Supporting Attendance at Work Program

Guidelines for Employees

Financial Services, June 2006
Introduction – Program Philosophy

The University, and specifically Financial Services, recognizes its responsibility to provide a working environment that supports employee wellness, attendance at work and ultimately, optimal performance.

We believe that absence can be minimized through prevention, early intervention and individual case management, and that employee attendance issues are best resolved in a positive, supportive manner.

This program applies to all employees and includes clearly defined roles for individuals at every level of the organization in an effort to resolve attendance issues co-operatively.

Program Objectives

1. To support support and encourage employees to be well and at work, acknowledging the investment Ryerson has made in its people.

2. To assist employees who are at or off work, and need help.

3. To provide accommodation, where necessary, and to assist employees when they return to work from a sick or WSIB leave and cannot perform their regular duties during rehabilitation.

4. Recognizing the impact of personal issues on individuals, the program provides guidelines to encourage a consistent and fair process and outcome, while providing individual flexibility as needed.
Guiding Principles

The program was designed using certain assumptions and these are the principles within which the program operates. They are:

- Employees want to be at work, and given Ryerson’s investment in its employees, managers want them to be at work and to be productive.
- Every absence is legitimate unless shown otherwise,
- Financial Services is committed to accommodating employees’ health-related limitations. These limitations may affect their ability to perform their work, or their ability to be at work.
- Where an employee’s inability to be at work is for non-health-related reasons, Financial Services will, when requested and whenever possible, work with our employee to identify possible solutions.
- Employees are committed to working with Financial Services to find individual solutions.

Supporting Attendance at Work – Six Easy Steps
(Program Overview)

1. Supervisor/Manager monitors attendance reports and identifies the need for discussion with employee(s), or employee identifies a need for assistance.
2. Discussions focus on reasons for the absence and on an employee’s need for accommodation or assistance.
3. Discussions are documented with goals and timelines.
4. Follow-up meetings will be held to review progress and continue planning, or to show the situation as resolved.
5. Further meetings will occur, as required, until resolution.
6. If progress is not made, or a situation is not resolved, a review team of employee, manager, Human Resources (HR), and as necessary the Medical Designate or treating physician will be consulted.
Partners in Solution

Responsibility for, and commitment to the Supporting Attendance at Work Program, exists at all levels of the organization.

Your Responsibilities as an Employee

- To attend work regularly and consistently
- To facilitate early notification of absence and to follow absenteeism reporting procedures whenever it is necessary to be off work.
- To maintain regular contact with your supervisor and/or manager during your absence.
- To provide medical information and/or reports (or facilitate their availability through your attending physician) to the University Medical Director as quickly as possible when requested
- To provide information (or facilitate its availability through your attending physician) regarding accommodation requirements to the University Medical Director as quickly as possible when requested.
- To co-operate and assist in identifying solutions/accommodations and report any difficulties with modified work plan to your supervisor and/or manager.

Your Supervisor’s/Manager’s Responsibilities

- To treat all employees fairly, consistently and in compliance with the guidelines of Financial Services Supporting Attendance at Work Program.
- To maintain regular contact with employees who are absent from work.
- To facilitate operations by reviewing workload requirements and adjusting work allocations as required during absences.
- To systematically and consistently monitor attendance and identify issues requiring follow-up
- To schedule initial and follow-up discussions with employees as necessary.
- To work with employees and Human Resources as required to provide modified work opportunities and accommodations as recommended by the University Medical Director Designate and to monitor progress.
SUPPORTING ATTENDANCE AT WORK PROGRAM – Guidelines for Employees

**Introduction**
- Attendance at Work
- Program Philosophy
- Guiding Principles
- Program Overview

**Partners in Solution**
- Employees
- Supervisors/Managers
- Senior Director
- Human Resources
- Union

**Attendance Management**
- Review of Attendance & Intervention
- Identifications
- Definitions
- Case Review
- Employee Meetings
- Meeting Steps
  - Introduction
  - Review
  - Plan for Improvement
  - Close the Discussion
- Post-meeting Activities
- Notification of Absence
- Employee Assistance
- Summary

**Your Supervisor’s/Manager’s Responsibilities**
- To ensure that other employees/departments affected are aware of the need to support individual employees/accommodations.
- To meet with any new employees to discuss expectations.
- To manage and monitor the return-to-work program.

**Senior Manager’s/Director’s Responsibilities**
- To support the Program.
- To assist supervisors and/or managers with the delivery of the program.
- To assist with the identification/provision of accommodation in complex situations.
- To ensure consistent application of the Program.
- To provide feedback and input to Human Resources (HR) regarding the program and tools.

**Human Resources’ Responsibilities**
- To monitor the success of the Supporting Attendance at Work program and to update/revise it as required, in consultation with Financial Services management.
- To provide coaching, advice and training to management on implementation of the program.
- To provide advice and assistance to supervisors/managers on individual cases.
- To attend initial and follow-up employee meetings when requested to do so.
- To facilitate access to the University’s Medical Director Designate, or other resources as appropriate.
- To create and update tools and guidelines necessary for program delivery.
- To provide absence data and records as required.

**Suggested Union Responsibilities**
- To support members.
- To attend initial and follow-up meetings with members, if requested by member.
**Introduction**
- Attendance at Work
- Program Philosophy
- Guiding Principles
- Program Overview
- Partners in Solution
  - Employees
  - Supervisors/Managers
  - Senior Director
  - Human Resources
  - Union

**Attendance Management**
- Review of Attendance & Intervention Identification
- Definitions
- Case Review
- Employee Meetings
- Meeting Steps
  - Introduction
  - Review
  - Plan for Improvement
  - Close the Discussion
- Post-meeting Activities
- Notification of Absence
- Employee Assistance
- Summary

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**Suggested Union Responsibilities**
- To assist with arranging for accommodated work duties for individual members and to help with the communication and follow-up with the affected employee and other members who may have concerns.
- To provide feedback to Financial Services management and HR regarding the program and tools.
**Attendance Management**

On a monthly and quarterly basis, your supervisor will review attendance for your whole work unit and a designated staff member in Financial Services will review the attendance records for the department as a whole. The following attendance management process will be utilized in identifying issues and to assist employees whose attendance needs improvement. Attendance management involves 5 progressive stages; they are as follows:

1. **Review of Attendance & Intervention Identification**
2. **Case Review**
3. **Employee Follow-up Meeting(s)**
4. **Initial Employee Meeting**
5. **Acknowledgment & Recognition**

**Review of Attendance & Intervention Identification**

The Supporting Attendance at Work program is focused on an employee’s record of absenteeism as it relates primarily to the use of sick and family leave. It does not include vacation, family, bereavement or other leaves outlined in the Collective Agreement or University policy.

**Supporting Attendance at Work – Intervention Triggers**

For the purposes of the Supporting Attendance at Work Program, employee absences in the following situations will prompt a review:

- Employees in the top 15% of the department taking the most time off work due to short-term absence.
- Employees that demonstrate an absence “pattern” that is unusual for that individual.
SUPPORTING ATTENDANCE AT WORK PROGRAM – Guidelines for Employees

Introduction
- Attendance at Work
- Program Philosophy
- Guiding Principles
- Program Overview
- Partners in Solution
  - Employees
  - Supervisors/Managers
  - Senior Director
  - Human Resources
  - Union

Attendance Management
- Review of Attendance & Intervention Identification
- Definitions
  - Case Review
  - Employee Meetings
  - Meeting Steps
    - Introduction
    - Review
    - Plan for Improvement
    - Close the Discussion
  - Post-meeting Activities
  - Notification of Absence
  - Employee Assistance
  - Summary

Definitions

Short-Term Absences
These are absences that usually last from a portion of one day to several days in duration. This type of absence, when it happens frequently, causes disruption in the unit’s operational continuity, making relief staffing difficult and usually resulting in existing staff assuming an increased workload.

“Patterned” Absences
“Patterned” Absences are defined as absences where there is a pattern of occurrences to an employee’s absence, for example:
  - adjacent to days off, weekends or holidays
  - particular days of the week each week, month or year
  - days off after performance related matters are addressed
  - days off after work assignments that the employee finds non-agreeable

This type of absence may indicate a problem which might benefit from intervention through Ryerson’s EAP initiatives. Like other short-term absences, the negative impact on operations and on your colleagues increases with the frequency of the absence.

Extended Absences
These are absences where an employee is away from work for approximately two or more weeks (i.e: greater than 10 consecutive working days) or longer. Usually, these are infrequent and less disruptive as the period of absence is known and arrangements can normally be made to maintain operational continuity.

The scope of the Program will not apply to those instances of extended absences that:
  - Are greater than 10 consecutive working days where the Disability Management process applies.
  - Result from a Workplace Injury and/or WSIB Absences injury.
Case Review

The case review process ensures that the collection and consideration of all necessary information has taken place and includes the:

- Review of the attendance records of the work group,
- Identification of potential patterns, issues, improvements,
- Determination of the need for a formal or informal meeting,
- Determination of whether there might be a need to arrange a discussion with Human Resources and/or the Supervisor, Manager and Senior Manager/Director about the situation.

Employee Meetings

Employee meetings are not intended to be disciplinary. The objective of the meeting(s) is to explore with the employee (while meeting employee privacy needs), the cause(s) of any difficulties affecting their ability to attend work and to identify potential solutions.

If there are accommodation and/or assistance requirements, they need to be identified and appropriately arranged. The proposed solution(s) needs to address the needs of Financial Services as well as those of the employee.

Your manager will ensure that sufficient notice, time and privacy are available for all meetings and that you are aware of the option to bring a union representative to all meetings.
Introduction

- Attendance at Work
- Program Philosophy
- Guiding Principles
- Program Overview
- Partners in Solution
  - Employees
  - Supervisors/Managers
  - Senior Director
  - Human Resources
  - Union

Attendance Management

- Review of Attendance & Intervention Identification
- Definitions
- Case Review
- Employee Meetings

Meeting Steps

- Introduction
- Review
- Plan for Improvement
- Close the Discussion

Post-meeting Activities

- Notification of Absence
- Employee Assistance
- Summary

Employee Meeting Steps

1. Introduction
   - Despite the time you have spent in information sessions and in reading this manual, each time a meeting is held regarding attendance, the purpose and objectives of the Supporting Attendance at Work Program will be explained and the program Philosophy will be reviewed.
   - The purpose of the meeting and the roles and responsibilities of all involved in the meeting will be stated to remind you that the meeting is not disciplinary.

2. Review
   - Your absences will be reviewed; your supervisor will be specific and will only deal with facts.
   - You and your supervisor will discuss the impact of your absence on your own job, on staffing, on the workload of co-workers and on operations in general.
   - Pertinent information will be elicited and a discussion with a view to problem solving will be encouraged. **You are not required to disclose medical information to management.**
   - Judgement will not be passed, but relevant facts will be reviewed and acceptable goals for improvement established.
Employee Meeting Steps (continued)

3. Plan for Improvement
   • Management and Financial Services’ commitment to accommodate employees when possible will be reinforced.
   • Your input as well as that from your union representative about possible solutions and goals for improvement will be sought and is appreciated.
   • The discussion will be about solutions, and timing and goals for attendance improvement.
   • An Attendance Improvement Plan will be completed.

4. Closing the Discussion
   • Together, the Plan for Improvement that has been mutually agreed to will be summarized.
   • A date for a follow-up meeting will be set.
Post-Meeting Activities

Whenever meetings are held, the result of all meetings (accommodation, assistance, other solution, no action etc.) will be documented and notes retained for future reference.

In all instances, you will be provided with a copy of the agreed-upon Attendance Improvement Plan.

Follow-up meetings will be established to review progress. In all instances, even when no action is considered necessary, at least one follow-up meeting will occur to ensure that the situation has been resolved and to confirm that accommodation, assistance or other action is still not required. Assuming that there will be improvement, these meetings will be used to reinforce Ryerson’s commitment to the program and to you.

Continued contact and open communication are important aspects of case management under the Supporting Attendance at Work Program. At all meetings, your supervisor/manager will:

– Ensure that you are aware of the option to bring a union representative with you.
– Review notes including action plans and solution(s) developed at previous meeting(s).
– Review data concerning absences since the last meeting, noting improvements and difficulties.
– Review reasons given for any absences.
– Discuss, progress, new goals and/or revised solutions with you.
– Be ready to hear new information and to collaborate on problem solving.

Management may, at any time, consult with Human Resources, the Manager and/or Senior Director on the approach taken, results achieved and any revision to strategy.

In the event that after a number of follow-up meetings, you continue to experience difficulty improving your attendance, the situation will be reviewed through a team effort that will include you, as well as any or all of the following:
Post-Meeting Activities (continued)

- your Manager and/or Supervisor,
- the Senior Director,
- the Union (if applicable),
- Human Resources, and possibly
- University Medical Director Designate.

The expected outcome of this meeting will be an action plan that provides for long-term resolution that may, if necessary, require alterations to an employment relationship.

Notifying your Supervisor of an Absence

So that there is no misunderstanding, following is a brief outline of the process that should be followed if you find it necessary to be off work for any period of time:

1. Please call your immediate supervisor as soon as possible, but no later than ½ hour following your scheduled start time. This will enable replacement staff and/or arrangements for coverage to be made.

2. If you become ill or are injured while at work, please let your supervisor know that you’re leaving. This will enable coverage and form completion for WSIB claims.

3. If you are sick, you don’t need to share the type of illness you have, but you do need to share how long you expect to be away, and you do need to keep in touch with your supervisor while you’re off.

4. Doctor’s notes are usually required when you’re away for more than 3 consecutive days, or 7 days in a calendar year. If you need to bring a note for other times off, your supervisor will let you know prior to your return to work.

5. Sometimes we ask for a doctor’s note upon your return to work following an extended absence. This is to make sure that you are really well enough to be back to work and minimizes the liability Ryerson carries should you take ill or further injure yourself at work.
Notifying your Supervisor of an Absence (continued)

6. If you’re taking a vacation day or a day off for any reason other than sick leave, you need to share the reason for your absence with your supervisor so that an informed decision can be made regarding the type of leave that you will need to take.

7. After 20 sick days you’ll receive an LTD package and it’s important that you complete the forms to reduce the chance of loss of earnings following a short-term disability absence.

Employee Assistance

While the University does not have a formal Employee Assistance Program (EAP) in place, we do offer assistance on an ad hoc basis, whenever possible. Requests for this assistance can be made through your supervisor, your union representative or through your Human Resources Consultant and in all cases the reasons for the request are confidential. If you require assistance, you may be referred to a third-party provider, or you may receive a package outlining various types of assistance that are available in the community. If you require assistance and do not wish to discuss with your supervisor, please contact your Human Resources Consultant at extension 5076.

Summary

Your supervisor/manager and the Human Resources Department is available at any time to discuss the Supporting Attendance at Work program, and/or to assist you with accommodation or employee assistance that you may require. Please contact any one of these individuals for help, should you need it. We hope that by working together, we can help you to help Ryerson meet its long-term strategic goals and objectives through supporting your attendance at work.