available resources;
- g) express confidence that the employee will improve his/her attendance;
- h) inform the employee that their attendance will be continued to be monitored; and
- i) advise that if this meeting fails to correct the attendance issue, further action will be warranted.

The supervisor must maintain accurate documentation of the Attendance Review Meeting.

STEP 3 - Attendance Management Meeting

An Attendance Management Meeting is held when the employee's attendance has not improved as required following the previous meeting. The supervisor must consult with a Human Resource

Consultant before holding an Attendance Management Meeting. If such a meeting is deemed appropriate, participants will include the supervisor, employee, human resources representative, and union representative (if requested). The discussions and outcome of the meeting will be documented in a letter to the employee. The purpose of the Attendance Management Meeting is to:

- a) follow-up on items discussed at the previous meeting;
- b) identify that the employee's attendance is unacceptable;
- c) seek further response from the employee concerning the absenteeism;
- d) determine if the absences are "culpable" or "non-culpable";
- e) reinforce attendance requirements; and
- f) identify specific course of action to be taken and possible consequences

STEP 4 - Attendance Management Hearing

An Attendance Management Hearing is held if the absenteeism continues to be excessive following the previous meeting and it appears that the absences are "non-culpable". The supervisor must consult with Human Resources before holding this meeting. If such a meeting is deemed appropriate, participants will include the supervisor, employee, human resources representative, and union representative (if requested). The discussions and outcome of the meeting will be documented in a letter to the employee. The purpose of the Attendance Management Hearing is to:

- a) review the employee's attendance record;
- b) summarize previous attempts to resolve the issue;
- c) explain the impact the absenteeism is having on the employee, co-workers and the organization;
- d) give the employee an opportunity to respond to the absenteeism concerns;
- e) determine if the absences are "culpable" or "non-culpable";
- f) determine if there is any indication that attendance will improve in the future;
- g) if yes, advise of Last Chance to show that he/she can attend work regularly; or
- h) if no, advise of other options that may be pursued, including non-disciplinary termination (as the absence is without blame).

Medical Certificates - Workplace Capabilities Form



As a basic premise, an employer has a right to enquire into any absence from work, and an employee has an obligation to account for any absence, including an absence alleged to be due to illness or injury. An employer's right to obtain medical information to accommodate an employee's disability, to determine eligibility for sick benefits, or to verify the basis for an absence from work must be balanced with the employee's right to privacy. The determination to obtain medical information is dependent on the circumstances underlying the

absence, the purpose of the request, and the specifics of the applicable collective agreement/ University Policy.

The level of detail an employer may insist upon will depend on the particular situation. The employer has a right to be advised of the employee's prognosis for recovery (with or without limitations), the general nature of the medical condition, fitness for work, and duration of any work limitations.

A certificate may be deficient if it does not contain sufficient information to establish that the employee was unable to work, or if it fails to demonstrate that an employee is fit to return to work following an injury or illness. Some instances where an employer may reject a medical certificate and/or request further information include:

- a) if it is not clear that the physician and patient have actually met, it is legitimate to request the date and time of the appointment and whether or not the patient was examined;
- b) when the medical certificate is either prospective (for future dates), or retrospective (obtained after the injury or illness);
- c) if it appears that the physician is not aware of the employee's duties, it would be appropriate to provide the physician with a copy of the job description and to request an opinion about the employee's ability to perform same;
- d) if it appears that the employee is seeing multiple physicians, the employer has the right to ask the physician how long the employee has been a patient, and whether other physicians are treating him/her for the same ailment; or
- e) if there is a concern that the physician might not have the necessary expertise or qualifications to diagnose or treat the employee's condition, the employer could ask the physician if a referral to a specialist would be appropriate.

Employee and Family Assistance Program



Personal problems can affect the physical and emotional well-being of an employee. The supervisor should be vigilant as to indications that employees are experiencing personal problems, particularly when these appear to be affecting their attendance or performance. In such situations, the supervisor should ensure that the employee is aware of the various services available to assist employees. They should make every effort, for instance, to remind the employee of the Employee and Family Assistance Program, a no-cost confidential counseling service for all University employees and their families. The EFAP counselling service toll free number is 1-800-387-4765. However, supervisors should note that the EFAP service is voluntary and therefore a supervisor cannot force an employee to seek help from the EFAP.

Suggestions for Attendance Interviews

It is important for the supervisor to review the University's policy on absenteeism with the employee. When the supervisor takes a professional and positive approach to the interview and communicates with tact and sincerity, the employee is encouraged to view the meeting as a sincere attempt to resolve the attendance issue. It is important that the employee be engaged in determining the solution. In situations where it seems appropriate, the supervisor can offer assistance by describing services that may help such as, the Employee and Family Assistance Program.

As well, it should be noted that the attendance management process for innocent absenteeism is not a disciplinary measure, as these attendance issues are considered to be innocent, unless there is evidence to the contrary. Furthermore, supervisors should be aware that, if requested, unionized employees have the right to union representation at any of the meetings.

Supervisors need to be well-prepared in order to encourage a successful interview. In order to be well-prepared, the supervisor should:

- think about what is intended to be accomplished (e.g., raise employee awareness of employer concerns, help understand the cause of the absences, identify solutions, etc.);
- review the employee's file and past attendance record, identify similar problems in the past, reasons, and action taken to resolve the problems;
- develop an appropriate approach and a number of alternatives;
- seek advice from senior managers or human resources staff on key points to address during the interview;
- set a mutually suitable time;
- allow enough time for discussion;
- organize all the facts and information well in advance of the interview;
- discuss the attendance concern, not other issues;
- plan for taking notes about the interview.

In any meeting with an employee to address an attendance issue, the interview tone and setting are extremely important to the success of the meeting. It is important that the supervisor conducts the meeting in a respectful manner and in a tone that shows genuine concern. A tactful presentation of the issue by the supervisor and a request for improvement will encourage a positive employee response and help to establish a cooperative relationship. Keep in mind that

the purpose of these meetings is to raise the employee's awareness of the attendance problem, inform them that the department is concerned, identify solutions and encourage improvement. To ensure a well-conducted interview:

Points to Make

- have a copy of the employee's attendance record to review with them;
- emphasize the University's need and desire for every employee to be at work when scheduled;
- identify how the absences affect the Department (morale of fellow employees, effectiveness and productivity of work group, quality of service provided);
- stress the requirement for improvement and clearly define expectations;
- inform the employee that their attendance will continue to be monitored;
- remind the employee that the Employee & Family Assistance Program is available to them;
- emphasize future improvement rather than the negative issues from the past;

Tone to Take

- ✓ meet in a suitable location (e.g. privacy);
- ✓ ensure confidentiality;
- ✓ show respect for the individual;
- ✓ listen carefully, put the employee at ease (the purpose of the interview is to find a solution, not to discourage the employee);
- ✓ observe non-verbal communication signals and body movements;
- ✓ use a tone of voice that demonstrates concern rather than anger or discipline;
- ✓ control voice volume;
- ✓ recognize that the choice of spoken words will affect the outcome of the meeting;
- ✓ allow the employee the opportunity to comment.

The interview concludes with a mutual plan. This will include:

1. outlining the problem and the plan for correcting it;
2. describing future goals; expectations and timeframe for improvement (recommended as 3 months);
3. monitoring employee attendance during the defined timeframe.

*** Be sure to document the meeting.**

Most attendance issues can be resolved if the situation is handled properly. Remember, unless there is evidence to the contrary, the supervisor always assumes that an absence situation is one of **innocent or non-culpable absenteeism and therefore, is not subject to disciplinary action.**

Suggested Answers to Questions Frequently Asked During Attendance Interviews

Q. We have 180 days sick leave available to us for when we need it. Why am I being talked to about my use of sick leave?

A. Regular attendance on the job is a reasonable expectation. The University does offer support by providing you with sick benefits, but we also want to work with you to help meet your employment obligation of regular attendance.

Q. The attendance of many others is much worse than mine. Why have I been singled out for an interview when others who have worse attendance than mine have not been talked to?

A. This meeting has been arranged to discuss your attendance. It would not be appropriate to discuss another individual's attendance record in this meeting.

Q. I have medical certificates for every one of the days you mentioned. Don't you realize that I was sick on each one of those days?

A. Yes, I realize you were sick on those days and I do not believe you have been abusing the sick leave policy. If I did, I would be considering a disciplinary process.

Q. I am dealing with some medical issues that may require me to be off work from time-to-time. What if I can't be at work on a regular basis?

A. Most importantly, I want to ensure that you are making use of all the supports available to improve your health situation and attendance. If your illness or disability is contributing to your attendance difficulties, we can get Employee Wellness involved to assist you further.

General Statement:

I am concerned that you are unable to be at work on a regular basis and that your absences have resulted in unsatisfactory attendance. Good attendance is a requirement of your position. We are entitled to expect a reasonable level of attendance from you. Your absences create staffing problems and increase workload for other staff. I would like to be able to provide you with support or resources that would help you with this problem. If there is a medical problem, it will benefit all to ensure that you seek advice and resources to remedy the situation. If you have a medical condition that may require accommodation, I can refer you to the accommodation specialist in Human Resources.

Conclusion

It is important to note that most attendance issues are resolved early in the process. While the steps described in the latter part of this section are occasionally necessary, in the majority of cases, the situation is resolved before it is necessary to terminate employment. Through implementation of positive actions suggested earlier in this guide, such as counselling the employee and ensuring that the employee is aware of the resources available to assist with their individual situation, the supervisor will encourage and support the employee in achieving and maintaining good attendance.

Appendix 1: Attendance Management – Interview Checklist

Important: the purpose of the meeting is to raise the employee’s awareness of the attendance problem, inform him/her that the department is concerned, identify solutions and encourage improvement.

Name: _____ Date of Interview: _____

- Regular attendance on the job is a reasonable expectation. Inform the employee that the University wishes to manage employee attendance through a positive, supportive environment that promotes optimum attendance.
- Explain that absenteeism results in operational difficulties, affecting not only individual employees, but also coworkers & the operations of the organization. Managing attendance can improve service, increase productivity & retain staff.
- Provide the employee with a copy of his/her attendance record for review. Discuss the attendance concern, not other issues.
- Advise that the purpose of the interview is to find a solution – allow the employee the opportunity to comment – listen carefully.

Note: If at any point during the discussion, the employee communicates that the attendance difficulties are the direct result of an identified illness or disability the supervisor needs to involve Employee Wellness to discuss whether accommodation is appropriate.

- Offer to assist the employee in identifying resources that may be of benefit, such as the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP).
- Stress the requirement for improvement and inform the employee that his/her attendance will continue to be monitored. *(Failure to achieve attendance target potentially could result in change in employment status from F/T to P/T or casual, or in termination – to be raised with employee at Step 2 onward).*
- Document the discussion:

Template A – Attendance Management Program (Step 1)

[*Insert Date*]

Name

Address (OR Hand Delivered)

Dear [*Insert Name*]:

Re: Attendance Management Program – Step 1

This will confirm our conversation of [*Insert Date*], at which time we discussed your record of attendance and enrolment in Step 1 of the Attendance Management Program. During the past [*number*] weeks you have been absent on [*number*] occasions for a total of [*number*] days. A record of your sick leave is attached for your information.

As discussed, we are concerned for your wellbeing and for your apparent need for frequent use of sick leave. We also need to consider the impact your absences have on the work unit as unwelcome stress may be placed on your coworkers to help cover your duties. Frequent absences hinder the planning, organization, completion of work, and quality of services. The University's requirement for all employees is regular and consistent attendance for their scheduled hours.

Your attendance record will be closely monitored and reviewed again in three months. Given the importance of regular attendance, I would encourage you to work towards achieving improvement in this area. Failure to demonstrate significant improvement in attendance in line with the University average (ten days per year) will result in moving you to Step 2 of the Attendance Management Program.

If you need help with any personal issues, you can contact the Employee and Family Assistance Program at 1-800-387-4765. This is a free and confidential counseling service available to all University of Manitoba employees and their families. If you have a medical illness or disability that is contributing to your attendance difficulties, a referral can be made to Employee Wellness who can assist in determining whether or not accommodation is appropriate.

Sincerely,

[*Insert Name*], Supervisor

c.c. [*Insert Name*], Manager
 [*Insert Name*], HR Consultant

Template B – Congratulatory Letter

[Insert Date]

Name

Address (OR Hand Delivered)

Dear *[Insert Name]*:

Re: Absenteeism

A review of your attendance record for the period X to Y indicates you recorded no sick leave absences.

I am writing to congratulate you for your excellent attendance. The Department is extremely pleased with your efforts and obvious dedication to maintaining regular and reliable attendance. While your attendance record will continue to be monitored on a regular basis, your improvement bodes well for the months to come.

I would like to extend to you the University's appreciation in this regard and encourage you to maintain your ongoing commitment.

Yours truly,

[Insert Name], Supervisor

cc: *[Insert Name]*, Manager
[Insert Name], Human Resources Consultant

Template C – Improvement Letter

[*Insert Date*]

Name

Address (OR Hand Delivered)

Dear [*Insert Name*]:

Re: Absenteeism

I am writing to confirm our meeting held on [*Insert Date*].

Several months ago we reviewed your attendance record and found that some improvements were required. You will recall that you were also advised that your attendance record would continue to be monitored closely and reviewed further in three months.

Assessment of your attendance for the period X to Y reveals you recorded [*Insert No or Very Few*] sick leave absences during this period. I want to commend you for the effort you have made and the resulting improvement in your attendance.

While your attendance record will continue to be monitored on a regular basis, your improvement bodes well for the months to come.

Keep up the good work!

Yours truly,

[*Insert Name*], Supervisor

cc: [*Insert Name*], Manager
[*Insert Name*], Human Resources Consultant

Template D – 1 Year Sustained Improvement

[*Insert Date*]

Name

Address (OR Hand Delivered)

Dear [*Insert Name*]:

Re: Absenteeism

I am writing to confirm our meeting held on [*Insert Date*].

A review of your attendance record indicates that you drew X days of sick leave in [*year*], X days in [*year*] and X days so far in [*year*].

As has been indicated to you in the past, the efficient operation of the Department depends on good attendance. Unscheduled absences reduce the Department's ability to plan, organize and carry out its activities. Continual absences undermine employee reliability and may result in increased staffing or overtime costs, stress on co-workers, and an inability of the unit to fulfil its mission.

Your record for the past 12 months reveals that your attendance has improved dramatically and you have been able to minimize your absences for an extended period of time. We are very pleased and would like to recognize your efforts and congratulate you on this improvement.

Recognizing that you have met your attendance targets, no further meetings will be required as long as an acceptable attendance record is maintained. However, your attendance will continue to be monitored and you will be returned to the Attendance Management Program, at a Step that reflects your prior history in the program, if you are not able to sustain your attendance at an acceptable level. I trust that a return to the program will not be necessary and you will maintain an acceptable attendance record on a go-forward basis.

Thank you again for your efforts and diligence in improving your attendance.

Yours truly,

[*Insert Name*], Supervisor

cc: [*Insert Name*], Manager
HR File

Template E - Relapse

[*Insert Date*]

Name

Address (OR Hand Delivered)

Dear [*Insert Name*]:

Re: Absenteeism

I am writing to confirm our meeting held on [*Insert Date*].

In a letter dated X, following an initial three-month review of your attendance, I noted that your attendance record had improved and congratulated you for your efforts.

However, the Department is concerned about your frequent use of sick leave during the current review period. A review of your record for the period X to Y reveals that you have drawn an additional X days of sick leave (a copy of your most recent attendance record is attached). While the validity of your use of sick leave is not being questioned, the efficient operation of the Department depends on good attendance. Unscheduled absences reduce the Department's ability to plan, organize and carry out its activities. Continual absences undermine employee reliability and may result in increased staffing and overtime costs.

Although you have been given an opportunity to improve your attendance, it appears that you have not maintained your initial improvement. Accordingly, your attendance record will again be monitored closely over the next three months and immediate and significant improvement is required. A meeting will be scheduled with you at that time to discuss your progress.

I would also like to take the opportunity to remind you again that if you are experiencing personal difficulties which you feel may be affecting your attendance, the University has an Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP). The EFAP is a voluntary, confidential counselling service for University employees and their families. The EFAP service can be reached at 1-800-387-4765.

Yours truly,

[*Insert Name*], Supervisor

Attachment

cc: [*Insert Name*], Manager
[*Insert Name*], Human Resources Consultant

Template F - Step 2 (Attendance Review Meeting)

[*Insert Date*]

Name

Address (OR Hand Delivered)

Dear [*Insert Name*]:

Re: Attendance Management Program – Step 2

I am writing to confirm our meeting held on [*Insert Date*], at which time you were informed that you are now in Step 2 of the Attendance Management Program. In a letter dated [*Insert Date*], you were advised that your attendance record was of concern and that improvement was required. You were further advised that your attendance would be monitored closely and reviewed in three months.

A review of your attendance for the period X to Y reveals that you drew an additional X days of sick leave (please see attached copy of your attendance record). While the validity of your use of sick leave is not being questioned, the efficient operation of the Department depends on good attendance. Unscheduled absences reduce the Department's ability to plan, organize and carry out its activities. Continual absences undermine employee reliability and may result in increased staffing or overtime costs.

Although you have been given an opportunity to improve your attendance, significant improvement has not materialized. While we sympathize with your situation, the Department cannot accommodate ongoing absences without information to substantiate your need for accommodation. Accordingly, your attendance record will again be monitored closely over the next three months and immediate and significant improvement is required. A meeting will be scheduled with you at that time to discuss your progress. Failure to demonstrate significant improvement in attendance in line with the University average (ten days per year) will result in moving you to Step 3 of the Attendance Management Program.

I would also like to take the opportunity to remind you again that if you are experiencing personal difficulties which you feel may be affecting your attendance, the University has an Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP). The EFAP is a voluntary, confidential counselling service for University employees and their families. The EFAP service can be reached at 1-800-387-4765.

Yours truly,

[*Insert Name*], Supervisor

cc: [*Insert Name*], Manager
[*Insert Name*], Human Resources Consultant

Template G – Step 3 (Attendance Management Meeting)

[Insert Date]

Name

Address (OR Hand Delivered)

Dear [Insert Name]:

Re: Attendance Management Program – Step 3

I am writing to confirm our meeting held on [Insert Date], at which time you were informed that you are now in Step 3 of the Attendance Management Program.

By letters dated X and Y, you were advised your attendance was unacceptable to this Department. You were further advised that significant improvement was required and that your attendance would be reviewed in three months.

A review of your attendance record from X to Y reveals that you have drawn an additional X days of sick leave (please see the attached copy of your most recent attendance record.) Although you have been given a number of opportunities to improve, and despite your commitment to maintain an acceptable level of attendance following the above noted meetings, no significant change has occurred. While we sympathize with your situation, the Department cannot accommodate ongoing absences without information to substantiate your need for accommodation.

Your attendance record indicates that you have claimed ___ sick days in (year), ___ sick days in (year), ___ sick days in (year), ___ sick days in (year) and ___ sick days so far this year. These ongoing absences place undue strain on staff and operations in general and the Department cannot permit this to continue. I must emphasize that your regular and reliable attendance at work is a requirement of your position.

I will take the opportunity to remind you again that if you are experiencing personal difficulties which you feel may be affecting your attendance, the University has an Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP). The EFAP is a voluntary, confidential counselling service for University employees and their families. The EFAP service can be reached at 1-800-387-4765.

Your attendance will again be monitored closely over the next three months. If immediate and significant improvement is not evident at the end of that period, the Department will be forced to take further action. A meeting will be scheduled with you at that time to discuss your progress.

Yours truly,

[Insert Name] Supervisor

cc: [Insert Name], Manager

[Insert Name], Human Resources Consultant

Template H – Step 4 (Attendance Management Hearing – Final Warning)

[Insert Date]

Name

Address (OR Hand Delivered)

Dear [Insert Name]:

Re: Absenteeism

The Department has written and met with you on a number of occasions (X times) regarding your frequent use of sick leave. On each occasion, you have been advised that, while you have otherwise been a valued member of the University, your attendance record has been unsatisfactory. You were further told your frequent absences were having an adverse effect on the Department's ability to carry out its work, and of our expectation for immediate and significant improvement. You were also informed that your attendance would be monitored on an ongoing basis.

A review of your attendance for the period X to Y indicates you have drawn an additional _____ days of sick leave. Although you have been given a number of opportunities to improve over the past _____ years/months, your attendance continues to be substantially below acceptable levels. We view this as a very serious matter, which has a significant negative impact on departmental operations.

If there is any underlying cause which may be affecting your ability to attend work on a regular and reliable basis, then we ask that you advise us at this time.

To ensure that you understand the gravity of this situation, the letter will constitute a FINAL opportunity to improve attendance. Failure to show an immediate and lasting improvement in your attendance at work will result in the termination of your employment, albeit for non-disciplinary reasons.

Yours truly,

[Insert Name], Manager

cc: [Insert Name], Supervisor
[Insert Name], Director
[Insert Name], Human Resources Consultant
[Insert Name], Union Representative

Template I – Termination Innocent Absenteeism

[Insert Date]

Name

Address

OR Hand Delivered

Dear [Insert Name]:

Re: Frustration of Employment Contract and Termination

This letter will confirm our meeting of [insert date] at which time you were advised that your employment contract with the University of Manitoba is deemed frustrated and as a consequence terminated effective immediately.

As you are aware, you have been through all stages of the Attendance Management Program and despite our repeated offers of assistance your attendance has failed to demonstrate a significant and sustained improvement. In addition, the University of Manitoba has previously advised you of the consequences related to your on-going failure to demonstrate significant and sustained improvement to your attendance.

We wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

Sincerely,

[Supervisor Name]

c.c. HR Consultant
Manager
Union Rep

Note:

This letter is only drafted as a last resort to the attendance management program, as the goal of the program is to inform employees of attendance problems and to work towards a resolution. Reaching this stage means that it has been determined that the employment relationship has broken down and there is no reasonable prospect for acceptable attendance in the foreseeable future.

Should an employee reach this stage, the supervisor and manager work closely with the Staff Relations Officer to review the employee's progress through the program and to discuss the termination process.