



# PROCEDURE

# HR-011

## ATTENDANCE SUPPORT PROGRAM

<b>Superintendent Responsible:</b> Superintendent of Human Resources	<b>Initial Effective Date:</b> 2020/02/24
<b>Last Updated:</b> 2025/06/27	<b>Next Review Date:</b> 2029/06/26

### Purpose:

To support Grand Erie District School Board (Grand Erie) employees with maintaining regular attendance at work through the use of proactive attendance support measures.

### Guiding Principles:

Grand Erie is committed to creating a supportive and healthy environment for its employees.

The Attendance Support Program objectives are to:

- create and promote a healthy school/school board community that contributes to safe, stable learning and working environments that ultimately support student and staff well-being and student achievement;
- treat absences in a fair and consistent manner and be compliant with applicable laws and collective agreements;
- support employees in regular and consistent attendance at work while considering individual needs on a case-by-case basis

Attendance Support is an early intervention program designed to assist employees who are struggling to maintain regular attendance at work. The intent of the Attendance Support Program is to provide non-disciplinary and supportive assistance to Grand Erie employees who exceed the established absence threshold.

### 1.0 Absenteeism

- 1.1 **Non-Culpable (Innocent) Absenteeism** refers to absences as a result of illness or injury or medical appointment unrelated to work, that arise due to circumstances beyond the employee's control; in other words, they are blameless. These absences are not dealt with through a progressive discipline model; instead the employee is supported through the Attendance Support Program.
- 1.2 **Culpable Absenteeism** refers to those absences for which employees can be held accountable. Failure to attend work without notifying the employer, lateness for work or leaving early, and using sick leave for reasons other than intended are examples of culpable absences. Employees with culpable absences are subject to progressive discipline. These absences are not dealt with through the Attendance Support Program.

### 2.0 Absence Threshold

- 2.1 The absence threshold is the established number of absences to initiate entry into the Attendance Support Program. The threshold is a reasonable number that is based on empirical data.
- 2.2 It will include number of absences and/or occurrences over a rolling 12 month working period to trigger possible entry into the Attendance Support Program.
- 2.3 When an employee's absences exceed the absence threshold, the Attendance Support Program will be initiated with notification to the employee and the School Administrator/Immediate Supervisor that the employee has exceeded the absence threshold.

2.4 As necessary, the threshold will be reviewed annually. Employees will be notified of threshold changes.

2.5 Entry into any level of the Attendance Support Program will be applied consistently to all employees using discretion and will recognize specific goals that are unique to each employee's circumstances.

2.6 Where an employee has had multiple entries into the Attendance Support Program, they may be placed into the level deemed appropriate given their absence history.

2.7 Should a disability be identified requiring support and or accommodation during the process, the employee will be supported by the Health and Wellness Team.

2.8 Absences that the Attendance Support Program may include are:

- Personal illness/injury unrelated to work (paid and unpaid) if the absences are less than five (<5) consecutive days and the employee is not involved and/or supported in the employer's Health and Wellness Program.
- Medical/Dental appointments;
- WSIB declined claim-related absences and/or the employee is not participating in the employer's Health and Wellness Program.
- Repeated absences of five (5) consecutive days, which are not part of the Health and Wellness Program.

2.9 Absences that are not included in the Attendance Support Program:

- Vacation
- Compensatory
- Pre-approved leave of absence
- Bereavement leave
- Personal day
- Jury or subpoena leave
- Pregnancy/parental leave
- Workplace illnesses or injuries
- Union business leave
- Examinations and convocations
- Quarantine
- Observance of recognized religious holy days
- Urgent matter day
- Hazardous weather day
- Moving day
- Approved Long Term Disability Benefit claims

### **3.0 Roles and Responsibilities**

3.1 Employee:

- Maintain regular attendance at work as scheduled
- Participate actively in all levels of the attendance support program
- Actively participate in treatment plans as recommended by qualified registered Healthcare professional to achieve optimal recovery
- Cooperate in setting personal attendance goals
- Contact their union representative if the employee wishes them to be involved
- Provide any appropriate documentation, during any level of the process

3.2 School Administrators/Immediate Supervisors:

- Communicate attendance expectations to all employees through an annual review of the Attendance Support Program
- Demonstrate support for the intent of the Attendance Support Program to all staff

- Identify any attendance concerns to Human Resources
- Advise employees of available resources e. g., Employee Assistance Program(EAP).
- Participate in all coaching meetings and provide input into the development of individualized attendance goals for each employee involved in the process
- Support and assist at any level in the attendance support process
- Provide positive reinforcement to employees who reach their attendance goals

### 3.3 Human Resources:

- Interpreting sick leave provisions
- Monitoring attendance statistics
- Provide School Administrators/Immediate Supervisor with support and guidance in the various stages of the Attendance Support Program, including establishing personalized absenteeism thresholds for employees
- Gather and maintaining medical documentation in a secure, confidential location
- Offer the necessary resources to support employees e.g. EAP, accomodation, referrals to appropriate resources
- Consulting with respective bargaining agents, as requested and/or required
- Assisting in developing return to work plans and/or accommodation plans, including updating plans on a regular basis

### 3.4 Union Representatives:

If the employee chooses to involve a bargaining unit representative, the representative should be involved in the process as early as possible. Responsibilities of bargaining agents include:

- Providing sound, practical advice to their members
- Ensuring Collective Agreement provisions are understood and followed
- Assisting to resolve situations wherein obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code conflict with Collective Agreement provisions

## **4.0 Attendance Support Process**

4.1 The process consists of a number of support meetings that focus on proactive intervention and employment accommodation, as appropriate. The entire process is structured to cover a minimum period of twelve (12) continuous months wherein participation in the program extends from one year to the next and does not cease at the end of a school year.

4.2 There are five steps in the process, one informal and four formal. Each level is intended to raise awareness of absenteeism rates and to provide support and/or referrals to available resources in order to assist employees.

4.3 The Preliminary Email includes the employee, the School Administrator/Immediate Supervisor, and the local Union representative. The communication confirms the employee has entered the program based on the outlined recorded absences. The employee is provided with the opportunity to contact a Health and Wellness Officer to discuss their absence level, ensure absence days and coding is correct, gain an understanding of the issue(s) that may be preventing the employee from regularly attending work, offer support and guidance, and set attendance goals for the next ninety (90) working days. Should the employee not respond to the communication within five (5) working days, it will be understood that the absences are correct and attendance goals are identified for the next ninety (90) working days.

4.4 Coaching Level 1 consists of a letter that includes the employee, the School Administrator/Immediate Supervisor, Human Resources, and the local Union representative. The employee may enter into Level 1 as they have been unable to meet the attendance goals established in the preliminary meeting or the prorated threshold is exceeded during the preliminary meeting review. Attendance goals will be set with

the employee that will apply for the next ninety (90) working days. Support will continue to be offered to the employee.

4.5 Coaching Level 2 consists of a meeting that includes the employee, School Administrator/Immediate Supervisor, Human Resources, and the local Union representative. The employee may enter into Level 2 as they have been unable to meet the attendance goals established in Level 1 or the prorated threshold is exceeded during the Level 1 review period. Attendance goals will again be set with the employee that will apply for the next ninety (90) working days. Support will continue to be offered to the employee.

4.6 Coaching Level 3 consists of a meeting that includes the employee, School Administrator/Immediate Supervisor, Human Resources, the Superintendent/Next Level Supervisor, and the local Union representative. The employee may enter into Level 3 as they have been unable to meet the attendance goals established in Level 2 or has exceeded the prorated threshold during the Level 2 review period. Attendance goals will again be set with the employee that will apply for the next ninety (90) working days. Alternative options may be discussed at this time to meet the employee's needs and their ability to attend work as scheduled. The employee may be advised that failure to meet the attendance goals set in Coaching Level 3 may result in termination of employment. Discussion for alternative considerations may occur. Support will continue to be offered to the employee.

4.7 Coaching Level 4 consists of a meeting that includes the employee, the School Administrator/Immediate Supervisor, Human Resources, the Superintendent/next level supervisor, and the local Union representative. The employee may enter into Level 4 as they have been unable to meet the attendance goals established in Level 3 or have exceeded the prorated threshold during the Level 3 review period. Alternative options may be discussed at this time to meet the employee's needs and their ability to attend work as scheduled. The employee may be advised that failure to meet the attendance goals in Coaching Level 4 may result in termination of employment. Discussion for alternative options may occur. Support will continue to be offered to the employee.

4.8 When attendance goals have been met within a coaching level the employee enters into a review period of twelve (12) working months. During this review period the Health and Wellness Officer will continue to monitor their absences.

4.8.1 Employees who do not exceed the threshold in the twelve (12) month review period will exit from the Attendance Support Program

4.8.2 Employees who exceed the threshold during the twelve (12) month review period will continue in the Attendance Support Program at the next level coaching level.

4.9 Where the employee progresses to Level 4 and it is determined that:

- Grand Erie has fulfilled its obligation under the applicable collective agreement and/or policies and procedures, the Ontario Human Rights Code and any other applicable legislation and;
- The employee's absenteeism is excessive and there is no reasonable likelihood that the employee will be able to attend work regularly in the foreseeable future, the employee may be advised that their employment is being terminated on a non-disciplinary basis.

**Reference(s):**

- Confidentiality of Medical Records Procedure (HR-008)
- Ministry of Education Attendance Support Programs (PPM 171)
- [Ontario Human Rights Code](#)
- Workplace Accommodation and Return-to-Work Program Procedure (HR-022)