

<b>Policy Title:</b>	<b>ATTENDANCE</b>	<b>Area of Responsibility:</b>
<b>Policy Section:</b>	<b>HUMAN RESOURCES</b>	<b>SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES &amp; FACILITIES SERVICES</b>
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### **5.3 Attendance**

#### ***Notification of Return to Work***

The College expects employees to keep Human Resources and their supervisors informed as to a likely return to work date. Should this not occur, the supervisor, in consultation with Human Resources, may initiate contact with the employee from time to time in order to obtain a status report on the illness, as well as to deal appropriately with any resulting staffing and/or scheduling issues.

#### ***Return to Work - Doctor's Notes, Functional Abilities Forms***

To return to work after illness or injury, employees may be required to provide a medical clearance to Human Resources, who will notify the manager. A return to work note is mandatory when the original doctor's note did not specify an anticipated time limit on the illness or an expected return to work date. If appropriate, employees may also be required to have a Functional Abilities Form completed by their physician. The College does not pay any fees associated with doctor's notes or Functional Abilities Forms.

#### **Medical (sick) note procedure**

- It is St. Clair's practice that medical (sick) notes are required once an employee is off work for three (3) or more consecutive days.
- Employees must always notify their Supervisor of absence on every absence.
- If an Employee is off work for three (3) or more consecutive days, they must send medical (sick) notes to Benefits Officer – Human Resources Office.
- Benefits Officer- will place medical note in personnel file.
- Benefits Officer will keep track of medical note to match with time sheets.
- If discrepancy occurs (i.e., missing medical note), Human Resources will contact Manager.
- Will notify employee to send medical note to Benefits Officer.

- Administration reserves the right, based on individual circumstances, to ask an employee for a doctor's note at any time;
- Vacation Time will not be altered to Sick Time unless the employee is hospitalized.

Medical information is kept with upmost regards to your privacy. St. Clair College is committed to ensuring that this confidentiality is maintained.

### ***Sick Leave Credits Do Not Constitute an Acceptable Level of Absenteeism***

Managers, supervisors, and employees are reminded that the number of sick day credits per benefit year provided under the two collective agreements and the Terms and Conditions of Employment for Administrative Staff do not constitute an acceptable level of absenteeism. Sick leave credits are provided for the purpose of allowing an employee to build a bank of credits to be used not only for legitimate short-term illnesses, but also in the event of long-term illness as a partial source of income protection.

### **Attendance Support Program**

#### **Introduction**

St. Clair College is committed to providing the highest level of education and related services within available resources to the community. This objective can only be realized through the efforts of well-trained and dedicated staff who fulfill the requirements of their jobs on a regular basis.

Within this framework, each employee is considered a unique individual with an inherent value whose well-being and function is promoted by St. Clair College. All staff are responsible for their own well-being and are encouraged to fulfill their own potential.

Regular and consistent attendance promotes higher staff morale, fair workload allocation, increased efficiency, and improved quality of services to our students. High rates of absenteeism cause job dissatisfaction, lower staff morale, and loss of productivity, which not only results in higher operating costs but also lower quality of delivery of services.

The Attendance Support Program (ASP) provides for a mutual awareness between managers and employees regarding the impact of absenteeism. It involves staff in supporting attendance at work and increases accountability to foster a sense of pride. Integral to the program is the belief that all employees must feel respected and valued and employees derive pride and satisfaction from their work.

St. Clair College is committed to a fair and consistent approach in attendance management. St. Clair College acknowledges that legitimate illnesses do occur which preclude an employee from performing his/her regular duties.

**Policy Statement**

The provision of quality education and services at St. Clair College relies heavily on the skills and expertise of all employees, whether they are involved directly with the students or provide a support service. Regular and consistent attendance at work by all employees is an essential requirement of employment. It is the employee's responsibility to take the appropriate steps necessary to meet this requirement.

The Attendance Support Program is designed to:

- Promote the College's mission and values in creating a positive work environment.
- Establish a procedural framework that will provide a basis for a consistent approach related to attendance.

The Attendance Support Program will be administered in accordance with the provisions of the Ontario Human Rights Code and, where applicable, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act and Collective Agreements.

**Objectives**

- To prevent staff illness and injury by promoting the use of prevention resources such as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), as well as other health and wellness programs.
- To provide a healthy and positive work environment.
- To reduce absenteeism and related direct and indirect costs.
- To routinely measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the ASP.
- To monitor the consistency of the application of the process within the College.
- To ensure accurate reporting of sick and work accommodation hours.
- To support managers in implementing the ASP across the College in a fair, consistent, and equitable manner that is compatible with the College values.
- To provide employees and managers with clear policies, procedures, and guidelines for attendance management.

**Approach**

- To bring an attendance issue to the employee's attention in a timely manner and communicate the College's expectations.
- To address absences through discussion and counselling.
- To discuss and offer recommendations for support and intervention, as required.
- To provide follow up and feedback on progress.
- To treat all information related to absences as confidential.
- To manage absences on a case-by-case basis in a framework of consistently applied policies and procedures.

## **Employee Tools**

### **1. Employee Assistance Program**

This is a service available for employees to deal with any issues or concerns that may be contributing to their absences.

### **2. Work Accommodation**

The College is committed to exploring re-integration and accommodation options for the employee's early and safe return to his/her normal job. In order to facilitate accommodation and re-integration, the active participation of the employee is required.

Employees are encouraged to cooperate and are expected to make full use of the Employee Assistance Program and/or other external resources.

## **Attendance Management**

St. Clair College maintains the Attendance Support Program for the purpose of promoting regular attendance by monitoring individual absences. The program includes all full-time employees. Whenever possible, to improve an employee's attendance, he/she will be offered assistance such as the Employee Assistance Program, referral for treatment, and/or a reasonable work accommodation program if applicable.

Only sick time, paid and unpaid, will be reviewed under the Attendance Support Program. These absences will be dealt with by discussion and counselling. The appropriate response to non-culpable (innocent) absenteeism is to assist the employee in identifying the reasons for the excessive absenteeism and exploring with the employee the steps which could be taken to correct the problem(s).

Innocent absenteeism will be managed on a case-by-case basis and may involve the employee, his/her supervisor, a union representative, and an HR representative.

The Attendance Support Program consists of:

- 5 stages of concern meetings
- Completion by a physician of a Functional Abilities Form\*, if appropriate. \* The College does not pay for these forms to be completed.

## **Procedure**

Human Resources will determine the average sick day usage for all constituent groups. This average will be reviewed on an annual basis and communicated to all staff.

- Every four months, Human Resources will send alert reports to managers which will include those employees who have exceeded the College average sick day usage in the previous 4-month period.
- Step 1 will involve Human Resources notifying the manager/sector head that an employee has exceeded the College average. The manager/sector head will meet with the employee and discuss the concern regarding absences, document the conversation and advise Human Resources that the meeting has taken place (email is acceptable). This excludes employees currently on short term or long-term disability.
- Human Resources will generate the letters for the manager for step 2 and above.

At each concern meeting, the manager will:

- Confirm the employee's number of days and incidents using the report provided by HR.
- Ask if there is anything that they can do to assist the employee in returning to regular attendance.
- Offer the services of the EAP and Human Resources as appropriate.
- Communicate the impact of absences on the department and remind the employee that regular attendance is a requirement of employment.
- Following the meeting, have Human Resources generate the letter (Step 2 and above) and ensure that a copy is provided to the employee and to the union representative if requested by the employee.

At the second meeting (Stage 2) and beyond, the employee will be made aware that continued inability to maintain regular attendance might result in termination of employment, which is based on a frustration of the employment contract. Some of the factors affecting this decision will include: length of time in the program, work accommodation(s) identified and offered, prognosis for regular attendance.

Note: When an employee is at Step 1 or 2 of the program and who was on the report and is NOT on a subsequent report, his/her status will be removed from the Attendance Support Program. If the employee is at any other stage of the program then his/her status is reduced by one stage. For example: If an employee was on the list and had reached Stage 3 status but was not on the next list, his/her status in the program would be reduced to Stage 2.

**Attendance Support Program Overview**

HR will send attendance reports to managers every 4 months including all employees who are over the College average number of sick days. HR, in consultation with the supervisors/managers, may exercise discretion to determine whether an employee's particular circumstances are extenuating and warrant the employee not entering or progressing to the next stage of the Plan (e.g. Exceptional Circumstances). In exercising discretion, HR will ensure fairness and consistency across the College.

**Stage 1 – Concern Meeting**

Manager/sector head will meet with employee if on the report, document and advise Human Resources.

Document meeting and advise Human Resources.

**Stage 2 – Concern Meeting**

Manager will meet with employee if still on the report.

Stresses seriousness of poor attendance and advises of the potential for future termination.

Present letter and, if requested by the employee, to the union local.

**Stage 3 – Concern Meeting**

Manager will meet with employee if still on the report.

Stresses seriousness of poor attendance and advises of the potential for future termination.

Present letter and, if requested by the employee, to the union local.

**Stage 4 – Concern Meeting**

Manager will meet with employee if still on the report.

Stresses seriousness of poor attendance and advises of the potential for future termination.

Present letter and, if requested by the employee, to the union local.

**Stage 5 – Concern Meeting**

If still on the report, the Manager will meet with the employee, his/her union representative, and Human Resources.

Termination Decision.

- Note:
- 1) When an employee is at Step 1 or 2 of the program and who was on the report and is NOT on a subsequent report, his/her status will be removed from the Attendance Support Program. If the employee is at any other stages of the program then his/her status is reduced by one stage. For example: If an employee was on the list and reached Stage 3 status, but was not on the next list, his/her status in the program would be reduced to Stage 2.
  - 2) When an employee is off work as a result of an exceptional circumstance (as described above), they will remain at the current stage and not be reduced by one stage.

## **Definitions**

### **Innocent absenteeism**

- absences that arise due to circumstances beyond an employee's control.

### **Serious innocent absenteeism**

- absences that arise due to circumstances beyond an employee's control but are higher than the College average for a period of one year

### **Culpable absenteeism**

- lateness/leave early or absence problems for which the employee should be held responsible because they are within the employee's power to address and correct

### **Exceptional Circumstances**

- an illness that requires ongoing treatment (such as cancer) or an illness or injury that results from a one time, time limited absence (such as an individual recovering from a broken bone or surgery).