

## 4.4 Attendance Support and Absence Management Policy

### Policy Statement

The Province of Nova Scotia promotes a workplace culture that supports the health and well-being of all employees. We strive to maximize regular work attendance by considering fairness to the employee while maintaining work efficiency.

We believe every employee makes a valuable contribution to the delivery of service to the public. Part of that contribution includes attending work on a regular and consistent basis. All employees have a responsibility to maintain their own health and well-being to maximize their regular work attendance.

### Definitions

#### **ABSENCE REPORTING PORTAL (ARP)**

An online tool available through our external service provider and used by managers/supervisors to report absences.

#### **ABSENTEEISM**

Absent from scheduled work.

- *Culpable absenteeism* – absences that are not medically or otherwise justified for which the employee is held responsible because they are within the employee's power to address and correct.
- *Innocent absenteeism* – absences that are medically or otherwise justified for which the employee is not held responsible because they relate to an illness or injury that is verifiable by medical documentation.

#### **ATTENDANCE**

Reporting for work as scheduled and agreed.

#### **ATTENDANCE REVIEW STANDARD**

Three incidents of absence in a six-month period. Absences in this context include general illness, short term illness (STI), family illness and medical/dental appointments.

#### **DAY**

A day (converted to hours) where an employee claims a sick leave benefit. One day's benefit is equal to 1/10 of the regular bi-weekly hours worked by the employee. This policy refers to sick leave benefits in days for simplicity.

**DEPUTY HEAD**

The deputy of the member of the Executive Council presiding over a department and all others whom the Governor in Council from time to time designates as having the status of deputy head.

**EMPLOYEE SELF-SERVICE (ESS) AND MANAGER SELF-SERVICE (MSS)**

SAP pay and leave system for the Province of Nova Scotia.

**Policy Objectives**

- Enable regular work attendance by promoting a workplace culture that supports the health and well-being of all employees;
- define the roles and responsibilities of managers and employees in creating and maintaining a supportive and productive workplace culture;
- provide support to managers/supervisors to approach attendance support, absence management and return to work in a positive and timely manner; and
- establish consistency in applying the attendance review standard.

**Application**

This policy applies to all employees whose terms and conditions are set out in accordance with the Civil Service Act and regulations and other direct employees of the provincial government including all bargaining unit employees.

**Policy Directives**

This policy applies to all employees whose terms and conditions are set out in accordance with the Civil Service Act and regulations and other direct employees of the provincial government including all bargaining unit employees.

**ATTENDANCE SUPPORT**

- Managers/supervisors will encourage employees to identify options for consideration to enable them to perform their duties on a regular basis.
- Managers/supervisors will discuss attendance support and absence management programs, including reasonable accommodations, with their employees in a positive and timely manner.
- Employees will access available resources to enable them to stay at work.

**REPORTING AN ABSENCE**

- Employees who are unable to work as scheduled, for any reason, are required to contact their manager, or designated work unit contact, as soon as possible. Where a department or work unit has a specific contact procedure, employees are required to follow that procedure.
  - Failure to follow absence reporting procedures may result in the employee being considered absent without leave. This may negatively impact pay and/or result in disciplinary action.
- Employees are responsible to record their absences using the Employee Self-Service (ESS) system, or other reporting system as appropriate, for the manager's approval in Manager Self-Service (MSS).
- Managers/supervisors are required to report and record absences of their staff using the Absence Reporting Portal (ARP) or other relevant reporting systems.

**REVIEWING ATTENDANCE**

- Regular work attendance is required of all employees and consequently requires that employees' attendance records are reviewed by managers/supervisors on an ongoing basis.
- In instances when the attendance review standard is exceeded, managers/supervisors will review the employee's attendance record and determine if further action is necessary.
- Employees must use leave appropriately and are required to cooperate with the employer and the external service provider where applicable to enable a safe and sustainable return to work.
- If an employee's conduct is considered culpable absenteeism, it will be addressed through clarification of attendance expectations, coaching, or other progressive discipline tools.

**ABSENCE MANAGEMENT**

- An external service provider manages the Province of Nova Scotia's Short-Term Illness (STI) Support Program for absences due to personal illness or injury of a four to 100 days duration.
- Employees whose absences exceed 100 days may be eligible for Long Term Disability (LTD) benefits. An external service provider manages the LTD Plan.
- Absences that are due to injury or illness on duty may be covered by the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB). WCB manages these claims. Employees must report injury or illness on duty to their manager as soon as an injury occurs.

### **PRIVACY AND CONSENT**

- Employees are required to provide consent to release information (e.g. health information) to support proper application of leave benefits as well as to assist with the case management services.
- Information that is provided by the employee for the purposes of attendance support and absence management will remain confidential in accordance with the required consent. Information related to an employee's health-related restrictions and limitations that are relevant to the workplace will be provided to the manager/supervisor, as may be required.

### **RETURN TO WORK**

- The employer will provide reasonable accommodations where required to support an employee's safe and timely transition back to work.
- Managers/supervisors and employees are expected to identify the first opportunity for a safe and productive return to work/transitional work based on medical or other relevant evidence, and to fully co-operate with any reasonable efforts or requests that are expected to facilitate an optimal and safe return to productive work.

## **Policy Guidelines**

This policy is supported by Attendance Support and Absence Management Guidelines developed by the Public Service Commission (PSC). The guidelines are available on MyHR.

## **Accountability**

### **DEPUTY HEADS**

#### **Deputy Heads are responsible to:**

- model leadership that influences organizational culture and promotes a safe and healthy workplace that is conducive to regular work attendance and employee well-being; and
- promote the Attendance Support and Absence Management Policy and support managers/supervisors in the implementation of the policy and guidelines.

### **MANAGERS/SUPERVISORS**

#### **Managers and supervisors are responsible to:**

- provide a safe and healthy workplace that is conducive to regular attendance of staff, including communication about attendance support programs and outlining

attendance expectations;

- maintaining an open dialogue with the employees to be aware of changes in an employee's behaviour and productivity which could indicate a concern;
- support employees in using benefits and resources that maintain and promote their physical and mental well-being;
- report all absences in a timely manner using the appropriate reporting system;
- maintain contact with the employee during their absence;
- review attendance reports, monitor attendance patterns and where appropriate address attendance concerns in a timely and supportive manner;
- review this policy with staff to understand attendance expectations and supports;
- consistently administer departmental and government-wide policies and guidelines that relate to attendance support and absence management;
- respect employee limitations and restrictions;
- consider impact of absences on operations by reviewing workload requirements and adjusting work allocations as required; and
- provide information and collaborate with the external service provider and the Absence Management Consultant (AMC) to identify and assess possible accommodations such as gradual return to work, transitional duties/hours or any other return to work measures based on the employee's functional status.

#### **PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

##### **The PSC is responsible to:**

- develop and maintain supporting documentation for attendance support and absence management;
- promote consistent and effective administration and oversight of leave benefits;
- provide guidance and support to departments and their managers concerning attendance support and absence management;
- provide advice and assistance regarding the design and implementation of transitional or permanent alternative work duties or accommodations, where appropriate;
- coordinate the administration of an employee's leave with the appropriate external service providers; and
- monitor external service providers to ensure compliance with service level agreements.

## **EMPLOYEES**

### **Employees are responsible to:**

- report to work on a consistent, and timely basis as scheduled;
- report all absences in a timely manner using the appropriate reporting system and as per their department's reporting procedures or as outlined in the appropriate guidelines;
- maintain contact with their manager/supervisor during an absence;
- be aware of and access resources available to support their health and well-being;
- familiarize themselves with this policy to understand attendance expectations and supports;
- make every effort to work in a safe and healthy manner to maintain attendance;
- report injury or illness on duty to their manager/supervisor as soon as possible;
- attend to personal responsibilities and obligations outside normal working hours where practical;
- seek solutions in collaboration with their manager/supervisor, when possible, to issues that may be impacting their ability to maintain regular attendance;
- follow recommended assistance or treatment plans, where appropriate;
- provide consent to support proper application of leave benefits and comply with the external service providers to apply for benefits; and
- provide information and collaborate with the external service provider and the AMC to identify and facilitate an optimal and safe return to productive work.

## **Monitoring**

The PSC is responsible for the implementation of this policy and ensuring the policy is up to date with attendance support and absence management practices.

## **References**

*Civil Service Act* and regulations

Collective agreements between the Public Service Commission and the NSGEU; the Department of Transportation and Public Works and CUPE; and Crown Attorneys Employment Agreement

Attendance Support and Absence Management Guidelines

Duty to Accommodate Guidelines

Nova Scotia Public Service Long Term Disability Plan

*Workers' Compensation Act*

## Enquiries

For further information or questions about this policy, please contact:

Public Service Commission

Absence Management

Email: [absencemanagement@novascotia.ca](mailto:absencemanagement@novascotia.ca)

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Approval date: ***July 25, 2018***

Effective date:

Approved by: ***Treasury and Policy Board***

Administrative update:

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