



Our Plan

**Attendance
Support Program:
A Conversation Based Approach**

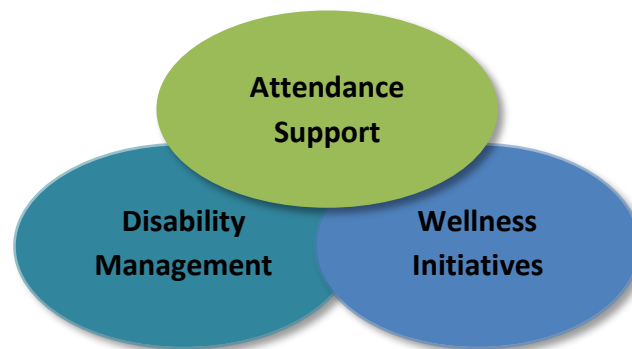
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Program Summary

The Greater Victoria School District is committed to each student's success in learning within a responsive and safe environment. Our mission is attainable when employees of the District are healthy and well, and thus able to perform in their job role to the best of their abilities. Further to this, regular and consistent attendance allows employees to apply their valuable set of skills and knowledge to the workplace, which helps the District achieve its goals.

Recognizing the importance of employee health and wellness, the District has developed an approach that promotes a holistic commitment to three key areas: attendance support, disability management and wellness initiatives.



The Attendance Support Program is one element of this approach. Applicable to all employee groups in the District, it follows a relationship and conversation led philosophy as a means to identify risks to employee health and wellbeing, and assist in improving attendance.

This document details the process followed for these three steps. It also defines and outlines parameters of the Program, including:

- Program approach and purpose
- Types of absences to be addressed
- Roles and responsibilities of supervisors, employees and Human Resources staff
- Requirements for referral to Human Resources

Approach and Purpose

The District believes that a relationship and conversation led approach with employees is the best way to offer support. The purpose of our program is to improve the overall health and wellbeing of our employees, reduce absenteeism, and enhance employees' engagement in the workplace, all while treating our employees in a consistent and fair manner. Our desire is to minimize avoidable absences and work with employees to ensure a healthy and vibrant workplace.

The purpose of our program is to:

1. Support attendance positively, pro-actively, and consistently, by assisting those who have difficulty with attendance, and recognizing improved attendance.
2. Encourage accountability for work attendance.
3. Work with individual employees who are having difficulty maintaining regular attendance, including the provision of:
 - Support from principals, managers, union representatives and Human Resource Services staff.
 - Access to support programs that foster wellbeing, such as employee assistance programs and District wellness initiatives.
4. Search for solutions to maintain regular attendance and reduce absence, including the identification of employees' genuine accommodation needs.
5. Assist in protecting the employment relationship.

The purpose of our program is not to:

1. Find fault, blame, or discipline employees for taking sick days.
2. Discouraging employees from taking sick days when they are ill.
3. Encourage or promote a 'zero sick days' policy.
4. Pressure or coerce an employee to reveal private and confidential medical or personal matters.

Types of Absences

Absences can be grouped into two main categories: non-culpable and culpable. **This Attendance Support Program focuses on non-culpable absences only.** Further, the Program will categorize absences whose reasons are unclear as non-culpable. This will ensure that employees are given the opportunity to receive support where it may be needed.

Non-Culpable Absences

Absences defined as non-blameworthy, involuntary and/or innocent

Non-culpable absences occur when an employee, through no fault of their own, is unable to fulfill their employment responsibilities. These types of absences are often beyond the employee's control, and may be referred to as involuntary or innocent absences. Examples of non-culpable absences that may need support include illness/injury and emergency situations.

Culpable Absences

Absences defined as blameworthy, voluntary and unacceptable

Culpable absences occur when an employee is absent for reasons that are within their control and are deemed unacceptable. Such absences are subject to discipline, like any other form of misconduct. Examples include an employee returning late from breaks and fraudulent use of sick leave.

Please note: Culpable absence will be dealt with through a different process. If an employee is found to have used their sick days fraudulently, they will be removed from the program.

Responsibilities

Each employee of the District plays a role in creating the best possible learning environment for our students and an enjoyable, productive workplace. The responsibilities of supervisors, employees, and Human Resource Services in the attendance support process are outlined below, which together help ensure the success of the program.

Supervisors

Supervisors are fundamental to the success of the Attendance Support Program, through their leadership, guidance, and open communication with employees. These interactions help to build positive working environments that foster good attendance. Supervisors are in the best position to successfully address absence issues because they have an established relationship with the employee and are responsible for the employee's performance. They are directly aware of the impacts of the employee's absence. They are responsible for:

- Conveying the supportive tone of the program to employees, and modeling a positive approach to attendance.
- Communicating expectations, to ensure employees understand the importance of regular attendance and the consequence of their absence.
- Coaching and offering assistance to employees when attendance is becoming an issue, to help the employee achieve improvement.

Employees

It is the commitment, hard work, and engagement of employees of the District that results in successful learning outcomes for students, and makes the District a healthy and vibrant workplace. They are responsible for:

- Striving to maintain good health and well-being, and to actively participate in a medical/recovery plan when applicable.
- Understanding their obligation to attend work regularly and perform the duties for which they were hired.
- Following procedures for reporting work absences, and providing medical documentation as needed.
- Keeping their supervisor and Human Resource Services informed about their recovery and issues that may impact their ability to be at work.

Human Resource Services

Human Resource Services staff helps to maintain consistency and fairness in the Attendance Support Program process, and providing support for supervisors and employees. They are responsible for:

- Guiding and acting as a resource to all parties.
- Ensuring that the program is being implemented in a consistent, fair, and respectful manner across the District.
- Ensuring that employees understand their attendance responsibilities and are familiar with the program.
- Providing supervisors with appropriate training on the program, as well as data on employee absences.
- Coaching supervisors on program implementation.
- Leading formal support sessions with employees.
- Overseeing cases involving modified work duties and accommodation issues.
- Handling serious cases that have moved through the program and have been passed on to the Human Resources.

Program Application

Attendance Issue Identification

The program uses absence data to objectively identify potential attendance issues. There is not a single measure that will recognize all cases that may require support. Employees who have absences above the 95th percentile of their employee group will be identified as a potential candidate for the program. The supervisor needs to be aware when a given employee exceeds or is on course to exceed these numbers in the near future. Such analyses will be conducted by Human Resource Services.

Exceeding these measures alone does not mean that a problem is developing. There are many reasons why an employee may be absent more than others, such as a serious illness, accident or injury requiring extended time off work. While supervisors and Human Resource Services staff should be consistent in addressing absence issues, it is essential that each case is dealt with on an individual basis and that extenuating circumstances are considered.

Initial Steps in Attendance Support

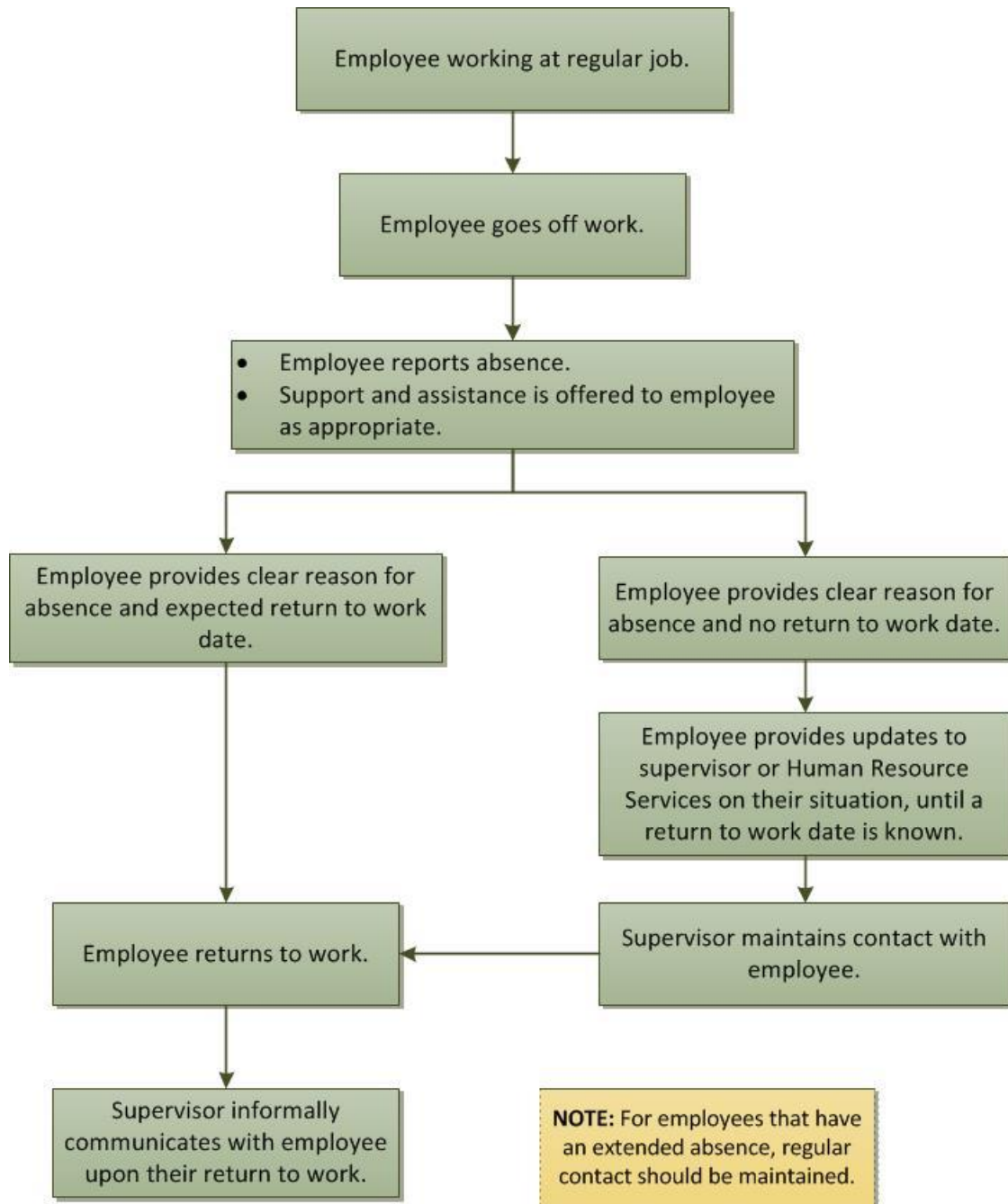
The application of attendance support requires staff to follow the standard attendance reporting processes. Employees that are unable to attend work are required to log into ADS or notify their supervisors as soon as possible in advance of their absence.

The supervisor may call the employee to confirm the absence and obtain appropriate information, including general reasons for the absence and its expected length. The employee should provide a prognosis for the absence, excluding confidential medical information; they are not required to provide a diagnosis of their illness. The supervisor will touch base and communicate with the employee during their absence and upon their return to work.

Three times a year, Human Resource Services will conduct analyses to review staff absences. Employees who are approaching and/or have exceeded general workforce norms will be noted, and supervisors will be provided with attendance data for these employees. Each case will be reviewed individually, to determine whether attendance support is appropriate. If an individual is identified as a potential candidate for the program, a minimum of Step 1 will take place.

Flow Chart 1 - Attendance Issue Identification Process

(For All Employees)



General Guidelines

Pre-Conversation Planning

Before speaking with an employee during any step in the ASP process, the supervisor should be prepared, and should seek assistance from their HR Representative when appropriate. This will help to bring the most value to the situation, and ensure that suitable support is offered to the employee. This is a key opportunity to inform the employee that they are missed when they are absent, and of the importance that the District places on their consistent attendance. When informed of the need for these conversations, it is also expected that the employee come prepared for open, respectful dialogue on their attendance. It is advised that before each step the supervisor has the following items prepared:

- Absence reports provided by HR
- Absence calendar available from AMS (instructions available)
- Examples of how absences are affecting students, coworkers, and the employee
- EFAP Brochure
- Employee Resource Brochure

Review Dates

A review date should be set for the supervisor, employee, and any other applicable parties to meet again and review the employee's progress. Whether the progress is positive or still an area for concern, this date should not be any longer than 3 working months from the previous meeting. (i.e. an employee, who works 10 months of the year and has a meeting on May 1st, would be scheduled for their review date no later than the beginning of October of the next school year). Finish the meeting by encouraging the employee to approach the Supervisor at any time outside the scheduled meetings should further assistance or support be required.

Documentation

Documentation should take place directly following the meeting to ensure nothing is missed or forgotten. All details of the meetings can be recorded on the *Action Plan* (template found in with the supporting documents) and should always include the date the meeting took place, who was in attendance, key details of the conversation, and recommendations or referrals that may have been made. If the follow up/review date has been set, then that should be included in your notes as well. The documentation can be done by either the supervisor or HR Representative. In addition, these notes should be filed, either electronically or manually in protected files with limited access only.

Attendance Support Program Process

Step 1: Casual Check-in

When Human Resource Services identifies an employee who may need attendance support, the employee's supervisor will be provided with the employee's attendance records. These records are reviewed, and if deemed appropriate, the supervisor will engage the employee in a casual check-in. This informal conversation helps the supervisor to identify strategies to support the employee and to determine if further support is needed. This is also a way to increase awareness of the importance of being at work on a regular, consistent basis. The purpose of the casual check-in conversation is to:

- Advise the employee of the attendance issue.
- Express concern for their well-being.
- Determine if there is anything that the District can do to assist the employee in improving their attendance.
- Refer employee to the District's Employee & Family Assistance Program (EFAP) or the HR Representative.

The supervisor will also ensure that the employee is fully aware of the Attendance Support Process. The supervisor will work with the employee, and HR as appropriate, to identify possible supports.

Please note: Although this is a casual check in, the supervisor will always ensure the conversation is held privately.

After the Casual Check-in

The supervisor will send the HR rep an email notifying them the conversation took place and note the date and any key points from the conversation. The supervisor and HR rep will monitor the employee's attendance for the next 2 - 3 months. The supervisor will determine if further monitoring is needed.

Follow Up

Supervisors will hold a follow-up conversation with the employee approximately 2 - 3 months after the first conversation, or at another interval as appropriate in the employee's individual circumstances. This follow up conversation is an opportunity for a supportive discussion about whether the employee's attendance has improved and whether supports have been helpful or effective in addressing the employee's attendance issues. The Supervisor will determine if further monitoring and/or support are needed.

Step 2: Awareness Meeting

The Awareness Meeting will take place approximately 2 - 3 months after the Casual Check-in. This meeting is not about blaming an individual for their absence or discouraging them from taking sick days when they are ill. It is to highlight that the frequency of absence is a concern to the District and to facilitate an open dialogue to explore accommodations or support options. This meeting will be facilitated by the Supervisor and include the HR rep if the supervisor desires. Although this is not a disciplinary meeting, the employee may wish to invite the union.

The supervisor will open the meeting by discussing the purpose of the meeting and explaining that it is not a disciplinary meeting. During this discussion, the supervisor will:

- Introduce and explain HR's role in the meeting if applicable.
- Positively acknowledge any improvement and/or express continued concern to do with the employee's absences, as appropriate.
- Explain that it is the District's policy to meet with those employees whose absence is in the 95th percentile of their peer group.
- Discuss the importance and value of the employee's consistent and regular attendance with respect to their employment commitment.
- Review Absence History:
 - Review with the employee their absence report and calendar including days missed and reasons for absence.
 - Confirm the accuracy of the absence data with the employee.
 - Discuss the impact felt at the workplace and have examples ready if applicable.
- Review any other resources or options that may be available to the employee that would assist them in their effort to attend work on a more regular and consistent basis.
- Confirm expectations and draft an action plan, including both employee and District commitments.
- Set review date (within 3 working months).

After the Awareness Meeting

The supervisor will send the HR rep an email (if they are not at the meeting) notifying them the conversation took place and note the date and any key points from the conversation. The supervisor and the HR rep will monitor the employee's attendance for the next 2 - 3 months. A copy of the action plan will be sent to both the employee and the HR rep. The supervisor will determine if further monitoring is needed.

Step 3: Support Meeting

The Support Meeting will take place approximately 2 - 3 months after the Awareness Meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to acknowledge any improvement and/or express continued concern to do with the employee's absences, as appropriate. The Supervisor and the HR rep will meet with the employee. Although this is not a disciplinary meeting, the employee may wish to invite the union. The *Disability Management* representative may attend this meeting.

If significant improvement has occurred: *If there is improvement, the HR rep is optional*

- Supervisor meets with employee to thank and positively recognize improvement and offer on-going support.
- Reiterate both the employee's and the District's commitment to encourage better attendance at work.
- Supervisor will update the HR rep of conversation and determine if further monitoring is required.

If there has been no improvement:

- Review previous and new absences with employee to ensure accuracy.
- Understand absence history from last meeting to current meeting.
- Review action plan and determine if the employee followed through on the agreed upon plan or why they were not able to do so.
- Listen and offer assistance and support.
- Work with the employee, and appropriate parties, to identify possible resources and assistance available to help them attend work regularly. Including:
 - District Employee & Family Assistance Program (EFAP)
 - Referral and possible accommodation through Disability Management process
 - Review and update the employee's and District's commitments.
 - Confirm expectations for attendance at work.
 - Update action plan.
 - Set Review Date (within 3 working months).

After the Support Meeting:

The HR rep will complete a detailed summary of meeting including date, key points, and who was in attendance. The supervisor and HR will monitor the employees' attendance for the next 2 - 3 months or next review date. A copy of the updated action plan, commitments, and any other appropriate documentation will be sent to the employee and all those in attendance.

Step 4: Intervention Meeting

***The number of review dates and Intervention Meetings needed at Step 4 will be determined by actual and sustained improved attendance at work by the employee.*

The Intervention Meeting will take place approximately 2 - 3 months after the Support Meeting (or previous Intervention Meeting). The purpose of the Intervention Meeting is to focus on working with the employee to improve their attendance in a more structured way, and ensuring that the employee is aware of the potential outcomes of not improving their attendance. The supervisor the HR rep will meet with the employee. The employee will be encouraged to have a union representative present for these meetings. The *Disability Management* representative may attend this meeting.

The supervisor or HR rep will review with the employee their attendance history to date as well as the discussions, action plans, and outcomes arising from previous meetings. The HR rep will review the employee's absence report from the previous meeting including any days missed and reasons provided for those absences. The employee will be asked to confirm accuracy of the information.

If significant improvement has occurred:

- The supervisor and HR rep will meet with the employee to positively recognize improvement and offer on-going support. At this time they will review the employee's and the District's commitment to support better attendance at work.
- A follow up meeting will be set (within 2 working months) to positively review the employees continued attendance improvement.
- The supervisor will send follow up letter recognizing the improved attendance and expectation for continued improved attendance.

If there has been no improvement:

- Understand absence history from last meeting and discuss the impact of absences on the workplace and note any new issues.
- Review action plan and determine if the employee followed through on the agreed upon plan or why they were not able to do so.
- Listen and offer assistance and support.
- Work with the employee, and appropriate parties, to identify possible resources and assistance available to help them attend work regularly. Including:
 - District Employee & Family Assistance Program (EFAP)
 - Referral and possible accommodation through Disability Management process

- Review and update the employee's and District's commitments to support improved attendance at work.
- Confirm expectations for improved attendance as well as the extent of possible outcomes should the employee's absence record not improve at a reasonable level.

Step 4: Intervention Meeting Continued

- Update action plan.
- Set Review Date (within 3 working months).

After Meeting:

The HR rep will complete a detailed summary of meeting including date, key points, and who was in attendance. The HR rep and supervisor will review the attendance history as well as discussions, action plans, and outcomes arising from previous meetings to determine if an additional Intervention Meeting should be held or if the Employee should proceed to the ASP Completion stage. If appropriate, the HR rep may contact Disability Management for referral and provide case history. A copy of the updated action plan, commitments, and any other appropriate documentation will be sent to the employee and all those in attendance.

Step 5: ASP Completion (Or Referral to Human Resources)

The length and outcome of the Attendance Support Program will vary with each individual's personal circumstances. It is the District's hope that the ASP completion would be successful and positive and involve congratulating the employee on their improved and continued regular attendance. If an attendance issue recurs, the employee may return to the program. At what step the employee re-enters will be based on a review of absences and past participation in the process.

In rare cases, there may be an employee who remains unable to attend work regularly despite being supported through the program. If all attempts to support the employee to improve their absenteeism have been unsuccessful, they may be referred to the District's Labour Relations group for case review and possible employment-related consequences (subject to the provisions of applicable legislation, and the District's duty to accommodate). This group will determine the continued viability of employment, and whether the employer-employee relationship has been frustrated. The District has just cause to refer an employee to the Labour Relations group when the following conditions are met:

1. The employee has an excessive absence record, based on comparison with established absence norms (District/School/Department).
2. Other employees with similar or worse absenteeism have been treated the same.
3. All reasonable efforts have been made to assist the employee in addressing their absenteeism and successfully fulfilling the employment contract.
4. There is no likely resolution to the issue and the employee is unlikely to attend work regularly in the future.
5. Relevant provisions in the collective agreement, and any applicable legislation, have been complied with.

In effect, the employer must demonstrate that the employee's absenteeism has frustrated the employment relationship.

An employer is not entitled to discipline an employee for absence due to genuine illness or injury. The District will not issue disciplinary letters, nor will it suspend an employee for non-culpable absence. However, the District does have the right to take steps aimed at improving an employee's attendance at work and assisting them to fulfill their employment contract. If an

employee follows the program to completion without a resolution being achieved, the District may determine that the viability of the employment relationship has been frustrated. In these circumstances, the employee will be referred to the Labour Relations group within Human Resource Services.