

Topic:	Absence Reporting
Effective:	January 2012
Cross-Reference:	Administrative Procedure – Attendance Support Program; Confidentiality of Medical Records; Disability Management – Early Intervention, Accommodations and Return to Work; Attendance Management; Progressive Discipline
Review/Revision Date:	January 2014
Responsibility:	Executive Officer of Human Resources

INTENDED PURPOSE:

It is the expectation of the Halton District School Board that each employee attends work regularly and punctually. However, the Employer understands that from time to time, employees may be unable to attend work due to personal illness or injury. The Employer provides sick leave benefits to accommodate employees who are medically unable to attend work.

This procedure outlines the process and expectations for the use of sick leave and reporting absences from work. It is to ensure that absences are reported correctly and sick leave benefits are used appropriately.

The Employee Health Services Department will maintain the confidentiality of medical documents, as defined in the Confidentiality of Medical Records administrative procedure, for the purpose of this Absence Reporting administrative procedure.

PROCEDURE:**1.0 Definitions**

- 1.1 Non-Culpable Absenteeism or innocent absenteeism refers to employees who are absent through no fault of their own due to medical and/or personal reasons. These absences, at an excessive or frequent rate, may be addressed through the process of the Attendance Management Program or the Disability Management Program. Entry into either of these programs is dependent on the criteria outlined in the respective administrative procedures and can include multiple or patterned single day and/or consecutive day absences.
- 1.2 Culpable Absenteeism refers to absences that the employee has control over and that are within the employee's power. These will be addressed through the appropriate collective agreement/terms and conditions of employment and/or the Employer's Progressive Discipline administrative procedure.

2.0 Single (1) day absences

- 2.1 An employee that is unable to attend work due to personal illness or injury must notify the Principal/Supervisor/Manager or designate immediately to allow for appropriate coverage. The employee must indicate, in general terms, the reason for the absence, i.e. due to accident, illness, contractual, etc.

- 2.2 Attendance on PA days, on days following and/or preceding holidays (e.g. winter break, March break, long weekends etc.), and on days marked by significant events (e.g. an international sport event etc.) is expected. The Employer may monitor absences on these specific days, including those that have been booked in advance, and request appropriate medical documentation supporting the absence, if sick leave has been accessed.
 - 2.3 The Employer may request an employee to provide medical documentation for any given absence.
 - 2.4 When the Employer directly requests medical documentation, the Employer will cover the cost associated with obtaining said documentation upon the provision of an original invoice.
 - 2.5 Employees are required to enter his/her absence on the Halton Absence Reporting and Replacement Information system (HARRI) through telephone or Internet to allow for necessary coverage. The correct absence code and project code, if applicable, must be entered to classify the employee's absence.
 - 2.6 The absence code for illness is to be entered directly by the employee. Pre-approved absences, as listed in the HARRI documentation, can only be entered once Human Resources has given approval.
 - 2.7 For pre-approved absences, as mentioned in 2.6, an Absence Approval Form must be completed by the employee's Principal/Supervisor/Manager or designate and sent electronically, as an email attachment, to the respective Human Resources Administrator. The request will then be reviewed and returned electronically. If approval is obtained, it is at this point only that the absence can be entered into HARRI.
- 3.0 Absences of more than **five (5)** consecutive working days related to illness or injury:
- 3.1 When an employee is aware that s/he is going to be absent for more than five (5) consecutive working days, the employee will notify his/her Principal/Supervisor/ Manager or designate immediately of the absence indicating, in general terms, the reason for the absence, i.e. due to accident, illness, contractual, etc.
 - 3.2 The Principal/Supervisor/Manager or designate shall indicate to the employee that a member of the Employee Health Services Department or designate will be notified of the absences to enable early intervention and to facilitate a safe and timely return to work.
 - 3.3 The Principal/Supervisor/Manager or designate will notify a member of the Employee Health Services Department or designate by email, fax or telephone.
 - 3.4 A member of the Employee Health Services Department or designate may require the employee to provide documentation completed by the appropriate treating medical practitioner that may include the following information:
 - i. A Functional Abilities Form or Standard Medical Certificate that describes the medically-supported restrictions and/or limitations the employee is experiencing in relation to the essential duties of his/her position;
 - ii. Confirmation that the employee is participating in the appropriate treatment to expedite the employee's safe and timely return to work;
 - iii. Expected date employee could participate in the Return-to-Work Program with appropriate modifications/accommodations based on restrictions/limitations;

- iv. Expected return-to-work date at regular hours and duties and any other information required to safely return the employee to work in a timely manner;
 - v. Treating medical practitioner's name, address, phone number and fax number; and
 - vi. Treating medical practitioner's signature.
- 3.5 Unless otherwise arranged, this medical documentation must be submitted by the employee or appropriate treating medical practitioner to a member of the Employee Health Services Department or designate within ten (10) working days of the date of the request. If the employee is having difficulty obtaining the appropriate documentation within this timeframe, the employee will discuss the matter directly with a member of the Employee Health Services Department.

The Employer must exercise discretion in each case in determining whether to ask for a medical certificate in accordance with 2.0 and 3.0 of this administrative procedure. In the event that the Principal/Supervisor/Manager or designate believes that medical documentation is required for any absence less than 5 consecutive days, they will contact the Halton District School Board's Attendance Support Officer prior to making the request to the employee.

4.0 Sick Leave Benefit:

- 4.1 As outlined below, an employee may access sick leave benefits if s/he becomes injured or ill and has a credit of unused sick leave.
- 4.2 An employee may access sick leave benefits if s/he is ill or injured and incapacitated from working or disabled, which is defined as a state of incapacity due to bodily injury or sickness, preventing the employee from working for the Employer for remuneration.
- 4.3 The Employer encourages employees to schedule preventative medical or dental appointments outside of the employee's regular working hours. However, if the appointment cannot reasonably be scheduled outside of the employee's regular working hours, then the employee may access his/her sick leave benefits to attend the appointment.

4.4 Sick leave benefits are not payable:

- i. In cases which are compensable by the Workplace Safety & Insurance Board, excluding top-up;
- ii. For 12-month employees during scheduled vacation unless the illness requires hospitalization;
- iii. In place of vacation or lieu days or to tend to other personal issues related to family, such as a dependent that is ill or injured, except in the case of approved Personal Business or Emergency Family Illness absences as defined in the employee's Collective Agreement/Terms and Conditions of Employment;
- iv. When an employee is on an authorized unpaid leave of absence;
- v. When an employee does not have available sick credits or a bank of sick days;
- vi. While in receipt of full Long Term Disability Benefits;
- vii. When appropriate medical documentation has been requested and has not been received. In the event that the employee refuses to provide appropriate medical documentation, the Employer may take appropriate disciplinary action; or
- viii. When a reasonable offer, by the Employer, of accommodations has been provided.

- 4.5 To be eligible for sick leave benefits, the employee must follow the Employer's procedures for reporting absences related to illness or injury and for returning to work.
- 4.6 The Employer will endeavour to accommodate the return to work and placement of employees with a temporary, permanent, and/or partial disability in accordance with the Disability Management – Early Intervention, Accommodations and Return to Work administrative procedure, as well as any applicable statutory obligations.
- 4.7 Access to sick leave benefits may be denied for failure to provide all appropriate medical documentation requested. Appropriate medical documentation refers to, but is not limited to, medically supported restrictions and/or limitations as they relate to the employee's ability to meet the essential duties of their position. It is the employee's responsibility to submit appropriate documentation to a member of the Employee Health Services Department or designate, as applicable.
- 4.8 In order to maintain access to sick leave benefits, a member of the Employee Health Services Department or designate may request the employee to have a Functional Abilities Evaluation completed to determine the employee's restrictions and/or limitations related to the employee's position and/or to attend an Independent Medical Examination (IME). This will assist in providing return-to-work and/or accommodation options. In requesting the IME, the following protocol will apply:
 - i. If a member of the Employee Health Services Department or designate reasonably requires medical information to determine whether an employee is able to return to work or should properly remain off of work and in receipt of sick leave benefits, a member of the Employee Health Services Department or designate shall so advise the employee in writing and request that such information be provided;
 - ii. The employee is required to provide the requested medical documentation to a member of the Employee Health Services Department or designate in response to the request;
 - iii. A member of the Employee Health Services Department or designate will review the documentation provided by the employee. If the member of the Employee Health Services Department or designate is not satisfied with the adequacy of the medical information provided, s/he will clearly identify in writing to the employee why the information is not adequate;
 - iv. The employee will be given an opportunity to provide the member of the Employee Health Services Department or designate with further medical information;
 - v. The member of the Employee Health Services Department or designate will review any further documentation provided by the employee. If the entirety of the medical documentation provided does not reasonably permit the member of the Employee Health Services Department or designate to determine whether the employee should return to work or remain off of work, the employee may be requested to submit to an IME; and
 - vi. If the employee fails to attend the IME or does not, prior to the IME, provide the member of the Employee Health Services Department or designate with further medical information to reasonably permit the member of the Employee Health Services Department or designate to determine whether the employee should return to work or remain off of work, the employee's access to sick leave benefits may be discontinued.

5.0 Responsibilities of the Employee:

- i. To report absences to HARRI, unless the employee is incapacitated and unable to do so. Failure to report absences at the first opportunity in accordance with these procedures may result in denial of pay and/or sick leave.
- ii. To indicate, in general terms, the reason for the absence, i.e. due to accident, illness, contractual, etc.
- iii. To notify his/her Principal/Supervisor/Manager or designate of all absences by phone call, preferably; however, email is acceptable. If not immediately available, the Principal/Supervisor/ Manager may return the call. The Principal/Supervisor/Manager will make the decision of whom the direct contact for absences will be. Unless previously discussed with the Principal/Supervisor/Manager prior to the absence(s), the employee is to report (call or email) each day of absence.
- iv. In cases where the Employer is not directly requesting medical documentation but the employee is providing it to obtain a leave, the employee is to assume responsibility for the costs associated with the initial documentation from the appropriate treating medical practitioner in relation to the absence. Costs associated with subsequent request(s) for medical documentation by a member of the Employee Health Services Department or designate, will be borne by the Employer, upon submission of an original invoice.
- v. To be eligible for sick leave benefits, employees may be required to provide satisfactory medical documentation completed by the appropriate treating medical practitioner, in accordance with 2.0 and 3.0 of this procedure.
- vi. To maintain regular contact with the Principal/Supervisor/Manager during his/her absence when s/he is unable to perform the essential duties of the position due to disability.
- vii. To participate in appropriate treatment, as determined by the treating medical practitioner(s), to ensure a safe and timely return to work.
- viii. To participate in the development of his/her return-to-work plan, including taking the proposed return-to-work plan (including accommodations and/or modifications) to the appropriate treating medical practitioner(s) for approval, if necessary.

6.0 Responsibilities of the Principal/Supervisor/Manager:

- i. To communicate the Attendance Support Program procedures and guidelines to the employee.
- ii. To ensure the daily maintenance of accurate, up-to-date records regarding employees' absences as designated by Human Resources.
- iii. To monitor individual employee absenteeism records as designated by Human Resources.
- iv. To receive call-ins or return employees' calls, when necessary, should a message be received from employees, and determine the reason for absence.
- v. To ensure employee confidentiality in relation to absences and medical information.
- vi. To contact a member of the Employee Health Services Department or designate for assistance when restrictions and /or limitations have been identified.
- vii. To forward all medical documentation (if received) directly to the Employee Health Services Department or designate in a secure and confidential manner.
- viii. To advise employees of their obligation to provide satisfactory written proof of disability, as required, confirming disability and ensuring continued payment of sick leave benefits. Principals/Supervisors/Managers shall not require an employee to sign a release to authorize collection of medical information.

- ix. To participate in the development of the employee's return-to-work plan, including providing accommodations and/or modifications to the employee's duties and/or hours, based on recommendations from a member of the Employee Health Services Department or designate.

7.0 Responsibilities of the Disability Management Coordinator or Designate:

- i. To request proof of continuing disability from the employee in the case of absences exceeding ten (10) consecutive working days, at appropriate intervals, in order to maintain sick leave benefits or determine if participation in a Return-to-Work Program is appropriate.
- ii. To receive all medical documentation required and provide support to the employee during their time of disability.
- iii. To assist the Principal/Supervisor/Manager by maintaining contact with employees with a disability for more than ten (10) consecutive working days, verifying that the employee is under the active care of the appropriate medical practitioner and following an appropriate treatment plan, and advise the Principal/Supervisor/Manager of the expected return-to-work date, when known.
- iv. To develop an appropriate return-to-work plan (including appropriate accommodation and/or modification recommendations) based on the employee's restrictions and/or limitations.

8.0 Responsibilities of Superintendent(s)/ Executive Officer of Human Resources

- i. It is the responsibility of the appropriate Superintendent/Executive Officer of Human Resources to administer this procedure and program guidelines.
- ii. The appropriate Superintendent/Executive Officer of Human Resources shall review this procedure on a regular basis or as required by legislative change.

For further direction beyond this procedure, refer to the Disability Management – Early Intervention, Accommodations and Return to Work Administrative Procedure.