



PROCEDURE

HR-011

EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM

Superintendent Responsible: Superintendent of Human Resources	Initial Effective Date: 2020/02/24
Last Updated: 2024/02/27	Next Review Date: 2028/02/28

Purpose:

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

Guiding Principles:

Grand Erie is committed to creating and maintaining a healthy workplace for all employees. This procedure is to provide supportive assistance to employees to who are experiencing difficulty in attending work.

1.0 Illness/Injury Statistics Reporting

- 1.1. Grand Erie has established a standard frequency rate of absenteeism of two percent (2%) or less, and a standard severity rate of absenteeism of two percent (2%) or less. The definition of these two measures is as follows:
 - Frequency – the total number of days of absence as a percentage of an employee’s total scheduled workdays per school year
 - Severity – the number of occurrences of absences as a percentage of an employee’s scheduled workdays per school year
 - Examples:
 - For full-time, 12-month employee(s):
 - Five days of absence over a school year is a frequency rate of 2% (5/260 days)
 - Five consecutive days of absence in a school year is one occurrence and a severity rate of .4% (1/260 days)
 - Five separate days of absence over a school year represents 5 occurrences and severity rate of 2% (5/260 days)
 - For full-time, 10-month employee(s) and teachers:
 - Four days of absence over a school year is a frequency rate of 2% (4/194 days)
 - Four consecutive days of absence in a school year is one occurrence and a severity rate of .51% (1/194 days)
 - Four separate days of absence over a school year represents 4 occurrences and a severity rate of 2% (4/194 days)
- 1.2. Employee(s) absence data for schools/services, Families of Schools, and Grand Erie, may include frequency and severity rates.

2.0 DEFINITIONS	INCLUDES
Absences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal illness • Personal medical and dental appointments • Injury unrelated to work
Not considered absences under the definition of this Procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 personal day • Hazardous weather day • Moving day • Approved Long Term Disability Benefit claims

A School Administrator(s)/Immediate Supervisor(s) must exercise discretion in each case in determining whether to ask for a medical certificate in sections 3, 4, 5, or 6.

3.0 In a school year, absences of five consecutive working days for 12-month employee(s), OR four consecutive working days for 10-month employee(s) and teachers

- 3.1. Employee(s) are required to advise their School Administrator(s)/Immediate Supervisor(s) immediately following any illness or accident that prevents them from working in order to discuss a return-to-work date.
- 3.2. If the return-to-work date is five (four) consecutive working days or less, documentation from the appropriate treating medical practitioner(s) may be requested by, and submitted to, the School Administrator(s)/Immediate Supervisor(s), to be forwarded to the Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, as per 9(g).
- 3.3. The documentation shall consist of the following:
 - Medical restrictions and/or limitations that are preventing the employee from working and which may require accommodation upon return to work, if any
 - Expected date of recovery and/or return-to-work date
- 3.4. If restrictions and/or limitations have been documented by the employee's appropriate treating medical practitioner(s), the employee(s) will contact the Health and Disability Officer or Designate.
- 3.5. Any form developed by Grand Erie for use by the Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, to send to the appropriate treating medical practitioner(s) shall be consistent with the requirements of 3(c) in this Procedure. The Health and Disability Officer or Designate may give a copy of the form to the employee(s) and advise the employee(s) that they may provide a copy to their union representative.

4.0 In a school year, absences of six to ten consecutive working days for 12-month employee(s), OR five to ten consecutive working days for 10-month employee(s) and teachers

- 4.1. When an employee(s) will be absent from six (five) to ten consecutive working days, the employee(s) notifies the School Administrator(s)/Immediate Supervisor(s) immediately of the absence and the expected return-to-work date.

- 4.2. The employee(s) may be required to obtain documentation from the appropriate treating medical practitioner(s), as requested by and submitted to, the School Administrator(s)/Immediate Supervisor(s), to be forwarded to the Health and Disability Officer, or Designate as per 9(g). Documentation as outlined in 3(c) of this Procedure shall be required.
 - 4.3. The Health and Disability Officer or Designate will be advised by the School Administrator(s)/Immediate Supervisor(s) if an employee(s) has been requested to provide medical documentation.
 - 4.4. The Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, shall contact the employee(s) should documentation or information regarding an employee's restrictions and/or limitations be received directly from the appropriate treating medical practitioner(s).
- 5.0 **In a school year, after the sixth separate occurrence of an absence for 12-month employee(s), OR after the fifth separate occurrence of an absence for 10-month employee(s) and teachers AND on each subsequent occurrence of an absence within the same school year**
- 5.1. When an employee(s) is absent for six (five) separate occurrences within the school year, the School Administrator(s)/Immediate Supervisor(s) must meet with the employee(s) to discuss the absences.
 - 5.2. The employee(s) may be required to provide documentation, if any, as outlined in 3(c) of this Procedure.
 - 5.3. The employee(s) has a responsibility to notify the Health and Disability Officer or Designate.
 - 5.4. The Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, has responsibilities as outlined in 4(d) of this Procedure.
- 6.0 **Absences of more than ten consecutive working days**
- 6.1. When an employee(s) will be absent for over ten consecutive working days, they notify their School Administrator(s)/Immediate Supervisor(s) immediately of the absence.
 - 6.2. The School Administrator(s)/Immediate Supervisor(s) shall indicate to the employee(s) that the Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, will be notified of the employee's absence to enable early intervention and to facilitate a safe and timely return-to-work.
 - 6.3. The School Administrator(s)/Immediate Supervisor(s) will notify the Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, in one of three ways:
 - Via e-mail
 - Via fax - 519-759-5362
 - Via phone - 519-756-6306 or 888-548-8878, ext. 281130
 - 6.4. The Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, may require the employee(s) to provide documentation completed by the appropriate treating medical practitioner(s) that includes the following information:
 - Functional abilities form that describes the medically supported restrictions and/or limitations the employee(s) is experiencing in relation to the essential duties of their position
 - Confirmation that the employee(s) is participating in the appropriate treatment to expedite the employee's safe and timely return-to-work
 - Expected date the employee(s) could participate in a Return-to-Work Program with appropriate modifications/accommodations based on restrictions and/or limitations
 - Expected return-to-work date at regular hours and duties
 - Any other information required to safely return the employee(s) to work in a timely manner
 - Treating medical practitioner's name, signature, address, phone number and fax number

- 6.5. Unless otherwise arranged, this documentation must be submitted by the employee(s) or appropriate treating medical practitioner(s) to the Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, within ten working days of the date of the request.

7.0 Sick Leave Benefit

- 7.1. As outlined below, an employee(s) is entitled to sick leave benefits if they become injured or ill and have a credit of unused sick leave.
- 7.2. An employee(s) is entitled to sick leave if they are disabled, which is defined as a state of incapacity which is due to bodily injury or sickness, preventing the employee from working for Grand Erie for remuneration.
- 7.3. Sick leave benefits are not payable:
- In cases which are compensable by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board
 - For 12-month employee(s) during scheduled vacation unless the illness requires hospitalization
 - When an employee(s) is on an authorized unpaid leave of absence
 - When an employee(s) does not have a bank of sick days
 - For the percentage of time an employee(s) is receiving Long Term Disability Benefits
 - When appropriate medical documentation has not been received. Appropriate medical documentation refers to, but is not limited to, medically supported restrictions and/or limitations as they relate to the employee's ability to perform the essential duties of their position. It is the employee's responsibility to submit appropriate documentation to the School Administrator(s)/Immediate Supervisor(s), Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, as applicable
- 7.4. To be eligible for sick leave benefits, the employee(s) must follow Grand Erie's procedures for reporting absences related to illness or injury and for returning to work, as referred to under section 8.
- 7.5. Grand Erie will endeavour to accommodate the return-to-work and placement of partially disabled employee(s).
- 7.6. In order to maintain access to sick leave benefits, the Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, may request the employee(s) to attend an Independent Medical Evaluation (IME) and/or Functional Abilities Evaluation to determine the employee's restrictions and/or limitations and the employee's capacity to perform the duties of their position, as well as providing return-to-work and/or accommodation option(s). In requesting the IME, the following Protocol will apply:
- If the Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, requires medical documentation to determine whether an employee(s) is able to return-to-work or should properly remain off work and in receipt of sick leave benefits, the Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, shall so advise the employee(s) and request that such documentation be provided
 - The employee(s) is to provide medical documentation to the Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, in response to the request
 - The Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, will review the documentation provided by the employee(s). If the Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, is not satisfied with the adequacy of the medical documentation provided, the Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, will clearly identify to the employee(s) why the documentation is not adequate
 - The employee(s) will be given an opportunity to provide the Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, with further medical documentation
 - The Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, will review any further documentation provided by the employee(s). If the entirety of the medical documentation provided does not permit the Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, to determine whether the employee(s) should return-to-work or remain off work, the employee(s) may be requested to submit to an IME

- If the employee(s) fails to attend the IME or does not, prior to the IME, provide the Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, with further medical documentation to reasonably permit the Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, to determine whether the employee(s) should return-to-work or remain off work, the employee's access to sick leave benefits may be discontinued

8.0 **Responsibilities of the Employee(s)**

- 8.1. To personally call or text in to report an absence unless the employee(s) is incapacitated and unable to do so. Failure to report absences at the first opportunity in accordance with these Procedures may result in denial of pay or benefits.
- 8.2. To indicate, in general terms, the reason for the absence, i.e., due to accident, illness, bereavement, etc.
- 8.3. To call in directly to their School Administrator(s)/Immediate Supervisor(s). Unless otherwise arranged with the School Administrator(s)/Immediate Supervisor(s), the employee(s) is to call in on each day of absence.
- 8.4. To assume responsibility for the costs associated with the initial documentation from the appropriate treating medical practitioner(s) in relation to the absence. Costs associated with subsequent request(s) for medical documentation by the Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, will be borne by Grand Erie.
- 8.5. To be entitled to sick leave benefits, employee(s) may be required to provide satisfactory medical documentation in the form of a medical certificate or on forms provided by Grand Erie to be completed by the appropriate treating medical practitioner(s), as referred to in sections 3, 4, 5 and 6 of this Procedure.
- 8.6. To maintain regular contact with their School Administrator(s)/Immediate Supervisor(s) and/or the Health and Disability Officer during their absence when they are unable to perform the essential duties of their position due to illness or disability.
- 8.7. To participate in appropriate treatment, as determined by the appropriate treating medical practitioner(s), to ensure a safe and timely return-to-work. To participate in the development of their Return-to-Work Plan, including taking the proposed Return-to-Work Plan (including appropriate accommodations and/or modifications) to the appropriate treating medical practitioner(s) for approval, if necessary.

9.0 **Responsibilities of the School Administrator(s)/Immediate Supervisor(s)**

- 9.1. To ensure the daily maintenance of accurate, up-to-date records in the absence dispatch system.
- 9.2. To monitor individual employee(s) absenteeism records by accessing the absence dispatch system.
- 9.3. To identify, by accessing the absence dispatch system, absenteeism trends or patterns, such as the following:
 - Frequent absences of short duration of ten days or less
 - Absences of more than ten 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, scheduled days off and statutory holidays
 - Absenteeism in excess of the severity and frequency rates identified above
 - As identified by the Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, absences in excess of standard recovery time, in accordance with Canadian Medical Association, for an employee's illness or injury
- 9.4. To receive call-ins or return employees' calls should a message be received from employee(s) and determine the reason for absence.
- 9.5. To ensure employee(s) confidentiality in relation to absences and medical documentation received from an employee's appropriate treating medical practitioner under sections 3 to 6 of this Procedure.

- 9.6. To contact Human Resources or the Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, for assistance when restrictions and/or limitations have been documented by the employee's appropriate treating medical practitioner.
 - 9.7. To forward all medical documentation directly to the Health and Disability Officer, or Designate, in a secure and confidential manner.
 - 9.8. To advise employee(s) of their obligation to provide medical restrictions and/or limitations, as required. However, School Administrator(s)/Immediate Supervisor(s) shall not require an employee(s) to sign a release to authorize collection of medical documentation.
 - 9.9. To meet with the employee(s) to discuss attendance issues when the employee(s) has been absent in accordance with sections 3, 4, 5, and 6 of this Procedure.
 - 9.10. To participate in the development of the employee's Return-to-Work Plan, including providing accommodations and/or modifications to the employee's duties and/or hours, based on recommendations from the Health and Disability Officer, or Designate.
 - 9.11. To notify the Health and Disability Officer, or Designate of any absence greater than five days in length.
- 10.0 **Responsibilities of the Health and Disability Officer, or Designate**
- 10.1. To request medical documentation from employee(s) in accordance with this Procedure.
 - 10.2. To receive all medical documentation required from the employee, or their School Administrator(s)/Immediate Supervisor(s), or the employee's appropriate treating medical practitioner(s) and provide support to the employee(s) during their time of disability.
 - 10.3. To assess the medical documentation received to ensure it is appropriate and consistent with this Procedure's requirements. Medical documentation that is not appropriate may not be accepted.
 - 10.4. To assist the School Administrator(s)/Immediate Supervisor(s) by maintaining contact with employee(s) disabled for ten (10) or more consecutive working days, verifying that the employee(s) is under the active care of the appropriate medical practitioner(s) and following an appropriate treatment plan, and advise the School Administrator(s)/Immediate Supervisor(s) of the expected return-to-work date, when known.
 - 10.5. To develop an appropriate Return-to-Work Plan (including appropriate accommodation and/or modification recommendations) based on the employee's medically supported restrictions and/or limitations.
- 11.0 **Innocent (Non-Culpable) Absenteeism:**
- 11.1. Innocent (Non-Culpable) Absenteeism relates to absences as a result of disabilities that arise due to circumstances beyond the employee's control. These absences are not dealt with through a progressive discipline model; instead, the employee(s) is supported through the Health and Disability Management Program.
 - 11.2. Grand Erie reserves the right to consider the termination of an employee for continuous, non-culpable absenteeism, greater than 24 months.

Reference(s):

- [Ontario Human Rights Code](#)
- Workplace Accommodation and Return-to-Work Program Procedure (HR-022)