



# Northeastern Catholic District School Board

## ATTENDANCE SUPPORT

Administrative Procedure Number: APP013-4

### POLICY STATEMENT

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The Northeastern Catholic District School Board (NCDSB) is committed to creating and maintaining a safe and healthy workplace. As a witness to God's healing activity in the world, the NCDSB is called to act out of a deepened sense of responsibility for the health and wellness of its students and staff. The NCDSB believes that both individual and organizational health are important factors affecting the ability of all employees to attend work and to contribute fully to its mission. This strategy combines both prevention and intervention to achieve the goals of personal and workplace wellness as well as student achievement.

In order to carry out the NCDSB's mandate, regular attendance by all employees is essential to support student achievement. The Employee Support Program (ESP) is a comprehensive program aimed at positively supporting the health of employees and the organization. The Employee Support Program will be supported by Disability Support, Attendance Support and Wellness Programs.

### REFERENCES

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*Ontario Human Rights Code*

*Workplace Safety and Insurance Act*

*Employment Standards Act*

*Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*

NCDSB Policy

P-13 Employee Support Program Policy

E-24 Personal Information Management

NCDSB Administrative Procedure

APP013-1 Absence Reporting Injury or Illness

APP013-2 Confidentiality of Medical Records

APP013-3 Disability Support: Early Intervention, Accommodations and Return to Work

### DEFINITIONS

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#### **Absence**

For the purpose of this administrative procedure:

Absences **may include:**

- i) Personal illness/injury (paid and unpaid) if the absences are less than 5 consecutive days and the employee is not involved in the school board's Disability Support Program/WSIB RTW Plan or LTD RTW Plan.
- ii) Medical appointments and emergency dental appointments.

- iii) An absence is defined as any portion of a day. The actual time missed is considered in the threshold count.

Absences **not included**:

- iv) Vacation
- v) Culpable absences
- vi) Family medical leaves as defined by the *Employment Standards Act*
- vii) Pre-approved prolonged leaves of absence
- viii) Bereavement leave
- ix) Jury or subpoena leave
- x) Pregnancy/adoption leave
- xi) Union business leave
- xii) Examinations and convocations
- xiii) Quarantine
- xiv) Observance of recognized religious holy days
- xv) Inclement weather days
- xvi) Suspension
- xvii) Approved long term disability claims
- xviii) Paid or unpaid personal leave
- xix) Emergency leaves under the *Employment Standard Act* not due to personal illness/injury

**Absence Threshold**

The threshold is used as a mechanism to initiate non-disciplinary and supportive intervention. It represents the established number of absences that may trigger entry into the ASP. The Board's current threshold is 14 days of absence within a rolling 12-working-month period. When this threshold is met or exceeded, the Principal/Supervisor may meet with the employee to discuss their absenteeism. During this meeting the employee's personal circumstances will be considered. In addition to total days of absence, the number of occurrences will also be considered when the matter is addressed.

**Culpable Absenteeism**

Relates to those absences involving culpable conduct for which employees can be held accountable and may be disciplined. Failure to attend work without notifying the employer, lateness for work or leaving early and abuse of leave are examples of culpable absences. These absences are not processed under the Attendance Support Program.

**Innocent (Non-Culpable) Absenteeism**

Relates to absences as a result of illness or injury and personal medical appointments or emergency dental appointments unrelated to work that arise due to circumstances beyond the employee's control. These absences are not dealt with through a progressive discipline model; instead, the employee is supported through the Attendance Support Program.

**Prorated Threshold**

The number of working days an employee is absent may be prorated.

## **Supervisor**

An employee's immediate supervisor which may include the Board of Trustees through the Chair, Director, Superintendent, Principal/Manager/Supervisor and/or designate.

## **PROCEDURES**

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### **1.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The intent of the Attendance Support Procedure ("ASP") is to set clear and consistent expectations for school boards for the development and implementation of ASPs with the goal of enhancing employee well-being and attendance in a supportive and non-disciplinary manner for employees who exceed the school board's established absence threshold of 14 days within a rolling 12-working-month period.

The ASP also includes leading practices to support school boards with the development and implementation of their ASP's which adhere to the following principles:

- i) All school board employees play an important role in contributing to a supportive, positive and healthy school/school board community.
- ii) Attendance support is part of the regular operations of school boards.
- iii) The ASP must be implemented in alignment with applicable laws including the Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and must not be inconsistent with relevant school board collective agreements.
- iv) To ensure fair and consistent application of the ASP policy for all employees.
- v) To reduce absenteeism and related direct and indirect costs.
- vi) To increase attendance awareness by communicating the importance of regular attendance to all employees.
- vii) To promote cooperation between leaders and employees to achieve and maintain regular attendance at work.
- viii) To ensure all employees and leaders are aware of their responsibilities in maintaining acceptable attendance.
- ix) To assist employees who may require help in resolving health or other personal difficulties which may be affecting their ability to maintain acceptable attendance levels.
- x) To recognize employees who have demonstrated improved attendance.

### **2.0 GENERAL PROVISIONS**

- 2.1 School board monitoring of attendance through the ASP may assist with the identification of employees who require a referral to disability management, other support programs, accommodation, or other employee assistance.
- 2.2 An effective ASP should encourage joint accountability for health and wellness by seeking employees' input in creating solutions to address overall well-being and attendance.
- 2.3 The Ministry of Education requires all school boards to develop and implement an ASP in accordance with the following principles:

- i) statement of principles and objectives
  - ii) definitions of absences
  - iii) attendance threshold
  - iv) defined roles and responsibilities
  - v) documented processes and procedures
  - vi) monitoring, evaluating and reviewing processes
- 2.4 When an employee's absences exceed the established absence threshold the provisions of this procedure apply.
- 2.5 Should a medically supported disability be identified that requires support or accommodation at any time during the process, the school board will review, and when required, support the employee's transition into the Disability Support Program. Sporadic absences may continue to be considered within the Attendance Support Program.
- 2.6 The Board reserves the right to consider the termination of an employee for innocent absenteeism if the employee is unable to attend work with reasonable regularity and there is no reasonable prospect that an employee can regularly attend in the future even with reasonable accommodation if available.
- 2.7 The threshold established by the Board may be reviewed every two years.
- 2.8 Employees should be reminded on a yearly basis of the established threshold.
- 2.9 Entry into any level of the multi-level process is applied consistently to all employees using discretion. The attendance objectives which are set within any level are specific and unique to each employee's circumstances and the exercise of the Board's discretion will reflect its legal obligations.
- 2.10 The employee may include their union/association representative in the Attendance Support process. At the employee's request, the union/association representative may attend any meetings that occur to discuss or review the employee's attendance
- 2.11 The employee shall be notified via email correspondence by their Principal/Supervisor of their entry into each step of the Attendance Support Program. This correspondence shall be copied to the Human Resources Officer.

### **3.0 ATTENDANCE SUPPORT PROCESS**

- 3.1 The Attendance Support Process includes 5 distinct components:
- i) Preliminary Meeting
  - ii) Coaching Level 1
  - iii) Coaching Level 2
  - iv) Coaching Level 3
  - v) Coaching Level 4

### 3.2 Preliminary Meeting

The preliminary meeting may include the employee, the employee's union/association if requested, the Principal or Supervisor and/or a Human Resources designate as appropriate to initiate discussion related to the employee's absences; seek an understanding of the issue(s) that may be preventing the employee from regularly attending work; offer support and guidance; consider workplace accommodation needs if required under statute; as well as set attendance goals for the next 90 working days.

### 3.3 Coaching Level 1

The Coaching Level 1 meeting may include the employee, the employee's union/association if requested, the Principal or Supervisor and/or a Human Resources designate, as appropriate if the employee has been unable to meet the attendance goals established in the Preliminary Meeting for the review period. If no extenuating circumstances have been provided for which discretion may be applied, attendance goals will be set with the employee that will apply for the next 90 working days.

### 3.4 Coaching Level 2

The Coaching Level 2 meeting may include the employee, the employee's union/association if requested, the Principal or Supervisor and/or a Human Resources designate as appropriate. The employee may enter Level 2 if they have been unable to meet the attendance goals established in the Level 1 meeting for the review period. If no extenuating circumstances have been provided for which discretion may be applied, attendance goals may be identified for the employee by the Board representative for the next 90 working days.

### 3.5 Coaching Level 3

The Coaching Level 3 meeting may include the employee, the employee's union/association, the Principal or Supervisor and/or a Human Resources designate as appropriate. The employee may enter Level 3, if they have been unable to meet the attendance goals established in the Level 2 meeting for the review period. If no extenuating circumstances have been provided for which discretion may be applied, attendance goals may be identified for the employee that will apply for the next 90 working days. The employee will be advised that failure to improve attendance during the Level 3 review period may advance the employee to Coaching Level 4 where their employment status will be reviewed. This review may include termination on a non-disciplinary basis.

### 3.6 Coaching Level 4

The Coaching Level meeting may include the employee, the employee's union/association, the Principal or Supervisor and the Manager of Human Resources. The employee may enter into Level 4, if they have been unable to meet the attendance goals established in the Level 3 meeting for the review period. Where the employee progresses to Level 4 and the Board determines that:

- i) it has fulfilled its obligations under the applicable collective agreement and/or policies and procedures, the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act*, *Ontario Human Rights Code* and any other applicable legislation; and,
- ii) 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;

then the employee's employment status will be reviewed, up to and including termination on a non-disciplinary basis.

3.7 When attendance goals have been met within a coaching level, the employee enters a review period of up to 12 working months where their absences are monitored by the Human Resources Officer.

- i) Employees who exceed the threshold in the 12-working month monitoring period will remain in the Attendance Support Program. The employee may be invited to attend a meeting at next Level of the program.
- ii) Employees who do not exceed the threshold in the 12-working month monitoring period will exit the Attendance Support Program.
- iii) If the employee's absences exceed the boards established threshold after existing the ASP, the employee will enter the program at the Preliminary Level.

## 4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

### 4.1 Employees

- i) Maintain regular and on-time attendance at work;
- ii) Enter all absences in a timely manner following the Board's established absence reporting process;
- iii) Participate actively in all levels of the attendance support process;
- iv) Cooperate in setting personal attendance goals;
- v) Contact their union representative if the employee wishes them to be involved; and
- vi) Provide sufficient and appropriate documentation, during any level of the process in accordance with the related provisions of the Absence Reporting Procedure.

### 4.2 Principal/Supervisors

- i) Communicate attendance expectations to all employees through a regular review of the Attendance Support Program;
- ii) Review absence reports for staff and ensure accuracy;
- iii) Identify and inform the Human Resources Officer of absenteeism trends or patterns, such as the following:
  - frequent absences of short duration;
  - absences of 5 or more 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;
- absenteeism in excess of the threshold.
- iv) Address all absenteeism issues using discretion and seek support from Human Resources;
- v) Facilitating supportive meetings as outlined in the Attendance Support Procedure and provide input into the development of individualized attendance goals for each employee involved in the process
- vi) Support employees and act as a resource;
- vii) Advise employees of available resources (i.e. EAP);
- viii) Provide a written invitations and outcomes of coaching level meetings to the employee with a copy to the Human Resources Officer;
- ix) Provide positive feedback to employees when they reach their attendance goals.

#### 4.3 Human Resources Officer

- i) Support Principal/Supervisors in identifying absenteeism trends or patterns, such as the following:
  - frequent absences of short duration;
  - absences of five (5) or more consecutive days to identify possible entry into the Disability Support Program;
  - 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; and
  - absenteeism in excess of the threshold;
- ii) Support supervisors in addressing absenteeism issues;
- iii) Serve as a resource to employees and supervisors;
- iv) Identify employees who exceed the threshold level of absences;
- v) Advise employees of resources available to them;
- vi) Participate in meetings as outlined in the ASP, as required;
- vii) Provide assistance on the development of individualized goals at the conclusion of each meeting, considering all circumstances identified during
- viii) Measure the average number of occurrences and the working days absent per employee group on an annual basis and communicate the results to the Manager of Human Resources.

#### 4.4 Manager of HR/Supervisory Officers

- i) Conduct Coaching Level 4 meetings, and other meetings, when required. In conjunction with the Human Resources Officer and Principals and/or Supervisors, review the cases of employees who have not met attendance goals in Coaching Level 3;
- ii) Provide support and act as a resource to all aspects of the attendance support process;

- iii) Request regular reports to identify the outcome and timeliness of meetings conducted and follow up on meetings required that have not yet been conducted;
- iv) Hold leaders accountable to facilitating time meetings with employees in need of support.
- v) Ensure a review/audit of the Attendance Support Program occurs at a minimum of every three years as part of the Board's regular policy/procedure review cycle.

#### 4.5 Union/Association Representative

- i) Cooperate and help identify potential underlying issues affecting attendance and engage in problem-solving to explore reasonable accommodations or solutions where applicable.
- ii) Provide employees with clear and accurate information regarding the AS process.
- iii) Attend AS meetings when requested by employees.
- iv) Ensure that any discussions or meetings involving the employee's attendance are conducted in a respectful and confidential manner.

### 5.0 ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (AODA)

- 5.1 The Board is committed to ensuring that the ASP complies with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).
- 5.2 The Board recognizes its responsibility to provide accessible services, programs, and accommodations to all employees in accordance with the AODA, the Ontario Human Rights Code, and any other applicable legislation.
- 5.3 Employees requiring accommodation due to a disability will be supported in alignment with the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity.
- 5.4 The Board will ensure that all meetings, communication, and documentation related to the ASP are available in accessible formats upon request and will provide any necessary accommodations to facilitate full participation in the process.
- 5.5 Supervisors, Principals, and Human Resources designate involved in the Attendance Support Program will receive training to ensure compliance with the AODA and to enhance their understanding of providing accessible and inclusive support to employees.

### 6.0 RELATED FORMS AND DOCUMENTS

Nil.

**Director of Education:**

**Date:**