



Attendance Support Program AP 3880

Responsibility:	Associate Director, Business Services Executive Manager, Humans Resources & Equity Services Senior Manager, Human Resource Services
Legal References:	Ontario Human Rights Code Occupational Health and Safety Act Employment Standards Act Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)
Related References:	Policy/Program Memorandum No. 171-Attendance Support Programs (ASP) Employee Records AP3550 Sick Leave AP 3830 Medical Accommodation Program AP 3810
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Revisions:	
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1.0 Preamble

- 1.1 This document provides guidelines and expectations pertaining to the Attendance Support Program at the Waterloo Region District School Board.

2.0 Principles and Objectives

- 2.1 The Waterloo Region District School Board is committed to creating a supportive and a healthy environment for our employees. This program aims to enhance employee well-being and attendance to support student achievement and a healthy school/school board community. The intent of the Attendance Support Program is to support employees with their ability to maintain regular attendance at work by providing:
- Early intervention
 - Non-disciplinary support
- 2.2 Absenteeism:
- Creates operational challenges to meet system priorities (i.e. educational, operational)

- Adds financial pressure on school boards when an absent employee has to be backfilled

Educators and support staff who are consistently present, can better assess and support the learning needs of our students. Consistency is a key component to student learning and achievement.

- 2.3 The Attendance Support Program applies to all staff employed by the Waterloo Region District School Board.

3.0 Definitions

- 3.1 **Non-culpable (innocent) absenteeism** refers to absences as a result of a substantiated illness or injury that arise due to circumstances beyond the employee's control. These absences are not dealt with through a progressive discipline model; instead the employee is supported through the Attendance Support Program (ASP).

- 3.2 **Culpable absenteeism** refers to when an employee is unable to attend work for reasons that are within their control and for which they can be held accountable. Examples of culpable absences include:
- Failure to attend work without notifying the employer
 - Lateness for work or leaving early
 - The inability to substantiate absenteeism when required
 - Abuse of leave provisions contained within the employee's Collective Agreement/employment contract

Employees with culpable absences are subject to progressive discipline, in accordance with the associated Progressive Discipline Administrative Procedure. These absences are not dealt with through the Attendance Support Program, as they are beyond the scope of this administrative procedure.

- 3.3 **Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)** is Waterloo Region District School Board's free and confidential employee support program. Services include professional support and resources that are intended to assist employees and/or their families with a wide range of personal issues and challenges.

4.0 Absences that the Attendance Support Program may include:

- 4.1 Personal illness/injury unrelated to work (paid and unpaid) if the absences are five consecutive days or less and the employee is not formally involved and/or supported in the employer's Sick Leave & Medical Accommodation Program
- 4.2 Medical/Dental appointments; and/or
- 4.3 Non compliant WSIB related absences and/or the employee is not participating in the employer's Sick Leave & Medical Accommodation Program
- 4.4 Repeated absences of five (5) consecutive days, which are not part of the Sick Leave & Medical Accommodation Program

5.0 Absences that are not included in the Attendance Support Program

- 5.1 Approved Vacation
- 5.2 Approved lieu days
- 5.3 Culpable absences (refer to 3.2 of this administrative procedure)
- 5.4 *Employment Standards Act*, 2000 job protected leaves of absence (i.e. Family Medical leaves, Emergency leaves, etc.)
- 5.5 Pre-approved unpaid leave of absence
- 5.6 Approved Personal Days
- 5.7 Approved Family Care Days
- 5.8 Pre-approved Compassionate Care leaves of absences
- 5.9 Bereavement leave as per an employee's Collective Agreement (C.A./Agreement)
- 5.10 Pre-approved Jury or witness leave as per an employee's C.A./Agreement
- 5.11 Pregnancy/parental leave as per an employee's C.A./Agreement
- 5.12 Pre-approved Union business leave as per an employee's C.A./Agreement
- 5.13 Examinations and convocations (miscellaneous leave as per an employee's C.A./Agreement)
- 5.14 Quarantine as per an employee's C.A./Agreement (if applicable)
- 5.15 Observance of recognised creed days as per an employee's C.A./Agreement
- 5.16 Approved Inclement weather day as per an employee's C.A./Agreement
- 5.17 Board directed Suspensions and "Assign to home" directives
- 5.18 Approved Long Term Disability claims (As applicable, if eligible)
- 5.19 Specialist appointments (May require clarification/substantiation)
- 5.20 WSIB approved absences/Graduated Return-to-Work plans, etc.
- 5.21 Approved Sick Leaves and Medical Accommodations

6.0 Attendance Thresholds

- 6.1 "Absence Threshold" is the established number of occurrences absent to trigger entry into the Attendance Support Program.
- 6.2 When an employee's absences that are included under the Attendance Support Program have exceeded the threshold, the attendance support process will be initiated provided that the case has not been identified as an approved medical leave.

7.0 Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 Employee:

- 7.1.1 Maintain regular attendance at work as scheduled and directed.
- 7.1.2 Perform their key essential job duties and tasks as established by their employment responsibilities with the Board to support student and system needs.
- 7.1.3 Report to work in a manner that enables them to perform the essential duties of their role.
- 7.1.4 Participate actively in all levels of the attendance support process.
- 7.1.5 Actively participate in treatment plans as recommended by qualified registered Healthcare professional to:
 - Achieve optimal recovery
 - Enable them to have regular attendance in the workplace
- 7.1.6 Cooperate in setting personal attendance goals.
- 7.1.7 Notify the Board if they require accommodation.

- 7.1.8 Provide any appropriate documentation, during any level of the process as directed by the Attendance Support Program Officer in accordance with the:
- Sick Leave Procedure, if applicable (AP3830)
 - Medical Accommodation Procedure, if applicable (AP3810)

7.2 **Principal/Supervisor/Manager:**

- 7.2.1 Reinforce and support the Board's Attendance Support Program expectations to all employees.
- 7.2.2 Ensure absences are correctly recorded in the system.
- 7.2.3 Review absence reports for staff as provided by the Attendance Support Program Officers.
- 7.2.4 Support the identification of absenteeism trends or patterns, such as the following:
- Frequent absences of short duration
 - Absences of five (5) consecutive scheduled work days
 - Absences due to doctor appointments or scheduled treatment
 - Absences due to workplace injury and / or illness
 - Unauthorized absences
 - A pattern of repeated days of absence taken in proximity to weekends, natural breaks, and / or holidays
 - Absenteeism in excess of the established absence threshold
- 7.2.5 Address concerns related to absenteeism by engaging in discussions with the employee. Support and consistent discretion should be applied throughout the process. If necessary and/or if the employee states medical reasons for absenteeism, seek additional support and interventions from a member of the Attendance Support Team.
- 7.2.6 Support employees and act as a resource as necessary.
- 7.2.7 Advise employees of available resources (e. g., EFAP).
- 7.2.8 Participate in meetings as required by the Attendance Support Program
- 7.2.9 Support employees throughout the attendance process.
- 7.2.10 Provide positive reinforcement to employees who reach their attendance goals.
- 7.2.11 Document each meeting that they follow up with the employee with copies to the Attendance Support Team.

7.3 **Attendance Support Program Officers:**

- 7.3.1 Support Principal/Supervisor/Manager in addressing absenteeism issues.
- 7.3.2 Serve as a resource to employees and Principal/Supervisor/Manager.
- 7.3.3 Assist in identifying employees who exceed the absence threshold.
- 7.3.4 Identification of absenteeism trends or patterns, such as the following:
- Frequent absences of short duration
 - Absences of five (5) consecutive scheduled work day
 - Absences due to doctor appointments or schedule treatment
 - Absences due to workplace injury and / or illness
 - Unauthorized absences
 - A pattern of repeated days of absence taken in proximity to weekends, natural breaks, and / or holidays
 - Absenteeism in excess of the established absence threshold
- 7.3.5 Advise employees of resources available to them.
- 7.3.6 Facilitate and assist with meetings in the attendance support process.

- 7.3.7 Assist in the development of individualized goals at the conclusion of each meeting, taking into account all circumstances identified during each meeting.
- 7.3.8 Provide in writing reference to any scheduled coaching level meetings that have occurred with copies to the employee, Principal/Supervisor/Manager, and Manager of Human Resource Services.

7.4 **Executive Manager of HR or designate:**

- 7.4.1 Provide support and act as a resource to all aspects of the attendance support process.
- 7.4.2 Strategically support and obtain resources to enable appropriate execution and implementation of this protocol.
- 7.4.3 Review the cases of employees who have not met attendance goals following the completion of all coaching levels to determine ongoing options and potential next steps. This takes place in conjunction with:
 - Human Resource Services
 - The Principal/Supervisor/Manager
 - Attendance Support Team

8.0 ***The Attendance Support Program Process***

The Attendance Support Program process includes communication to employees as a reminder to review absences and ensure they are coded correctly and to access supports as needed:

- 8.1 **Initial communication** will be sent via email to all staff. This communication may provide a reminder every three months and will provide an opportunity for the employee to:
 - Be aware of their absences,
 - Ensure corrections are made as necessary
 - Access early intervention support as needed
- 8.2. **Preliminary email** - When an employee hits the absence threshold they will receive an automated communication advising them that they have entered the Attendance Support Program. The communication will outline attendance goals expected for the next ninety (90) days. The employee should review their absences and may contact the Attendance Support Program Officers to dispute or clarify absences. Should the employee not directly communicate to the ASPO within five (5) working days, it will be understood that the absences are correct. The employee will be provided with support information as well as contact information for the Attendance Support Program Officers (ASPO).
- 8.3. **Coaching Level 1** - Where an employee does not meet the attendance goals from the preliminary stage, they will receive a letter that includes:
 - The Employee
 - The Principal/ Supervisor/Manager
 - An Attendance Support Program Officer

The employee will enter into Coaching Level 1 as they have been unable to meet the attendance goals established in the preliminary email. Attendance goals will be communicated to the employee that will apply for the next ninety (90) days. Should the employee not meet the attendance goals prior to the (90) days, moving to the next coaching level may be triggered earlier. Support will continue to be offered to the employee.

- 8.4. **Coaching Level 2** - Where an employee does not meet the attendance goals from the Coaching Level 1 stage, they will be required to attend a mandatory meeting that includes:
- The Employee
 - The Principal/Supervisor/Manager
 - An Attendance Support Team member

The employee will enter into Coaching Level 2 as they have been unable to meet the attendance goals established in the Coaching Level 1 stage. Attendance goals will again be set with the employee that will apply for the next ninety (90) days. Should the employee not meet the attendance goals prior to the (90) days, moving to the next coaching level may be triggered earlier. Support will continue to be offered to the employee. The employee will receive a letter confirming the details of the meeting.

- 8.5. **Coaching Level 3** - Where an employee does not meet the attendance goals from Coaching Level 2 stage, they will be required to attend a mandatory meeting that includes:
- The Employee
 - The Principal/Supervisor/Manager
 - An Attendance Support Program Officer

The appropriate Manager of Human Resource Services or designate may also attend. The employee will enter into the Coaching Level 3 stage as they have been unable to meet the attendance goals established in the Coaching Level 2 stage. Attendance goals will again be set with the employee that will apply for the next ninety (90) days. Should the employee not meet the attendance goals prior to the (90) days, moving to the next coaching level may be triggered earlier. Support will continue to be offered to the employee.

- 8.6. **Coaching Level 4** - Where an employee does not meet the attendance goals from the Coaching Level 3 stage, they will be required to attend a mandatory meeting, which will include:
- The Employee
 - The appropriate Manager of Human Resource Services or designate
 - May include the Principal/Supervisor/Manager
 - The Attendance Support Program Officer
 - Union Representative as applicable

The employee may enter into the Coaching Level 4 stage as they have been unable to meet the attendance goals established in the Coaching Level 3 stage. The employee will be advised that failure to meet the attendance goals in Coaching Level 4 will result in their removal from the ASP program and the matter will be dealt with through Human Resources.

8.7 **Review Period**

When attendance goals have been met within a coaching level, the employee will receive a letter to acknowledge they have entered into a review period of twelve (12) working months. During this review period, an Attendance Support Program Officer will continue to monitor their absences

8.7.1. Employees who do not exceed the absence threshold in the twelve (12) month review period will exit from the ASP.

8.7.2. Employees who exceed the absence threshold during the twelve (12) month review period will continue in the ASP at the next relevant level.

- 9.0 The employer reserves the right to consider the termination of an employee for culpable or non-culpable absenteeism.
If the employee is unable and/or unwilling to comply with the requirements set out in the attendance support program, the board may proceed with discipline procedures.
- 10.0 An employee will enter a program stage automatically based on absenteeism levels.