



Attendance Assistance

Attendance Assistance Program Guide

Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board

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Attendance Assistance

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The Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board Strategy

The Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board is committed to creating and maintaining a healthy workplace. This strategy includes initiatives to improve the personal health of employees, and the physical and social environments they work in. It combines both prevention and intervention to achieve the goals of personal and workplace wellness.

Prevention programs are currently information-based with the objective of educating employees about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and a healthy workplace. Intervention programs are focused on attendance assistance and disability management. These intervention programs complement income protection programs such as personal leaves, sick leave benefits and long-term disability benefits.

This document details the Attendance Assistance Program.

For more information on the Board's comprehensive Attendance Support Program, please refer to Board Policy and Administrative Procedures H-2018-11-3.

The Attendance Assistance Program

I. Purpose

The purpose of the Attendance Assistance Program (AAP) is to support employees who are struggling to attend work regularly and improve their attendance. Regular and punctual attendance by all employees is the goal.

II. Principles

- Every employee is expected to contribute productively to the goals of the organization unless they are totally disabled.
- The Attendance Assistance Program is non-disciplinary and supports employees in relation to non-culpable absences.
- It is not the intent of the Attendance Assistance Program to manage culpable absences. These are handled through progressive discipline.
- The Board will provide support to employees who are fit to fulfill the essential duties of their job or an alternate job when a medical disability prevents them from attending work regularly.
- The Attendance Assistance Program is consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act and other applicable legislation, such that the ALCDSB meets its duty to accommodate disabled employees.
- Access to sick leave benefits is administered consistently and fairly.



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- The school board, its employees and unions/associations all have obligations to cooperate in the accommodation process.
- Sick leave benefits may be denied if an employee fails to cooperate or is unable to support a disability by providing objective medical information.

III. Culpable vs. Non-culpable Absences

Non-Culpable (innocent) absenteeism relates to absences resulting from illness or injury or other circumstances beyond the employee's control. Employees cannot be disciplined for these absences and should be supported through the Attendance Assistance Program.

Culpable Absenteeism relates to absences for which employees can be held accountable. Failure to attend work, lateness for work or leaving early and abuse of leave are examples of culpable absences. Employees with culpable absences are subject to progressive discipline up to and including the termination of their employment. These absences are not dealt with through the Attendance Assistance Program.

IV. Reporting Absences – The role of the Employee

Employees are expected to make every reasonable effort to attend work as scheduled. The Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board recognizes, however, that there will be times when employees are unable to attend work due to personal illness or injury.

To effectively manage attendance and ensure a consistent approach throughout the Board, it is imperative that all employees report their absences from work. The following is a non-exhaustive list of reportable absences:

Reportable Absences

- Illness or injury
- Late arrival
- Leaving work early
- Bereavement
- Vacation
- Pre-approved leave of absence
- Jury duty
- Union business leave

Employees are required to report all absences according to their respective agreements and the Absence Reporting Procedure.



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V. Establishing the Attendance Assistance Threshold

The AAP threshold as determined by the Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board is 11 absences. The threshold was derived from examining the average number of days absent based on absence data from the 2016/2017 school year. The threshold serves as a trigger to determine if an employee requires support to improve attendance. The Attendance Assistance threshold should be reviewed every two years by the Board. Employees should be notified of the threshold changes. The threshold is used as a mechanism to trigger non-disciplinary and supportive intervention.

VI. Managing Absences - Roles of the Workplace Parties

Principals/Supervisors are expected to regularly review their employees' attendance records. They should meet with employees at least once a year to provide information regarding the proper access to sick leave and other personal leaves; and to review the Attendance Assistance Program. During the review of the Attendance Assistance Program (AAP), Principals/Supervisors should explain the supportive and non-disciplinary intent of the program; and the purpose of the Disability Management Program.

Once the AAP is initiated, the Principal/Supervisor and/or Disability and Wellness may meet with the employee to discuss their level of absenteeism. Entry into any level of the multi-level program is applied consistently to all employees, beginning with the Preliminary Meeting. Employees have an opportunity to discuss any concerns or barriers that may prevent them from attending work on a regular basis. Attendance goals will be established at each stage of the program with the intent to offer support and improve attendance.

Disability and Wellness acts as a resource for employees, Principals/Supervisors and Union/ Association Representatives. Disability and Wellness may assist in identifying employees who exceed the Attendance Assistance threshold and participate in coaching level meetings. They may also assist in establishing attendance goals, monitoring individual attendance following coaching meetings and assisting with meeting documentation and correspondence to employees.

Employees participate and cooperate in Attendance Assistance Program meetings and discuss the general reasons for their absences. They attempt to improve their attendance through setting reasonable attendance goals in conjunction with their Principal/Supervisor and establishing alternative plans to reduce the need for being away from work. They may also provide any appropriate documentation, during any level of the process. Employees are expected to be accountable for their own well-being.

Union Representatives may act as a resource and support for the members. They may participate in Attendance Assistance Program meetings and assist their members to find additional supports to help them improve attendance.



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VII. Identifying Absences That Require Attention

Culpable absences should be handled through the Board's progressive discipline procedure.

The following absence types may be used in the innocent absenteeism count to the Attendance Assistance threshold:

- Personal illness/injury unrelated to work (paid and unpaid) if the absences are less than 5 consecutive days and the employee is not involved in the school board's Disability Management Program
- Medical/Dental appointments
- WSIB claim related absences if the absences are sporadic and less than 5 consecutive days and the employee is not involved in the school board's Disability Management Program
- Emergency leaves due to personal illness/injury under the Employment Standards Act

The following absence types may not be used in the innocent absenteeism count to exceed the Attendance Assistance threshold:

- Vacation
- Culpable absences
- Family medical leaves as defined by the Employment Standards Act
- Pre-approved prolonged leaves of absence
- Bereavement leave
- Jury or subpoena leave
- Pregnancy/parental leave
- Union business leave
- Examinations and convocations
- Quarantine
- Observance of recognized religious holy days
- Inclement weather day
- Suspensions
- Approved Long Term Disability claims
- WSIB absences less than 5 consecutive days
- Paid or unpaid personal leaves
- Emergency leaves under the Employment Standards Act, or compassionate leave/personal leave not due to personal illness/injury

These absence types are not used when calculating an employee's absenteeism for purposes of the Attendance Assistance Program because the employer has either approved the absence; legislation supports the employee's choice to be absent from work (e.g. emergency leave, maternity/parental leave and holy days); or the employee is otherwise required to be off work as in the case of jury duty. Case law has also identified absence



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types that are to be excluded from attendance assistance programs such as culpable absences.

VIII. Preliminary Meeting With the Employee

The attendance assistance process includes five distinct components: preliminary meeting; coaching level 1; coaching level 2; coaching level 3 and coaching level 4.

The purpose of the preliminary meeting is to determine a supportive path forward for employees who are struggling to maintain regular attendance at work. An employee may invite a union representative to participate in this meeting.

The Principal/Supervisor should bring a copy of the employee's attendance record to the meeting and indicate what specifically triggered the concern (above average number of absences, pattern of absences, duration, etc.) The Principal/Supervisor should explain the purpose of the meeting and emphasize the meeting is non-disciplinary and supportive. They should review the employee's absence history and verify with the employee that the record is correct. The Principal/Supervisor should then explain that they are not asking for details regarding a medical condition/disability or a diagnosis and the employee is not required to provide personal health information. If the majority of absences are related to personal illness/injury the Principal/Supervisor asks the employee if they have a medical condition/disability that is preventing them from attending work regularly.

If the employee indicates that they **had** a medical condition, or a number of illnesses/injuries, supporting the past pattern of absence, and that the absence pattern will stop within the next 90 working days; the Supervisor should indicate that they expect an improvement in attendance. A specific, measurable, and reasonable goal would then be set with the employee. The goal would take into consideration any anticipated absences over the next 90 working days up to a maximum of the pro-rated threshold. The Supervisor should let the employee know that their attendance over the next 90 working days will be monitored.

If the employee indicates they **have** a medical condition/disability that requires ongoing accommodation, and they expect this to continue for an indeterminate period, the supervisor should refer the employee to Disability and Wellness. Disability and Wellness may provide the Principal/Supervisor with further information on how to support the employee and may request the employee return a medical certificate completed by their attending physician. The Principal/Supervisor should let the employee know that their attendance will be monitored pending the outcome of the Disability and Wellness referral.

The outcome of the meeting should be documented through an email to the employee with copies to all involved parties, including the employee representative, if present.



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IX. Monitoring After Preliminary Meeting

After the preliminary meeting, the Principal/Supervisor in conjunction with Disability and Wellness will continue to monitor the employee's attendance for non-culpable absences for the next 90 working days after the preliminary meeting by pulling an absence report. If the attendance goal is met, the Principal/Supervisor will acknowledge this with a follow-up email to the employee. Disability and Wellness will continue to monitor the employee's attendance for an additional twelve working month period. Employees who do not exceed the threshold during this period will be sent a follow-up email indicating that they will exit the Attendance Assistance Program.

When goals or the threshold are not met, absences continue, and the employee may proceed through the Attendance Assistance Coaching Process and will be notified in writing (Invitation to Coaching Level 1, 2, 3 or 4 Meeting emails/letter) by the person monitoring the employee's attendance (either the Principal/Supervisor or Disability and Wellness). All involved parties will receive copies of the letter to the employee sent by either the Principal/Supervisor or Disability and Wellness.

X. Attendance Assistance Coaching Process

Following the distribution of the Invitation to Coaching Level Meeting email/letter to the employee, a meeting may be arranged for the employee, Disability and Wellness and Principal/Supervisor, and union. Disability and Wellness will assist the employee to determine any barriers to maintaining regular attendance at work. Disability and Wellness and the Principal/Supervisor will work with the employee to set attendance goals for the next 90 working days and advise the employee in writing of the agreed upon goals.

The employee will also be advised of the possible outcomes of the coaching process (i.e., moving to the next step of the coaching process; referral for disability management services including the need for ongoing medical certificates to support ongoing work or workplace accommodations; access to sick leave benefits when needed; exiting the attendance assistance process). When participating in the fourth coaching level, failure to meet attendance goals may result in termination for 'innocent absenteeism' - if the steps in the coaching process and all disability management efforts fail to accommodate the needs of the employee to the point of undue hardship and an employee's absences are excessive and are unlikely to improve in the foreseeable future.

If medical issues are identified, the employee will be referred to Disability and Wellness for assistance, so the Principal/Supervisor can be provided with further information on how to support and accommodate the employee.



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XI. Monitoring After Coaching Level Meetings

Throughout the coaching level process, Disability and Wellness will continue to monitor attendance for sick leave absences. At the end of 90 working days, the Principal/Supervisor and/or Disability and Wellness and the employee will meet to determine whether the employee has reached his/her attendance goals. If applicable, attendance improvement is recognized in an email/letter from the Principal/Supervisor or Disability and Wellness with copies to all involved parties.

Employees, who do not exceed the threshold for the 'up to 12-working month review period', will exit from the Attendance Assistance Program.

Where the employee exceeds the threshold during the 'up to 12-working month review period' and the absences are deemed to be innocent or non-culpable, Disability and Wellness will consult with the Principal/Supervisor to determine if the employee will be moving to the next coaching level.

At any time, should the employee fail to meet the requirements to support access to sick leave benefits, Disability and Wellness should advise the Principal/Supervisor and union that sick leave benefits may be denied.