

Supporting Attendance at Work Program

Guidelines for Employees

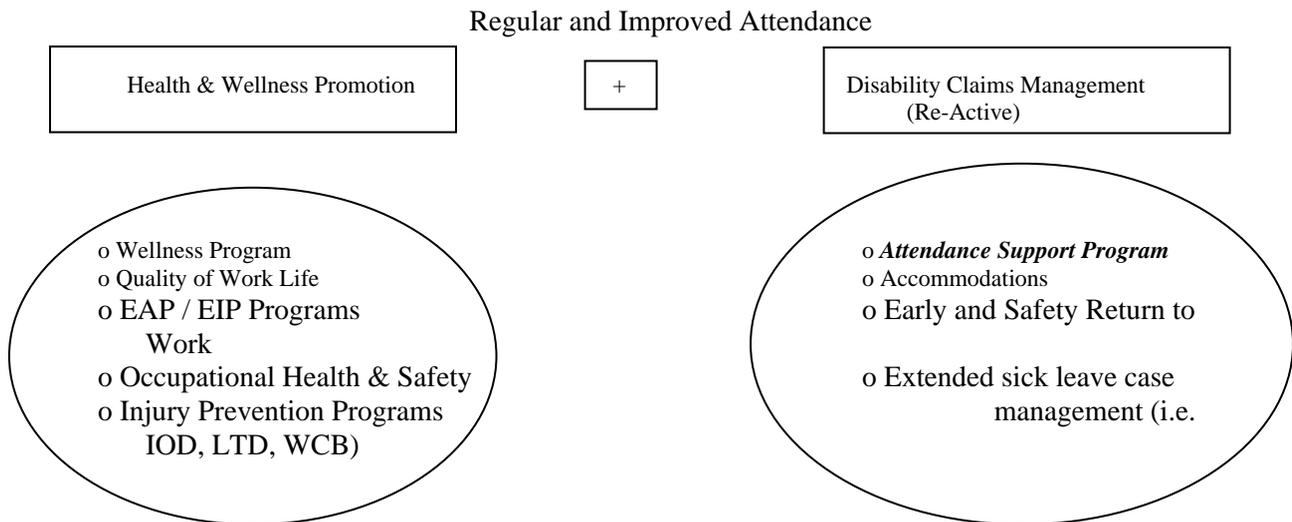
Introduction – Program Philosophy

The South Shore Regional School Board believes the performance of the organization is directly linked to the performance of individual employees. In order to perform our very best, the South Shore Regional School Board depends on a high quality delivery of service from our employees and their regular attendance at work is essential in achieving this standard. The Board recognizes its responsibility to provide a working environment that supports employee well-being and regular attendance at work. We believe that absences can be minimized through prevention, early intervention and individual case management, and that employee attendance issues are best resolved in a positive, supportive manner.

High levels of employee absenteeism leads to an interruption of service, lost productivity and a reduced sense of common purpose among co-workers. Consistent attendance management can have highly positive effects on the workplace. The Attendance Support Program recognizes the provisions of the applicable collective agreements and does not intend that ill or injured employees attend work if unable to do so.

This program defines the roles and responsibilities for individuals at every level of the organization in an effort to manage attendance issues co-operatively.

Consistent with the Early and Safe Return to Work Policy, the Attendance Support Program is intended to extend to employees the internal and/or external support and assistance that may be required to overcome issues that may impact their ability to attend work regularly or return to work.



Program Objectives

- To support and encourage employee well-being.
- To promote regular and consistent attendance at work.
- To provide guidelines for a consistent and fair process while providing individual flexibility as needed.
- To support and assist individual employees to achieve regular attendance.
- To provide a framework for responding to excessive absenteeism.

- To minimize absenteeism for SSRSB, which will sustain services to the students, maintain productivity, and decrease costs associated with employee absence.

Guiding Principles

The program was designed using certain assumptions and these are the principles within which the program operates. They are:

- Employees want to be at work, and administrators and managers want them to be at work and to be productive.
- Every absence is legitimate unless shown otherwise,
- SSRSB is committed to accommodating employees' health-related limitations. These limitations may affect their ability to perform their work, or their ability to be at work.
- Where an employee's inability to be at work is for non- health-related reasons, SSRSB will, when requested and whenever possible, work with our employee to identify possible solutions.
- Employees are committed to working with the Employer to find individual solutions.

Supporting Attendance at Work – Six Easy Steps

(Program Overview)

1. Human Resources monitors attendance reports and identifies the need for awareness with employee(s), or employee identifies a need for assistance through discussion.
2. Discussions and contact focus on reasons for the absence and on an employee's need for accommodation or assistance.
3. Discussions and contact are documented with goals and timelines.
4. Follow-up meetings will be held to review progress and continue planning, or to show the situation as resolved.
5. Further meetings will occur, as required, until resolution.
6. If progress is not made, or a situation is not resolved, a review team of employee, Supervisor / Administrator, Human Resources (HR), and as necessary a health practitioner will be consulted.

**Note: An employee may request a "Health Review" at any stage of the program. Employee may also request that their Employee Group Representative attend any scheduled Stage 1 or Stage 2 meetings.*

Partners in Solution

Responsibility for, and commitment to the Supporting Attendance at Work Program, exists at all levels of the organization.

Your Responsibilities as an Employee

- Strive to attend work for all of their scheduled work hours;
- Report occurrences of sick leave as required under the Absence Reporting below;
- Actively participate in the Attendance Support Program, return-to-work and/or accommodation processes as required;
- Provide medical certification of absence as required, in accordance with provisions of their collective agreement or terms and conditions of employment;

- Maintain ongoing and regular contact with his/her Administrator/Supervisor and / or HR department during longer term absence from work
- Request employee representation at his/her Stage meetings if desired;
- Identify attendance improvement strategies and goals with his/her manager or an HR representative

Your Administrator's/Supervisor's Responsibilities

- Foster a healthy and positive work environment.
- Treat employees fairly, consistently and in compliance with the guidelines of the South Shore Regional School Board Attendance Support Program, applicable collective agreement, and the benefits provisions.
- Raise awareness about the importance of regular attendance.
- Maintain, monitor and be accountable for attendance levels within their respective areas – monitor and manage situations where employees have excessive incidental or patterned absences in consultation with Human Resources.
- Understand the requirements for reporting and managing work-related and non-work-related illness and injury situations.
- Identify accommodation opportunities to allow employees to remain at work or to return to work in a safe and timely manner. Identify and plan modified work options or accommodations in consultation with the Human Resources Department and all necessary stakeholders when an accommodation has been requested.
- Maintain regular contact with an employee, as well as the Human Resources department, during the employee's absence from work.
- Attend Stage meetings as required by the program;
- Offer early assistance, through the Human Resources Department, to employees who may require it to attend work regularly;
- Recognize good and improved attendance.
- Safeguard the confidentiality of information.

Senior Manager's/Director's Responsibilities

- Incorporate annual goals related to establishing a healthy and safe work environment in the annual business plan; and
- Recognize the value of regular attendance and its link to student achievement; and
- Ensure that all Administrators / Supervisory Staff fulfill their responsibilities identified in this program.

Human Resources' Responsibilities

- Compile data on employee attendance;
- Report attendance data and trends to stakeholders, including Quarterly reports to Administrators / Supervisors;
- Review attendance data and trends and recommend program changes to improve work quality to the Board;
- Administer, monitor and evaluate the Attendance Support Program to ensure the program achieves organizational goals and contributes to the delivery of programs and services to the community.
- Monitor employee absenteeism records during their time in the Attendance Support program;
- Provide training and guidance on Attendance Support Program matters;

- Attend Stage meetings as required by the program;
- Provide consultation on work performance, health issues, employment accommodations and return-to-work issues; and
- Participate in the Attendance Support Program as the programs dictates.
- Recognize good attendance and positive participation in the program.

Suggested Union Responsibilities

- Support and advise the employee.
- Attend meetings with the employee as per the relevant collective agreement and assistance program.
- Raise awareness about the importance of regular attendance.

Supporting Attendance at Work – Intervention Steps

For the purposes of the Supporting Attendance at Work Program, employee absences in the following situations will prompt a review:

- Employees who exceed 10 days in a ten month period who do not have documentation on file. Follow up will occur every five months (as defined by the school year Set – June) thereafter.
- Employees that demonstrate an absence “pattern” that is unusual for that individual.

Definitions

Short-Term Absences

These are absences that usually last from a portion of one day to several days in duration.

“Patterned” Absences

“Patterned” Absences are defined as absences where there is a pattern of occurrences to an employee’s absence, for example:

- adjacent to days off, weekends or holidays
- particular days of the week each week, month or year
- days off after performance related matters are addressed
- days off after work assignments that the employee finds non- agreeable

This type of absence may indicate a problem which might benefit from intervention through EAP initiatives or discussions with direct supervisors and administrators about surrounding circumstances.

Extended Absences

These are absences where an employee is away from work for approximately two or more weeks (i.e: greater than 10 consecutive working days) or longer. Usually, these are infrequent and less disruptive as the period of absence is known and arrangements can normally be made to maintain operational continuity.

The scope of the Program will not apply to those instances of extended absences that:

- Are greater than 10 consecutive working days where the Disability Management process applies.
- Result from a Workplace Injury.

Case Review

The case review process ensures that the collection and consideration of all necessary information has taken place and includes the:

- Review of the attendance records of the work group,
- Identification of potential patterns, issues, improvements,
- Determination of the need for a letter or a meeting.
- Determination of whether there might be a need to arrange a discussion with Human Resources and/or the Supervisor, Manager and Senior Manager/Director about the situation.

Employee Meetings

Employee meetings are not intended to be disciplinary. The objective of the meeting(s) is to explore with the employee (while meeting employee privacy needs), the cause(s) of any difficulties affecting their ability to attend work and to identify potential solutions.

If there are accommodation and/or assistance requirements, they need to be identified and appropriately arranged. The proposed solution(s) needs to address the needs of Financial Services as well as those of the employee. Your manager will ensure that sufficient notice, time and privacy are available for all meetings and that you are aware of the option to bring a union representative to all meetings.

Despite the time you have spent in information sessions and in reading this manual, each time a meeting is held regarding attendance, the purpose and objectives of the Supporting Attendance at Work Program will be explained and the program Philosophy will be reviewed.

The purpose of the meeting and the roles and responsibilities of all involved in the meeting will be stated to remind you that the meeting is not disciplinary.

2. Review

- Your absences will be reviewed; HR personnel will be specific and will only deal with facts,
- Pertinent information will be elicited and a discussion with a view to problem solving will be encouraged. **You are not required to disclose confidential medical information to management.**
- Judgement will not be passed, but relevant facts will be reviewed and acceptable goals for improvement established.

3. Plan for Support

- Management 's commitment to accommodate employees when possible will be reinforced.
- Your input as well as that from your union representative about possible solutions and goals for improvement will be sought and is appreciated.

- The discussion will be about solutions, and timing and goals for attendance support.
- An Attendance Support Plan will be completed.

4. Closing the Discussion

- Together, the Plan for Improvement that has been mutually agreed to will be summarized.
- A date for a follow-up meeting will be set.

Post-Meeting Activities

Whenever meetings are held, the result of all meetings (accommodation, assistance, other solution, no action etc.) will be documented and notes retained for future reference. In all instances, you will be provided with a copy of the agreed- upon plan.

Follow-up meetings will be established to review progress. In all instances, even when no action is considered necessary, at least one follow-up meeting will occur to ensure that the situation has been resolved and to confirm that accommodation, assistance or other action is still not required. Assuming that there will be improvement, these meetings will be used to reinforce our commitment to the program and to you.

Continued contact and open communication are important aspects of case management under this program. At all meetings, the HR representative will:

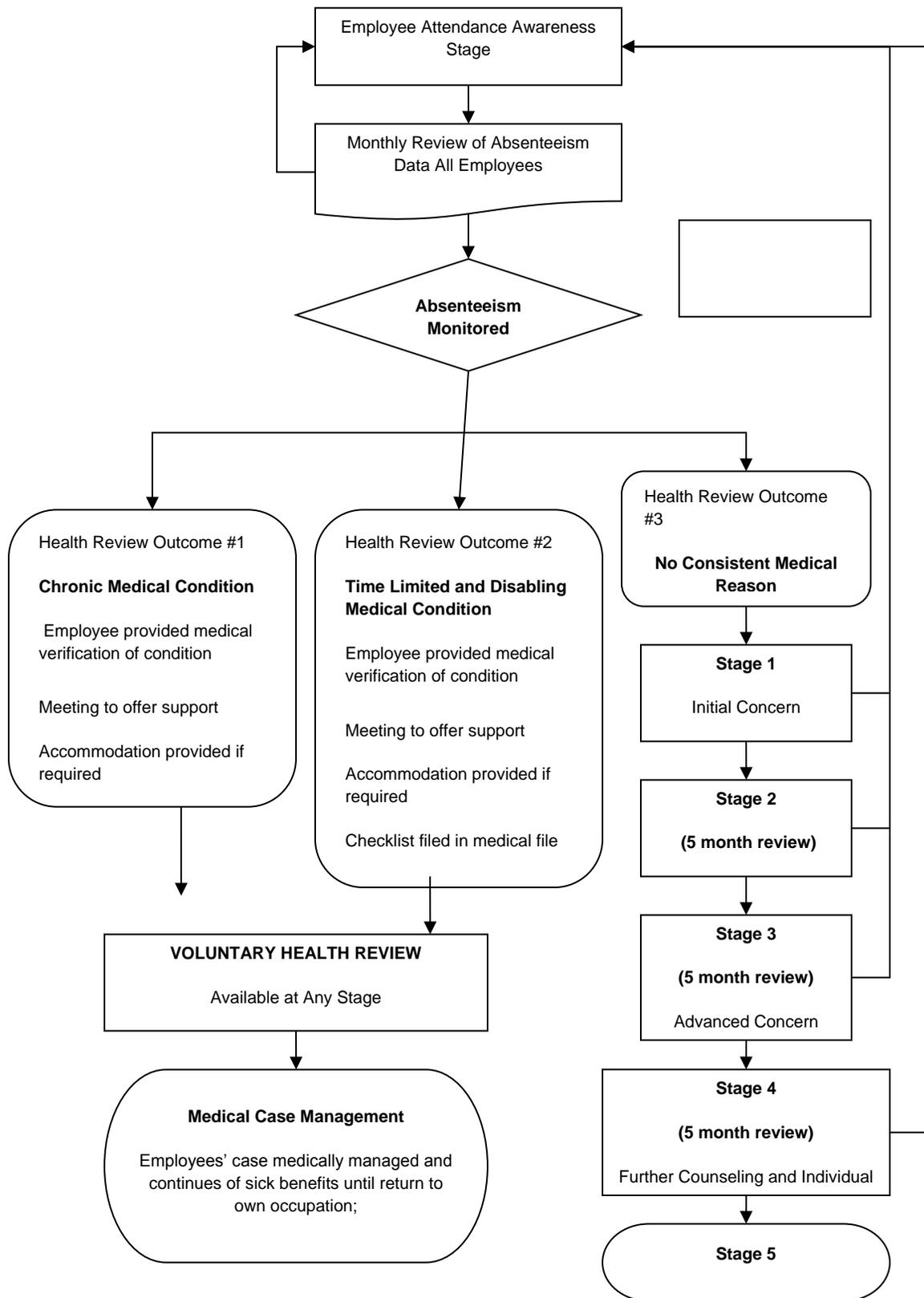
- Ensure that you are aware of the option to bring a union representative with you.
- Review notes, action plans and solution(s) developed at previous meetings.
- Review data concerning absences since the last meeting, noting improvements and difficulties.
- Review reasons given for any absences.
- Discuss, progress, new goals and/or revised solutions with you.
- Be ready to hear new information and to collaborate on problem solving.

Employee Assistance

All employees have access to Employee Assistance programs that are supportive in helping them remain at or return to work. They focus on a healthy and engaged employee working in a safe and supportive environment. Access to the programs is on a self-referral basis and contact information is available from your Supervisor / Administrator.

Summary

The Human Resources Department is available at any time to discuss this program, and/or to assist you with accommodation or employee assistance that you may require. Please contact any one of these individuals for help, should you need it.



4.2 The Attendance Support Program – Summary

The Attendance Support Program consists of the following stages:

- **Employee Attendance Awareness State**

- ❖ Monthly review of absenteeism data

- **Stage 1* - Initial Concern**

- Meeting occurs
 - 4-month attendance review period.

- **Stage 2* – Further Concern**

- Meeting occurs
 - 4-month attendance review period.

- **Stage 3* - Advanced Concern**

- Meeting occurs
 - 4-month attendance review period and 8 month monitoring.

- **Stage 4* - Counseling and Individual Plan**

- Meeting with manager, Human Resources and Worker Representative.
 - 4-month attendance review period and 16 month monitoring.

- **Stage 5* - Individual Decision Made**

- Follows Collective Agreement provisions: decision made on individual case

**Note: An employee may request a “Health Review” at any stage of the program. Employee may also request that their Employee Group Representative attend any scheduled Stage 1 or Stage 2 meetings.*