

**ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES
FOR CUPE LOCAL 2950 EMPLOYEES**

1. Introduction
2. Evaluating and Understanding Absenteeism
3. Promoting Regular Attendance at Work
4. Managing Absenteeism Consistently
 - Step 1: Review Records and Identify Problematic Absenteeism
 - A. Compile and Review the Attendance Records for Each Employee
 - B. Identify Candidates for the Attendance Management Program
 1. Objective Assessment
 2. Subjective Assessment
 - Step 2: Conduct Absenteeism Meetings
 - A. Review of Absences and Impact
 - B. Understanding
 - C. Moving forward: Prognosis and Monitoring
 - D. Documenting the Discussion
 - Step 3: Fulfill the Ongoing Duty to Inquire
 - Step 4: Reassess the Employment Relationship
5. Sample Interview Questions
 - A. First Interview
 - B. Second Interview
 - C. Third Interview
 - D. Fourth and Final Interview
6. Template Follow-up Letters
 - A. First Interview Letter
 - B. Second Interview Letter
 - C. Third Interview Letter
 - D. Fourth and Final Warning Letter

1. Introduction

Our success as a University depends on the contributions made by our employees. Employee absenteeism undermines University operations in a multitude of ways; for example, it impacts on the quality and timeliness of service delivery and production; it places greater burdens on fellow employees and affects morale in the workplace, and, of course, there are significant associated financial costs.

Therefore, the University is committed to fostering a culture of regular attendance and promoting health and wellness among our staff. When illnesses and injuries occur, employees are provided with leaves for treatment, recovery, and support. But consistent and appropriate attendance evaluation is essential to implementing and maintaining a successful Attendance Management Program (the “Program”). Think of the Program as an extra tool in your managerial toolkit to deal with excessive absenteeism.

Managing absenteeism can be complicated. These Guidelines have been developed to assist managers in the long-term management of absenteeism. The objectives of these Guidelines are as follows:

- Evaluating and understanding the different forms of absenteeism
- Promoting regular attendance at work
- Managing absenteeism consistently across the University

In managing absenteeism, other health-related issues may be raised, including wellness initiatives, health and safety measures and accommodation of disabilities. HR Advisors are available to guide managers through these issues and make the necessary referrals to specialists and experts, as required.

2. Evaluating and Understanding Absenteeism

In order to administer this Program it is important to understand the difference between culpable and non-culpable absenteeism.

Non-culpable absenteeism is an absence resulting from disability, injury, illness, or another legitimate health reason. Examples include:

- Sick leave (paid or unpaid)
- Injury leave (WorksafeBC – discussed in greater detail below)
- Other absences attributable to illness or injury

The term “non-culpable” simply means that the employee’s absence is not blameworthy. Therefore, the response from management must be non-disciplinary. How can one be disciplined for something outside their control?

By contrast, culpable conduct involves employee fault or wrongdoing. Examples of culpable issues in absenteeism may include:

- Failure to report to work or follow established call-in procedures
- Sick leave fraud
- Falsification of time records

- Excessive lateness

This Program is ONLY concerned with non-culpable absenteeism. Therefore, the approach will always be non-disciplinary. Culpable absenteeism is addressed using a disciplinary approach and, consequently, does not fall within the Program. It is very important to delineate these two concepts.

If you have concerns about potential culpable conduct (for instance, concerns that an employee on sick leave is not actually sick) contact your HR Advisor to discuss the appropriate steps. These types of allegations involve a disciplinary approach, and must be handled outside of the Program.

3. Promoting Regular Attendance at Work

An open discussion is the key to successful attendance management and promoting regular attendance. Specific actions a manager should take include:

- Engaging employees to recognize their value to the University's operations.
- Communicating regularly with employees about the expectation for regular and consistent attendance.
- Managing absences consistently and concurrently.
- Identifying and resolving contextual factors in the workplace that may contribute to absenteeism through dialogue with employees.

4. Managing Absenteeism Consistently

The success of the Program also depends upon the consistent application of the following steps which are designed to identify and formally address excessive problem absenteeism:

STEP 1: Review Records and Identify Problematic Absenteeism

A. *Compile and Review the Attendance Records for Each Employee*

For each employee, managers must identify in a spreadsheet:

- All absences (paid and unpaid) due to illness or injury.
- All absences due to injuries on duty or WorksafeBC leave.
- All other unplanned, unscheduled absences or leave; e.g. absence without leave, failure to report to work, absence to care for family members, personal emergencies.

The above will form the employee's record of non-culpable absenteeism. In compiling this record, it is important to ensure the information used is accurate, current and consistent.

Examples of absences not included in this record are:

- Scheduled vacation.
- Maternity, adoption or parental leave.

- Compassionate leave.

B. *Identify Candidates for the Attendance Management Program*

The next step in the Program is to identify those employees who may be candidates for the Program. This requires a two-stage analysis: (1) an objective (statistical) assessment; plus (2) a subjective (contextual) assessment.

1. Objective Assessment

Managers should review their attendance records and list those CUPE 2950 employees within the department who have been absent either,

- **12 or more days in a 12-month period; or**
- **At a rate exceeding the departmental average.**

Since the University is comprised of such a diverse group of employees working within a wide range of departments and occupations, the above threshold comprises employees working within CUPE 2950 only.

If you have an employee who does not meet this threshold, but you have concerns with respect to their attendance, please contact your HR Advisor for assistance.

2. Subjective Assessment

Once managers have compiled a list of employees who are over the “threshold”, managers must consider the record for each listed employee to determine subjectively whether there is, in fact, an ongoing problem that needs to be addressed and corrected.

Key criteria include:

- Duration (short, intermittent vs. longer term)
- Frequency (number of separate occurrences)
- Predictability (whether planned or unplanned)

The number of incidents and the duration of each are important considerations. Frequent, unplanned absences may cause more operational disruption and hardship than one longer planned absence.

Questions to consider in assessing each record include:

- How many times, days, and for what reason has the employee been absent?
- Is the problem recent? Can it be traced to a particular change in the employee’s circumstances?
- Are the absences of short duration with no medical attention?
- Are the absences due to family responsibilities?
- Is there a solution that will likely enable the employee to maintain regular attendance in the foreseeable future?
- Has the employee identified a chronic underlying condition (disability)?

- Has the employee identified a need for accommodation of a disability or other condition? (Discuss with your HR Advisor)

There are times when excessive absenteeism presents itself objectively but is not a problem requiring correction; for instance, where excessive absenteeism is caused by injury due to a motor vehicle accident. Managers should ask whether, on a review of the record, there is an ongoing problem with excessive absenteeism that needs to be addressed and managed. If so, then the employee may appropriately be placed in the Program.

Managers are encouraged to contact their HR Advisor if they require any advice or guidance as to whether a particular employee has “problem attendance” and/or should be moved to the next step of the Program.

STEP 2: Conduct Absenteeism Meetings

If a review of the record discloses problematic absenteeism, the employee is required to attend a meeting (or series of meetings). Of course, managers must review attendance records prior to the employee meeting and consider the operational and financial impact of the employee’s absences.

A list of sample questions is provided at the end of these Guidelines.

Each meeting is divided into four sections:

A. Review of Absences and Impact

The manager begins by stating that the meeting is non-disciplinary. The manager reviews the attendance record with the employee, confirms the total number of days absent, the number of occasions, and the type of leave taken. The manager explains the detrimental impact on operations given the nature of the work the employee performs. The tone of this message is important because it should highlight the employee’s value in the workplace, as well as the consequence of their absence on the workforce when they are away.

B. Understanding

Through this discussion with the employee, the manager seeks to understand the reasons for the absences. It is important to explore workplace or personal factors that may impede the employee from regularly reporting for work.

Managers will not necessarily have access to confidential medical information, such as a diagnosis of an illness, at this stage of the Program. However, it is absolutely necessary to inquire whether the employee is experiencing an ongoing medical condition that is causing or contributing to the absenteeism. You may also ask whether they are currently under the care of a physician or if they are following a prescribed treatment program. It is important to emphasize that we are not challenging their right to use the sick leave provision for a legitimate absence due to illness or injury.

C. Moving forward: Prognosis and Monitoring

The employee and manager should discuss the prognosis for regular attendance and respective responsibilities and commitments. The manager reminds the employee about programs and supports in

place to promote wellness at the University, including the Employee and Family Assistance (EFAP) Program. The employee is informed that his/her attendance will be monitored and that a significant and sustained improvement in their attendance is required, and that if such improvement does not occur the employee will move to the next step of the Program.

D. Documenting the Discussion

After the meeting, a follow-up letter is normally issued to the employee with copies delivered to Human Resources and the personnel file. Letters must be tailored to include the circumstances of each employee and what was said in the meeting. Depending on the circumstances and the employee's explanations, it may be that no letter is issued.

A subsequent meeting or second meeting should not automatically or necessarily be held. If, however, the required improvement in attendance does not occur, a second and third meeting may be necessary. These subsequent meetings will adopt a similar approach to the first meeting. This includes the duty to re-inquire whether a medical condition is contributing to their absences. It is important to reference the previous meetings held with the employee within the scope of these Guidelines. While the period of time between meetings is not prescribed, it's important to assess the particular circumstances of each case, before determining the monitoring period between meetings. The monitoring period should always be the same; however, the decision to have a 2nd or 3rd meeting with someone is based on their particular circumstances. While the period of time between meetings is not prescribed, it does need to be long enough to demonstrate that the expected improvement did not take place. Templates for follow-up letters can be found at the end of these Guidelines. Note that these letters must be tailored to the personal circumstances of each employee.

STEP 3: Fulfill the Ongoing Duty to Inquire

The University's duty to inquire is ongoing and is exercised through informal discussions and during attendance meetings. For those employees whose excessive absenteeism is related to a specific medical condition or injury, additional medical information may be requested to ensure that the University can properly assess how to proceed. Should an employee share that their absenteeism is related to a medical condition or injury please inform them that we may need further information and that you will get back them shortly. Managers must consult with an HR Advisor regarding these matters.

STEP 4: Reassess the Employment Relationship

The aim of the Program is to assist as many employees as possible in returning to an acceptable level of regular attendance. However, in some cases this does not occur. Where the Program does not result in an acceptable level of improvement in attendance, the University must reassess the viability of continuing the employment relationship. The relevant considerations at this stage are as follows:

1. Whether the employee has had an excessive absenteeism record over a sustained period of time.
2. Whether there is any reasonable likelihood that the employee will be able to achieve an acceptable level of attendance (i.e. the prognosis).
3. Whether a duty to accommodate (to the point of undue hardship) exists.

Consultation with your HR Advisor must occur at this stage.

It may be that a fourth and final meeting is warranted. HR will assist with the preparation of the meeting and final notice as required. This notice will be issued following the meeting indicating that the employee's failure to improve their attendance will result in their termination of employment. If there is still no improvement, the HR Advisor will assist management with any decision to conclude the employment relationship.

5. Sample Interview Questions

First Interview

Employee: _____
Date: _____
Attendees: _____
Location: _____

I have called this meeting to review your attendance record for the last several years with you. This meeting is non-disciplinary.

- 1) I am providing you with a copy of your attendance record. Do you agree with this information as recorded? Are there any corrections you want me to note? [Go over the total number of days absent, number of occasions, types of leave taken]
- 2) If there are any corrections that you discover after this meeting, please bring those to my attention.
- 3) Having reviewed your attendance record, I need to address it with you. The University values your contribution as an employee. Regular attendance at work is critical in terms of our ability to deliver effective service and operate successfully. Your current level of absenteeism causes us concern as your employer. First, are you aware that you have had a lot of absenteeism?
- 4) Looking at your record, can you go over the reasons for this absenteeism with me?
- 5) At this stage, we need you to improve your attendance record. Do you understand that, and what steps will you take to do this?
- 6) I want to remind you about programs and supports that are in place at the University, including the Employee and Family Assistance program (EFAP). Do you need any further information about those?
- 7) If your attendance does not improve we will continue to meet with you as part of the Attendance Review Program. This is an issue that may ultimately impact on your continued employment at the University if it is not corrected. Do you understand that?
- 8) Is there anything else that we can do to help you, or that you would like to add?

Second Interview

Employee: _____
Date: _____
Attendees: _____
Location: _____

- 1) I have called this meeting to review with you your attendance record since our last attendance meeting on insert date of 1st interview. In this meeting when asked about your poor attendance and how you were going to improve it, you stated, "insert comments from 1st interview" Do you recall this discussion?
- 2) As we discussed at our last meeting, the University values your contribution as an employee. Regular attendance at work is critical in terms of our ability to deliver effective service and operate successfully. Your level of absenteeism continues to be a concern. Here is a copy of your attendance record since our last attendance meeting. Do you agree with this attendance record? Are there any corrections you want me to note? [Go over the total number of days absent, number of occasions, types of leave taken]
- 3) If there are any corrections that you discover after this meeting, please bring those my attention.
- 4) Do you acknowledge that there continues to be a problem with your attendance?
- 5) Looking at your record, can you go over the specific reasons for this absenteeism with me?
- 6) Let me ask you more specifically, do you have any medical issues, substance abuse issues or any family issues that keep you from coming to work on a regular and consistent basis?
- 7) If you have any problems in the areas just mentioned, you have a responsibility to seek assistance. Do you understand this?
- 8) I want to remind you about the programs and supports that are in place at the University, including the Employee and Family Assistance program (EFAP). Do you need any further information about those?
- 9) At this stage we need you to improve your attendance record. Do you understand that, and what steps will you take to do this?
- 10) If your attendance does not improve we will continue to meet with you as part of the Attendance Review Program. This is a serious issue that may impact on your continued employment at the University if it is not corrected. Do you understand that?
- 11) Is there anything you would like to add?

Third Interview

Employee: _____
Date: _____
Attendees: _____
Location: _____

- 1) I have called this meeting to review with you your attendance record since our last attendance meeting on insert date of 2nd interview. In this meeting when asked about your poor attendance and how you were going to improve it, you stated you would be, “insert comments from 2nd interview” Do you recall this discussion?
- 2) I’ve monitored your attendance since our last meeting and continue to have serious concerns about your attendance at work. Regular attendance is an important part of your employment, as we have discussed. Here is a copy of your attendance record since our last attendance meeting. Do you agree with this attendance record? Are there any corrections you want me to note? [Go over the total number of days absent, number of occasions, types of leave taken]
- 3) If there are any corrections that you discover after this meeting, please bring those my attention.
- 4) Do you acknowledge that there continues to be a problem with your attendance?
- 5) Looking at your record, can you go over the specific reasons for this absenteeism with me?
- 6) Let me ask you more specifically, do you have any medical issues, substance abuse issues, or any family issues that keep you from coming to work on a regular and consistent basis?
- 7) If you have any problems in the areas just mentioned, you have a responsibility to seek assistance. Do you understand this?
- 8) I want to remind you about programs and supports that are in place at the University, including the Employee and Family Assistance program (EFAP). Do you need any further information about those?
- 9) At this stage, your attendance record must improve. Do you understand that, and what steps will you take to do this?
- 10) Your attendance will continue to be monitored and we expect to see an immediate improvement. If your attendance does not improve and you fail to attend work on a regular and consistent basis, you will be subject to further action. This action could include termination. Do you understand?
- 11) Is there anything else that we can do to help you, or that you would like to add?

Fourth and Final Interview

Employee: _____
Date: _____
Attendees: _____
Location: _____

- 1) I have called this meeting to review with you your attendance record since our last attendance meeting insert date of 3rd interview. In this meeting when asked about your poor attendance and how you were going to improve it, you stated you were going to, “insert comments from 3rd interview”. Do you recall this discussion?
- 2) I’ve monitored your attendance since our last meeting and continue to have serious concerns about your attendance at work. As you have been told at past meetings, regular attendance is an important part of your employment. Here is a copy of your attendance record since our last attendance meeting. Do you agree with this attendance record? Are there any corrections you want me to note? [Go over the total number of days absent, number of occasions, types of leave taken]
- 3) If there are any corrections that you discover after this meeting, please bring those to my attention.
- 4) Do you acknowledge that there continues to be a problem with your attendance?
- 5) Looking at your record, can you go over the specific reasons for this absenteeism with me?
- 6) Let me ask you more specifically, do you have any medical issues, substance abuse issues, or any family issues that keep you from coming to work on a regular and consistent basis?
- 7) If you have any problems in the areas just mentioned, you have a responsibility to seek assistance. Do you understand this?
- 8) I want to remind you about programs and supports that are in place at the University, including the Employee and Family Assistance program (EFAP). Do you need any further information about those?
- 9) Your attendance will continue to be monitored and we expect to see an immediate improvement. If your attendance does not improve and you fail to attend work on a regular and consistent basis, you will be subject to further action. This action could include termination. Do you understand?
- 10) Do you have anything else that you would like to add that is relevant to your attendance?

6. Template Follow-up Letters

A – First Interview Letter

This letter documents a non-disciplinary meeting held with you on (date) at which your attendance record from (date) to the present was discussed. Present at this meeting were...

A review of your attendance record reveals the following absences due to (illness) or (injury) as follows:

This absenteeism is of concern to the University as it is detrimental to the operations of the department.

At the meeting, you explained that your absences were caused by/attributable to/contributed to by (...).

You were advised that the University would continue monitoring your attendance and that a significant and sustained improvement in your attendance record is required. We remain optimistic that your attendance will improve.

(If an employee claims an ongoing or chronic medical condition (or injury) is contributing to their absenteeism, you should consult with your HR Advisor regarding any possible additional steps required).

There are many means to fulfill your responsibility to attend work on a regular basis. We encourage you to explore means to improve your attendance. During the meeting, you committed to/did not commit to... We are committed to supporting the health and wellness of our employees, and encourage you to ask for support when facing health related issues. During the meeting, we committed to ... Since these events may be complex for both you and the department, we take this opportunity to refer you to the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP), which may be reached at 1-800-663-1142 or TTY (Hearing Assistance) 1-888-384-1152, as an additional resource.

B – Second Interview Letter

This letter documents a non-disciplinary meeting held with you on (date) to discuss your attendance record from (date) to the present. Attending this meeting were... We last met to discuss your attendance on (date) with a follow up letter to you dated (date).

A review of your attendance record reveals the following absences, since your last meeting, due to (illness) or (injury) are as follows:

This absenteeism is of concern to the University as it is detrimental to the operations of the department. At our most recent meeting, you explained that your absences were caused by/attributable to/contributed to by (...)

A review of your attendance record overall reveals the following absenteeism, as addressed in our letter dated (date).

(If an employee claims an ongoing or chronic medical condition (or injury) is contributing to their absenteeism, you should consult with your HR Advisor regarding any possible additional steps required).

Unfortunately, since our last meeting and written correspondence your attendance has not improved to an acceptable level. In the (time) since that meeting you have been absent ___ days. Please be advised that the University will continue to monitor your attendance and that a significant and sustained improvement in your attendance record is required. We remain optimistic that your attendance will improve. If, however, your absenteeism continues to fall below an acceptable standard, your employment with the University may be in jeopardy.

As discussed this program does not include formal communication when there has been improvement. Therefore an employee is only progressed to the next meeting is there continues to be a concern with their level of absenteeism.

There are many means to fulfill your responsibility to attend work on a regular basis. We encourage you to explore means to improve your attendance. During the meeting, you committed to/did not commit to... We are committed to supporting the health and wellness of our employees, and encourage you to ask for support when facing health related issues. During the meeting, we committed to ... Since these events may be complex for both you and the department, we take this opportunity to refer you to the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP), which may be reached at 1-800-663-1142 or TTY (Hearing Assistance) 1-888-384-1152, as an additional resource.

C – Third Interview Letter

This letter documents a non-disciplinary meeting held with you on (date) to discuss your attendance record from (date) to the present. Present at this meeting were ... We last met to discuss your attendance on (date), with a follow up letter to you dated (date).

A review of your attendance record reveals the following absences, since your last meeting, due to (illness) or (injury) are as follows:

This absenteeism is of concern to the University as it is detrimental to the operations of the department. At our most recent meeting, you explained that your absences were caused by/attributable to/contributed to by (...).

A review of your attendance record overall reveals the following absenteeism, as addressed in our letter dated (date).

(If an employee claims an ongoing or chronic medical condition (or injury) is contributing to their absenteeism, you should consult with your HR Advisor regarding any possible additional steps required).

Unfortunately, since our last meeting and written correspondence your attendance has not improved to an acceptable level. In the (time) since that meeting you have been absent ___ days. Please be advised that the University will continue to monitor your attendance and that a significant and sustained improvement in your attendance record is required. We remain hopeful that your attendance will improve. If, however, your absenteeism continues to fall below an acceptable standard, your employment with the University may be terminated due to non-culpable absenteeism.

There are many means to fulfill your responsibility to attend work on a regular basis and consistent basis. We encourage you to explore means to improve your attendance. During the meeting, you

committed to/did not commit to... We are committed to supporting the health and wellness of our employees, and encourage you to ask for support when facing health related issues. During the meeting, we committed to ...

Since these events may be complex for both you and the department, we take this opportunity to refer you to the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP), which may be reached at 1-800-663-1142 or TTY (Hearing Assistance) 1-888-384-1152, as an additional resource.

D – Fourth and Final Warning Letter

This letter documents a non-disciplinary meeting held with you on (date) to discuss your attendance record from (date) to the present. Present at this meeting were ... We last met to discuss your attendance on (date), with a follow up letter to you dated (date).

A review of your attendance record reveals the following absences, since your last meeting, due to (illness) or (injury) are as follows:

This absenteeism is of concern to the University as it is detrimental to the operations of the department. At our most recent meeting, you explained that your absences were caused by/attribution to/contributed to by (...).

A review of your attendance record overall reveals the following absenteeism, as addressed in our letter dated (date):

Unfortunately, since our last meeting and written correspondence your attendance has not improved to an acceptable level. In the (time) since that meeting you have been absent ____ days.

You have now had __meetings and received __ letters with respect to the need to improve your attendance; however your attendance continues to fall below an acceptable standard. In light of the above, and based upon the fact that you have been advised previously about your poor attendance, this letter serves as a final warning of the need for an improvement in your attendance. The matter of your attendance is now at a critical stage. The University will continue monitoring your attendance. Unless there is a significant and sustained improvement in your attendance the University will terminate your employment due to non-culpable absenteeism.

There are many means to fulfill your responsibility to attend work on a regular and consistent basis. We encourage you to explore means to improve your attendance. During the meeting, you committed to/did not commit to... We are committed to supporting the health and wellness of our employees, and encourage you to ask for support when facing health related issues. During the meeting, we committed to Since these events may be complex for both you and the department, we take this opportunity to refer you to the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP), which may be reached at 1-800-663-1142 or TTY (Hearing Assistance) 1-888-384-1152, as an additional resource.