

BUILDING POSITIVE WORK ATTENDANCE POLICY

Purpose

1. This policy provides the principles by which work attendance requirements are to be managed in order to support both robust and effective working environments and employee wellbeing.

Application

2. This policy contains a set of whole-of-government instructions issued by the Head of Service under the *Public Sector Management Act 1994* which binds all employees and officers engaged under that Act.

Background

3. The ACT Government is committed to the health and wellbeing of its employees. Positive work attendance is characterised by work environments that are not routinely disrupted by high levels of unscheduled absence and where usage of planned leave entitlements allows employees to achieve a healthy work/life balance. Positive work attendance is a mutual goal shared by directorates, managers/supervisors, employees and the organisation as a whole.

Principles

4. Managers/supervisors and employees have a mutual obligation to support a culture of positive attendance by correct usage of leave entitlements provided in ACTPS Enterprise Agreements.
5. Unscheduled work absence must be managed with a genuine view to the employee's welfare and must utilise early intervention practices.
6. In addition to prescription in ACTPS Enterprise Agreements, managers/supervisors must approve or decline employees' requests for leave in line with the principles of natural justice, procedural fairness and the operational needs of the work area.
7. Where an employee is ill or injured, the management of their absence must align with the relevant Whole of Government policies.

Management of Unscheduled Absence

8. A low level of unscheduled absence is acknowledged as a normal part of every workplace.
9. Directorates and agencies are responsible for encouraging considerate work practices such as the utilisation of personal leave in order to prevent the spread of contagious and seasonal illnesses or reduce risk associated with communicable illnesses being passed to colleagues with compromised immune systems.
10. Unscheduled absence that has become frequent, prolonged, reflects a pattern or is otherwise of concern must be recognised. Prompt, appropriate action must be taken to support the employee's positive work attendance, including seeking advice from directorate/agency Human Resources and/or Injury Prevention areas.
11. A manager/supervisor may undertake an informal conversation with an employee who has returned to the workplace after an unscheduled absence. The conversation must be undertaken with a genuine view to the employee's welfare and explore:
 - the reasons behind the absence (work related, personal or otherwise);
 - whether the employee is fit to return to the workplace; and
 - whether the manager can adjust any aspect of the work or workplace to assist the employee to build positive attendance.

Contact with employees who are absent from work

12. Managers/supervisors are responsible for maintaining appropriate contact with employees who are absent from work. This includes employees on extended leave, as directed in the ACTPS *Staying in Touch* Policy.
13. Making contact with employees who are absent from work without any form of approved leave to enquire after the employee's welfare is an accepted management practice within ACT Government workplaces;
14. If a manager/supervisor is unable to successfully contact an employee within 24 hours of that employee being absent from work without approved leave, the manager/supervisor should consider contacting the employee's emergency contact. This does not limit a manager/supervisor from making contact with an employee's emergency contact sooner and each case should be considered on its merits.

Responsibilities

15. Directors-General and equivalent Agency Heads will:
 - model and promote a consistent, flexible and empathetic approach to the management of attendance in order to build positive attendance cultures in line with this and other whole of Government policies and legislation; and
 - ensure their directorate/agency provides support to managers/supervisors to strengthen their capability to build positive attendance.
16. Managers/supervisors are responsible for building a positive attendance culture with the employees they manage by:
 - understanding policies and procedures which apply to their workforce, including conditions and entitlements outlined in ACTPS Enterprise Agreements;
 - setting consistent expectations around attendance with those they manage and ensuring such expectations consider the wellbeing of their employees;
 - making and maintaining appropriate contact with absent employees;
 - ensuring new and existing employees understand, and have access to, processes relating to the notification and application for leave, and information regarding expected absence duration;
 - timely consideration of leave applications, approval/non-approval of applications and appropriate communication of related decisions to the employee, consistent with relevant Enterprise Agreement and/or policy/ies;
 - recognising unscheduled absences that have become frequent, prolonged, reflect a pattern or are otherwise of concern and taking appropriate action to build positive attendance with the employee including conducting appropriate conversations with the employee;
 - considering making contact with an employee's emergency contact if attempts to get in touch with an employee who is unexpectedly absent are unsuccessful;
 - managing ill/injured employees in line with relevant whole of Government policies;
 - maintaining appropriate confidentiality in relation to employee leave circumstances, discussions and storing and handling leave records in line with privacy principles;

- understanding when to seek specialist advice or escalate a concern over leave or attendance matters; and
 - understanding responsibilities under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 including playing an important preventative and early intervention role in the health and wellbeing of those they manage.
17. Employees are responsible for building a positive attendance culture by:
- reporting their absence to their manager/supervisor as outlined in this policy and their Enterprise Agreement, including making contact as soon as practicable in the event of an unscheduled absence;
 - ensuring leave is accurately recorded following the agreed leave application process as well as a record of attendance;
 - providing timely, appropriate documentation, including medical certificates, to support their leave claim;
 - using leave entitlements for the purposes for which they are intended;
 - adhering to medical recommendations/restrictions;
 - communicating either with their manager/supervisor, or another appropriate manager/ supervisor, to explore the reasons behind an unscheduled absence; and
 - ensuring details of their emergency contact are up to date in the relevant workplace records system.
18. Human Resource areas within directorates/agencies and the Injury Management Team, CMTEDD will:
- support positive attendance cultures by providing consistent, accurate and timely specialist advice to managers/supervisors when appropriate;
 - regularly remind staff to update their emergency contact details in the relevant workplace records system;
 - proactively support managers/supervisors to strengthen their capability to build positive attendance; and
 - maintain a consistent, flexible and employee wellbeing-focussed approach to the provision of all attendance related services to managers/supervisors and employees.

Legislative Reference

19. The key principles of this policy are aligned with the following authorised sources:

- Fair Work Act 2009;
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- ACTPS Enterprise Agreements;
- Public Sector Management Act 1994; and
- Public Sector Management Standards 2006.

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on behalf of Kathy Leigh, Head of Service

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