

Attendance Support Policy

Original Implementation Date:	December 2008	Approved by:	CAO
Date of Last Revision:	October 1, 2024	Approved by:	Cathie O'Toole, CAO
Effective Date of Last Revision:	October 1, 2024	Approved by:	Cathie O'Toole, CAO

1 - Policy Name

Attendance Support Policy

2 - Purpose

Employees are responsible for attending work on a regular basis. Paid sick leave is intended to help protect the income of employees through periods of absenteeism due to illness or non-workplace injury. It is the policy of HRM to support employees to achieve optimal attendance and to manage employee absenteeism in a fair and consistent manner. The intent of the attendance support policy is to facilitate an appropriate return to work and is not intended to require employees to attend work if unable to do so due to illness or injury.

3 - Objectives

HRM is committed to:

- Maximizing service delivery to the public.
- Assisting employees in minimizing absences from work by making every reasonable effort to provide accommodation, assistance and rehabilitation.
- Promoting a healthy workplace.
- Providing guidance and training to management staff responsible for dealing with attendance issues.
- Recognizing good attendance and supporting employees with excessive levels of absenteeism with appropriate resources to assist in achieving/maintaining regular attendance.

4 - Scope

Excluding probationary employees, this policy applies to all permanent, full-time Employees of Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM).

5 - Definitions

In the context of this document:

Absenteeism Thresholds: There will be two absenteeism thresholds established: (1) Sick Leave Percentage Threshold- means the average rate of absenteeism of the applicable employee group- see Appendix A for specifics. This threshold will be established at the end of

each fiscal year and will be used for the next two review periods. (2) Occurrences Threshold-three occurrences in any six-month review period. An occurrence is a single, uninterrupted incident of absenteeism. This can be a single day or a series of days in a row without a return to work.

Culpable Absenteeism means absence from work due to factors within the employee's control. Culpable absenteeism includes failure to notify manager/supervisor of absence, absences without leave and abuse of leave. Culpable absenteeism may be grounds for discipline, up to and including termination, and are not managed within the Attendance Support Policy.

Non-Culpable Absenteeism means absence from work due to illness, or non-occupational injury, including absences that may be a result of a disability other than a compensable (ie WCB) illness or injury.

Review Period means under this policy, a review period is a six-month period. The six-month periods will start at the beginning of the pay period closest to April 1 and October 1 of each calendar year.

6 - Roles and Responsibilities

Supervisor

- Ensure the consistent application of the Attendance Support Policy.
- Complete training related to the Policy.
- Educate employees on the importance of regular attendance.
- Regularly communicate with employees.
- Promote a safe and healthy workplace. Report incidents and address concerns.
- Promote the Employee & Family Assistance Program (EFAP).
- Review all sick claims.
- Provide assistance with return to work.
- Provide positive feedback for improved attendance.
- Explore duty to accommodate (human rights).
- Address absenteeism in a timely and ongoing manner to identify opportunities for early intervention and/or support outside of the formal Attendance Support process.
- Keep documentation of all meetings, stage letters and any other records related to the administration of this Policy.

Employee

- Attend work on a regular basis.
- Comply with reporting and timekeeping requirements.
- Follow any reasonable actions necessary to bring attendance to an acceptable level.
- If requesting an accommodation, refer to the process outlined in the Duty to Accommodate Policy.
- Immediately report any changes to health status or restrictions to perform regular work to the supervisor.

- Supply documentation as required (Attendance Support Form, Functional Abilities Report, other) subject to provisions of the collective agreement (where applicable).
- Identify any required accommodation needs at earliest opportunity.

Human Resources

- Provide departmental attendance reports to management every six months.
- Provide ongoing support to supervisors in assisting employees to manage their attendance.
- Provide training on the Attendance Support Policy.
- Promote health and wellness and EFAP.
- Analyze attendance, benefits and accident reports to target interventions to address identified risks.
- Support supervisors through steps of Attendance Support.
- Advise supervisors on processes and procedures relating to disability case management.
- Liaise with supervisors to determine where and when an employee can return, their limitations and/or modified duties.
- Ensure supervisor is aware of any changes regarding recovery status, return to work date, modified duty, or limitations.

7 - Policy Regulations

Absenteeism Thresholds	<p>HRM determines the average absenteeism percentage for each Employee group as outlined in Appendix A.</p> <p>In determining the average for the purpose of the attendance support policy, the following absences are included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sick with pay • Sick without pay <p>Employees whose attendance record shows that their absenteeism percentage is greater than the absenteeism threshold for their Employee group, or whose number of occurrences exceeds 3 separate occurrences during any six month review period, will have their attendance reviewed.</p>
Attendance Support Stages	<p>The stages of Attendance Support, from informal meeting through to termination, are detailed below. However, there will be exceptions to this process at the Employer’s discretion based on individual circumstances. The supervisor will document the reasons.</p> <p>At the end of each six-month review period, supervisors will review the employee’s attendance record and make a decision to either keep the</p>

	<p>employee at the current stage of the process, to advance the employee to the next stage as outlined below or to return the employee to the Informal Stage (see “Sustained Improvement” section below).</p> <p>An employee should not remain at any stage of the process for more than two consecutive review periods, unless there are specific circumstances that warrant this.</p> <p>At all stages of the process, the Employer will take into consideration any human rights obligations respecting accommodations for people with disabilities. In these situations, Supervisors should consult with the appropriate resources (Human Resources, Legal).</p> <p>Once an employee is placed on Stage Two of Attendance Support, a bargaining unit employee, upon request, may arrange to bring a union representative for any further meetings called by the Employer under the Attendance Support Policy, unless the applicable collective agreement provides otherwise.</p>
<p>Informal Meeting</p>	<p>If an employee’s absenteeism percentage is greater than the group threshold average or where an employee’s absenteeism exceeds 3 occurrences in a six-month review period, an informal meeting will be conducted by the supervisor*. The purpose of the meeting is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify concerns with attendance. • Explain the impact of absences on the work operation. • Identify expectations for improvement. • Identify resources for assistance. <p>*Note- If the supervisor believes there are special circumstances such that a meeting is not required, the supervisor will document the reasons (see “Special Circumstances” section below). The supervisor will continue to monitor the employee’s absenteeism and will initiate the Informal Meeting stage if appropriate.</p>
<p>Stage 1</p>	<p>In Stage 1, a formal meeting will be held between the employee and the supervisor. The purpose of the meeting is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify that attendance does not meet the Employer’s expectations. • Explain the impact of absences on the work operation. • Identify expectations for improvement. • Provide an opportunity to discuss reasons for absenteeism. • Identify resources for assistance (referral to Workplace Health Services or EFAP).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify a specific course of action.
Stage 2	<p>In Stage 2, a formal meeting will be held between the employee and the supervisor. The purpose of the meeting is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify that continued level of absenteeism is a concern. Provide an opportunity to discuss reasons for absenteeism. Identify resources for assistance (referral to Workplace Health Services or EFAP). Identify expectations for satisfactory improvement. Identify a specific course of action and possible consequences.
Stage 3	<p>In Stage 3, a formal meeting will be held between the employee and the supervisor. The purpose of the meeting is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify that continued level of absenteeism is unacceptable. Provide an opportunity to discuss reasons for absenteeism. Formal referral to Workplace Health Services and EFAP. Clearly articulate that the employee will likely be terminated if attendance expectations are not met in either of the next two review periods.
Termination of Employment	<p>Prior to making a decision on termination of employment, the supervisor will consult with Human Resources/Legal to review the case.</p>
Sustained Improvement	<p>At any stage of the process, if there is sustained improvement in attendance for two consecutive review periods which is under or meets the applicable group absenteeism threshold(s), the employee will be returned to the Informal Stage of the process.</p> <p>If an employee has been returned to the Informal Stage of the process and maintains the sustained improvement in attendance for an additional two consecutive review periods which is under or meets the applicable group absenteeism threshold(s), the employee will be removed from Attendance Support.</p> <p>If an employee has been returned to the Informal Stage of the process and again exceeds the applicable group absenteeism threshold or exceeds three (3) innocent or non-culpable absenteeism occurrences in either of the next two six-month review periods, the supervisor may place the employee back to the stage the employee had been in prior to reverting to the Informal Stage.</p>
Special Circumstances	<p>If, at any time during the attendance review process, Supervisors become aware of special circumstances that have contributed to an employee's</p>

	<p>absenteeism in that review period, Supervisors shall exercise discretion in determining appropriate next steps, which may include not advancing the employee to the next step of the review process. For the purpose of this policy, special circumstances may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The employee has worked a significant amount of overtime due to operational demands, including forced overtime; or• There has been a workplace incident involving bullying, harassment, or any other situation covered by the Respectful Workplace Policy or an incident of workplace violence; or• The employee experienced a significant life event, which may include a death or serious illness of a family member; or• The employee has had a significant health issue and/or a medical procedure/surgery.
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8 - Repeal

Replaces Halifax Regional Municipality Attendance Support Policies issued September 2015.

9 - Effective Date

October 1, 2024

10 - Related Policies and Practices

Duty to Accommodate Policy

11 - Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years by Human Resources or as required.

12 - Contact

HR Business Partners

13 – Attachments

Appendix A- Absenteeism Threshold Groups

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Employee Group	Threshold Group
Non-Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 35 hour per week workers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All other Non-Union members (except Non-Union Fire employees who work the 24-hour shift- see below)
ATU	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conventional Bus Operator & Access-A-Bus Operator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All other ATU members
CUPE 108	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All CUPE 108 members
IAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 24-hour shift workers (including Non-Union employees)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 10.5-hour shift workers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Non-Operational members
HRPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 12-hour shift workers (IES & Patrol)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All other HRPA members
NSGEU 107	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All NSGEU 107 members
NSGEU 222	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All NSGEU 222 members