



work  well

The word "work" is in a blue, sans-serif font. The icon consists of two stylized human figures, one orange and one green, overlapping in a circular arrangement. The word "well" is in a blue, cursive script font.

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## 1. Program Philosophy

In order to meet the needs of our Group Health Centre employees and provide a high level of service, The Group Health Centre depends on the contribution of its employees and their regular attendance at work is essential in achieving these goals. The Group Health Centre 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 poorer quality of service, lost productivity and reduced morale and engagement of co-workers. Consistent attendance support can have highly positive effects on the workplace. The Attendance Support Program recognizes the provisions of the applicable collective agreements and standard operating procedures 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 resolve attendance issues co-operatively. **The Attendance Support Program is not disciplinary.**

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 program, such as counseling the employee and ensuring that the employee is aware of the resources available to assist with their individual situation, the Manager will encourage and support the employee in achieving and maintaining good attendance.

## 2. Program Objectives

- To promote regular and consistent attendance at work;
- To support and encourage employee well-being;
- To provide guidelines for a consistent and equitable 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.

## 3. Partners in Solution

The responsibility for, and commitment to the Group Health Centre Attendance Support Program, exists at all levels of the organization. Successful attendance support is dependent upon the commitment of all employees. Outlined below are some of the key responsibilities of the various participants who will impact the success of the program.

**Employees** are responsible for the following:

- To attend work on time and regularly

- To attend to personal affairs and obligations outside of working hours when practical
- To facilitate early notification of absence(s) and to follow absenteeism reporting procedures in accordance with the applicable collective agreements and standard operating procedures.
- To provide suitable documentation as required by the applicable collective agreement, standard operating procedure and/or the Short Term Disability Support Program to support the absence from work, the return to work and any required accommodation to remain or return to work.
- To maintain regular contact with supervisor and/or manager during absence.

**Management/Supervisors** are responsible for the following:

- To treat employees fairly, consistently, equitably and in compliance with the guidelines of the Group Health Centre Attendance Support Program, applicable collective agreement, standard operating procedure and the Short Term Disability Support Program
- To foster a healthy and positive work environment.
- To raise awareness about the importance of regular attendance
- To recognize exemplary attendance for the individual employee's ability within the context of the individual
- To 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 HR.
- To understand the requirements for reporting and managing work-related and non work-related illness and injury situations.
- To identify Accommodation opportunities to allow employees to remain at work or return to work in a safe and timely manner. Identify and plan modified work options or accommodations.

**Human Resources** are responsible for the following:

- To provide coaching, advice and training to management on implementation of the program.
- To provide advice and assistance to supervisors/managers on individual cases.
- To attend initial and follow-up employee meetings when requested to do so.
- To create and update tools and guidelines necessary for program delivery
- To facilitate communication with employee, department and treating sources to obtain medical substantiation of absences.
- To implement and support work accommodation plans for employees at work and returning to work.
- To serve as a confidential source for employee medical information and/or WSIB

## 4. Nature of Employment Relationship

Employment relationships are contractual in nature; that is, in return for remuneration, the employee performs work assigned to them. If the employee is not able to live up to their part of the employment relationship, the contract may be terminated for frustration. The point of frustration will be reached when the employee has chronic absenteeism and there is no prospect of it improving in the reasonable foreseeable future. Before reaching the point of frustration, the Group Health Centre will provide the employee with coaching. This coaching may assist an employee in getting support (Employee Assistance Program), it may provide the incentive for an employee to seek medical attention or take more precautions to protect their health, and it

provides the employee with an understanding of the requirements and status of the employment relationship. Employees will be warned when their absenteeism is unacceptable, and may be told if their rate of absenteeism does not show significant and sustained improvement, dismissal may result.

## 5. Types of Absenteeism

Absences that will require some type of employer intervention are identified under two different categories: non-culpable and culpable. It is essential that these two types of absences are differentiated, recorded separately and resolved differently.

### Non-Culpable Absenteeism

#### *Innocent Absenteeism*

Situations in which an employee is away from work too frequently and yet has genuine and documented reasons for the absences are presumed to be innocent. Innocent absenteeism is non-culpable behavior, meaning that it is non-blameworthy.

Some 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;
- Unplanned absences regardless of credits used to cover the absence.

#### *Patterned Absenteeism*

Patterned 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 (ie. No reasonable explanation is given for the absences and it is not substantiated by acceptable suitable documentation) the absence may be considered culpable and disciplinary action may be required. Like other short term absences, the negative impact on operations and on the work environment increases with the frequency of these absences.

“Patterned” absenteeism may take the form of absences that occur:

- On particular days of the week;
- Adjacent to scheduled days off and/or weekends;
- On particular days of the week each week, month or year;
- On days off after performance related matters are addressed;
- On days off after work assignments that the employee finds non-agreeable;
- And/or appear on the surface to be suspicious.

### Culpable Absenteeism

These are unauthorized absences which are within the employee’s control and may warrant a disciplinary response. The following are situations of culpable absence:

- Excessive lateness;
- False explanation for an absence;
- No reason is provided for the absence (absence without leave);
- Unsubstantiated absence, where evidence of the reason is required;
- The reason for the absence is not legitimate;

- Failure to call in and report, as per collective agreement provisions or standard operating procedures;
- Does not provide suitable documentation when required.

## 6. Attendance Support Qualifying Criteria

When determining if an Attendance Support Review is required, the Manager needs to establish if the employee has met the qualifying criterion to warrant placement into the Attendance Support Program.

The number of incidents of absence and length of absence are important in determining the approach that should be taken in handling attendance issues.

For example one incident of twenty days absence due to a bona fide illness is handled differently than twenty separate incidents of one each day. All absences have an adverse impact on the workplace, however, a single, lengthy illness or injury will not usually be categorized as problem absenteeism where an employee's previous attendance record has been acceptable and is expected to return to satisfactory levels after the current absence is resolved.

### ***Criteria to enter the Attendance Support Program***

The criterion for placement in the Attendance Support Program is met when an employee meets or exceeds four (4) separate incidents of absence in a three (3) month period.

### ***Criteria to move up a stage in the Program***

Employees will move up a stage in the Attendance Support Program when number of incidents of absence is greater than four (4) or more in a three (3) months period.

### ***Criteria to move down a stage in the Program***

If the number of instances of absences are three (3) or less in a three (3) month period, the employee will move down a stage until they are no longer part of the program.

## 7. Attendance Support Program

### **Stage 1 Awareness Letter\***

When an employee's rate of absenteeism meets or exceeds the established criteria over a three month period, the Manager/Supervisor will give the employee the Stage 1 –Awareness Letter and the Manager/Supervisor will provide a copy of the letter to Human Resources for the Employee Attendance File. (Not part of the Employees Personnel File).

### **Stage 2 Meeting\***

Three months after the Stage 1 – Awareness Letter, the Manager/Supervisor will review the employee's attendance. If the employee's attendance is not meeting the criteria as determined during those three months, the Manager/Supervisor will meet with the employee to discuss the employee's ongoing inability to meet attendance expectations. The Manager/Supervisor will follow-up with a letter to the employee that shall be copied to the Manager, Human Resources and Employee Attendance File. (not part of the Employees Personnel file)

At this meeting, if the employee does not identify a suitable reason contributing to the employee's inability to meet attendance expectations, the Manager/Supervisor will follow-up with a letter to the employee) that shall be copied to the Manager/Supervisor, Human Resources and the Employee Attendance File. At this time, the employee should be advised that a continued inability to demonstrate a significant and sustained improvement in their attendance may place their employment with the Group Health Centre in jeopardy.

If the employee identifies a suitable reason for inability to meet attendance expectation, the Employer will support the Employee accordingly. The Manager/Supervisor will follow up with a letter to the employee that shall be copied to the Manager, Human Resources and Employee Attendance File. (not part of the Employees Personnel file)

\*Format and nature of this meeting will be determined on the basis of the applicable collective agreement or practice

### **Stage 3 Meeting\***

Three months after Stage 2 meeting, the Manager/Supervisor will review the employee's attendance since the Stage 2 meeting. If the employee's attendance has not met the criteria as determined, the Manager/Supervisor and next level Manager will meet with the employee to discuss the employee's ongoing inability to meet attendance expectations. The Manager/Supervisor will follow-up with a letter to the employee that shall be copied to the Manager, Human Resources and Employee Attendance File.

At this meeting, if the employee does not identify a suitable reason contributing to the employee's inability to meet attendance expectations, the Manager/Supervisor will follow-up with a letter to the employee) that shall be copied to the Manager/Supervisor, Human Resources and the Employee Attendance File. At this time, the employee should be advised that a continued inability to demonstrate a significant and sustained improvement in their attendance may place their employment with the Group Health Centre in jeopardy.

If the employee identifies a suitable reason for inability to meet attendance expectation, the Employer will support the Employee accordingly. The Manager/Supervisor will follow up with a letter to the employee that shall be copied to the Manager, Human Resources and Employee Attendance File. (not part of the Employees Personnel file)

\*Format and nature of this meeting will be determined on the basis of the applicable collective agreement or practice

### **Stage 4 Meeting\***

Three months after the Stage 3 meeting, the Manager/Supervisor will review the employee's attendance since the Stage 3 meeting. If the employee's attendance has not shown a significant and sustained improvement, the Manager/Supervisor will meet with the employee.

At this meeting, if the employee does not identify a suitable reason contributing to the employee's inability to meet attendance expectations, the Manager/Supervisor will follow-up with a letter to the employee) that shall be copied to the Manager/Supervisor, Human Resources and the Employee Attendance File. At this time, the employee should be advised that a continued failure to demonstrate a significant and sustained improvement in their attendance may place their employment with the Group Health Centre in jeopardy.

If the employee identifies a suitable reason for inability to meet attendance expectation, the Employer will support the Employee accordingly. The Manager/Supervisor will follow up with a letter to the employee that shall be copied to the Manager, Human Resources and Employee Attendance File. (not part of the Employees Personnel file)

\*Format and nature of this meeting will be determined on the basis of the applicable collective agreement or practice

### **Stage 5 Meeting\***

Three months after the Stage 4 meeting, the Manager/Supervisor will review the employee's attendance since the Stage 4 meeting. If the employee's attendance has not shown a significant and sustained improvement, and there is no reasonable basis upon which to believe that the employee's attendance will improve to an acceptable level within the foreseeable future, consideration should be given to entering into a LAST CHANCE AGREEMENT.

If management determines that a LAST CHANCE AGREEMENT is the best option, the Manager/Supervisor along with the assistance and advice of Human Resources will develop the appropriate documentation and hold a meeting with the employee and union representative, where applicable.

If management does not choose to pursue a LAST CHANCE AGREEMENT the Manager/Supervisor and Human Resources will meet with the employee and their union representative, as applicable, to advise the employee that their employment with the Group Health Centre is in effect terminated due to frustration of contract of employment arising out their inability to fulfill their part of the employment relationship. This meeting will be followed up with a letter to the employee that shall be copied to the Manager, Human Resources and the employee's Personnel File.

## Template A – Stage 1 – Awareness Letter

Date

Name

Department/Home Address

### **CONFIDENTIAL**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

#### **Re: Awareness Letter - Attendance Support Program – Stage 1**

This letter is to inform you that you have had 4 or more sick incidences this last (3) three month period, which is our organizational benchmark.

This letter is to bring you awareness of your attendance and is not disciplinary. This is a reminder that your absences have a significant impact on the department and your coworkers. It is important that you make every effort to attend work on a regular basis.

You have now been placed at Stage 1 of the Attendance Support Program. Your attendance will be monitored and reviewed again in three months, after which time you will either be out of the Attendance Program or moved to Stage 2.

Your rate of absenteeism over the past three (3) months was as follows:

3 Month Review Period	# of Available Working Hours/days	# of Hours/days of Absence	# of working Hours/days Absent

I would like to remind you that in the event that you require any assistance in improving your attendance or supporting any difficulties you are experiencing, you may speak to me or Human



Resources. At any time, you may also wish to use the Group Health Centre's Employee Assistance Program, which may be reached at 1-844-880-9142.

Please see attached Policy & Program for further information.

Yours kindly,

Cc: Union  
Human Resources  
Employee Attendance File

## Template - Improvement Letter

Date

Name

Department/Home Address

### **CONFIDENTIAL**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

#### **Re: Attendance Support Program – Improvement**

This letter will confirm our meeting on \_\_\_\_\_ (date). Present at this meeting were \_\_\_\_\_ (list attendees). We discussed your pattern of attendance during the period of \_\_\_\_\_ (date) to \_\_\_\_\_ (date). As you were informed in our meeting, it is the Group Health Centre's policy to review the attendance of all employees. This meeting was Stage \_\_\_\_ of the Attendance Support Program and was not disciplinary.

Given that your attendance has shown significant and sustained improvement, you will move back one Stage to Stage \_\_\_\_ of the Attendance Support Program. Your attendance will be monitored closely and reviewed again for improvement in three months, after which time I will meet with you.

Your improved attendance over the past (3) three months were as follows:

Previous 3 Month Review Period	# of Days/Hours Absent	Current 3 Month Review Period	Improved Attendance

I would like to remind you that in the event that you require any assistance in improving your attendance or supporting any difficulties you are experiencing, you may speak to me or Human Resources. At any time, you may also wish to use the Group Health Centre's Employee Assistance Program, which may be reached at 1-844-880-9142.

Your improved attendance shows your commitment to our shared objectives. I want to commend you for the effort you have made and the resulting improvement in your attendance.

Yours truly,

Cc: Union  
Human Resources  
Employee Attendance File