

ATTENDANCE SUPPORT PROGRAM

Limestone District School Board

2026

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Limestone District School Board prides itself on the quality educational services we provide to our students. The Board is dependent on the contribution and commitment of all its employees to achieve this goal. Regular, consistent attendance is therefore essential.
- 1.2 The Attendance Support Program is intended to address employee absences, through positive interventions whereby employees are offered assistance and support on an individual basis. Implementation of the Attendance Support Program will be subject to and consistent with respective Collective Agreement provisions and will respect applicable statutes.

2.0 Goals & Objectives

- 2.1 The long-term goal and commitment of the Attendance Support Program is to create and promote a healthy school/Board community that contributes to safe, stable learning and working environments that ultimately support student and staff well-being and achievement.
- 2.2 The Attendance Support Program is a non-disciplinary process. The goal of the Program is to assist employees to remain at work and where injury, illness, disability, or other cause prevents an employee from attending work, ensure that the necessary support is in place to promote an early and safe return to work. The intent is to resolve health concerns through positive intervention, including offering assistance such as accommodation, EAP services, or providing other referrals as appropriate.
- 2.2 Objectives of the Attendance Support Program include:
 - Supporting employees in maintaining optimal health.
 - Promoting optimal and regular attendance at work, which is essential to furthering the Board's goals and objectives.
 - Offering assistance and support to employees whose number of absences has escalated.
 - Treating all employees in a consistent and respectful manner.
 - Providing a framework to work within and establishing individualized goals for employees to work toward.
 - Reducing the financial and human impacts associated with sick leave, such as interruption of student learning, loss of productivity, overtime, replacement staff and staff morale.

3.0 Guiding Principles

- 3.1 The Attendance Support Program is founded on the following guiding principles:
 - Employee absences, due to injury or illness, are a legitimate use of sick leave unless determined otherwise.

- Employees play an active role in managing their own attendance.
- Supervisors will promote an open and cooperative injury/illness support process wherein both parties actively work together in assessing, planning, and identifying targets for improvement, based on individual circumstances.
- Cooperation between supervisors and employees will promote reduced absences and improved accommodation, where appropriate, of employee needs.
- The program provides for increased intervention as an employee moves through the Program.
- No person shall be denied participation in job competitions, transfers, or developmental opportunities because of their inclusion in the Program.
- The timelines established are guidelines only and may be repeated, extended, or shortened.

4.0 Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Employees

- 4.1.1 As the Board's greatest asset, employees are required to be at work, wherever possible. However, occasionally circumstances occur that result in an employee being absent from work. It is the employee's responsibility to advise their supervisor if they are going to be absent for any reason, including the following:
- Providing notification as soon as possible before the first day of absence or, if that is not possible, as soon as possible after the commencement of the absence.
 - Notifying their supervisor of their absence directly, where possible, understanding that in emergency situations another individual may have to communicate on behalf of the employee.
 - Notifying their supervisor as early as possible of the expected date of return.
 - Maintaining regular contact with their supervisor to advise of progress and an expected date of return in the case of longer absences.
 - Providing requested medical documentation to the Employee Health & Wellness Specialist in a timely fashion.
 - Notifying their supervisor or Human Resources as early as possible if the employee's inability to attend work is the result of a disability in order that possible accommodations can be explored.
 - Notifying their supervisor as early as possible if the employee's inability to attend work is the result of a workplace injury.
 - Actively participating in the return to work / accommodation process.
 - Actively participating in the Attendance Support Program.

4.2 Supervisors

- 4.2.1 The supervisor plays a critical role with respect to attendance. Responsibilities include:
- Promoting a positive work environment, including demonstrating concern for employee well-being.
 - Assessing employee absence rates, in consultation with Human Resources.

- Addressing potential absence concerns in a timely manner.
- Assisting staff who are struggling with attendance issues to develop an action plan to improve attendance and support them in achieving the goals of their action plan.
- Communicating attendance expectations to staff.
- Assisting with communicating the Attendance Support Program to employees.
- Maintaining communication with absent employees.
- Supporting employees, including providing available resources to assist them in their work and/or personal lives.
- Working alongside the Employee Health & Wellness Specialist to develop effective return to work strategies and/or accommodations for employees, including achievable attendance goals.
- Recognizing employees for good or improved attendance.

4.3 Human Resources

4.3.1 Human Resources is responsible for the overall management of the Attendance Support Program. The Board's Employee Health & Wellness Team plays a significant role in monitoring attendance and supporting employee return to work and/or accommodation. Responsibilities include:

- Interpreting sick leave provisions.
- Monitoring attendance statistics and providing Principals/Supervisors with trend analysis reports to identify employees who are experiencing increased absences.
- Provide support and advice to supervisors dealing with attendance concerns.
- Providing supervisors with support and guidance in the various stages of the Attendance Support Program, including helping supervisors to establish personalized attendance goals for staff and determining whether an employee should be granted an extension in each level.
- Requesting proper medical documentation, as necessary.
- Maintaining medical documentation in a secure, locked, confidential location.
- Consulting with respective bargaining agents, as requested and/or required.
- Leading and supporting the development of return to work and/or accommodation plans, including updating plans on a regular basis.

4.4 Bargaining Agents

4.4.1 Bargaining agents play an important role in supporting employees who are frequently absent from work. If the employee chooses to involve a bargaining unit representative, the representative should be involved in the process as early as possible.

Responsibilities of bargaining agents include, but are not limited to:

- Providing support, guidance and advice to their members as it relates to setting attendance goals, developing accommodation, and/or return to work plans.
- Ensuring Collective Agreement provisions are understood and followed.

- Working with the Board to resolve situations wherein obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code conflict with Collective Agreement provisions.

5.0 Types of Absences

- 5.1 **Innocent Absenteeism** refers to absences that are beyond the control of the employee, such as illness, injury, or disability. These absences are not dealt with through progressive discipline; but rather employees are supported through the Attendance Support Program. Lateness or leaving early may be included as part of innocent absenteeism.
- 5.2 **Culpable Absenteeism** refers to absences that are within the control of the employee and may involve deliberate misrepresentation or misuse of a leave thereby requiring disciplinary action. Although it may identify such patterns, the Attendance Support Program does not deal with culpable absenteeism. Lateness or leaving early may be included as part of culpable absenteeism.
- 5.3 Where culpable absenteeism is identified a separate and distinct disciplinary process will ensue in accordance with Board procedures and the respective collective agreement.

6.0 Attendance Threshold

- 6.1 An attendance threshold has been established for the purpose of identifying employees who may require additional support with respect to maintaining regular attendance at work. Employees who have been identified for placement into the Attendance Support Program will meet with their supervisor. The supervisor, in consultation with the Employee Health & Wellness Specialist, will offer support, share concerns, understand what may be contributing to the increasing number of absences and proactively problem solve strategies to reduce absences.

The threshold, as it relates to consideration for placement in the Attendance Support Program, has been set at 11 or more sick and/or sick/medical days not attributable to a single long-term medical issue. Personal leave used for purposes of personal medical appointments will count toward the threshold. Longer-term absences will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

- 6.2 The Board reserves the right to review and evaluate the program on a regular basis and amend the above-noted threshold as necessary.
- 6.3 The following chart illustrates what absences are included and what absences are not included as provided for in the respective collective agreement, for purposes of entry into the Program:

Absences Included	Absences Not Included
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illness • Injury unrelated to work • Personal medical Appointments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacation • Pregnancy / Parental Leave • Pre-approved Personal Leave (not related to personal medical appointments) • Workplace Illness/Injury (WSIB) • Bereavement Leave • Pallbearer Leave • Graduation Day • Union Leave • Quarantine • Compassionate Leave • Inclement Weather • Jury Duty • Family Leave • Family Medical Leave (ESA) • Parenting/Paternity Leave • Approved Long Term Disability • Observance of recognized religious holy days • Domestic and Sexual Violence Leave (ESA) • Long Term Illness Leave (ESA)

7.0 Recording Absences

7.1 In order to proactively identify and respond to potential attendance issues, it is important that accurate, up-to-date attendance records are maintained.

8.0 Identifying the Need for Possible Intervention

8.1 When an employee's number of absences approaches the established threshold, this signals that the employee may require additional support. Human Resources will determine when the Attendance Support Program is the appropriate next step, including participation in the program as well as movement through the program.

8.2 It is important to recognize that each employee and their situation is unique and therefore each case must be considered independently with some consideration and flexibility given to the individual circumstance. Once a potential issue has been identified, it is important to look at the number of absences as well as the length of each absence.

8.3 For example, one sick leave instance of twenty days absence due to surgery is handled differently than twenty separate instances of one day each. The former is an isolated incident, which may require a graduated return to work plan and corresponding accommodation. The latter will require further exploration as to what may be causing the employee to miss work and what support the employer can provide to assist the employee.

9.0 Attendance Support Process

- 9.1 The process consists of several support meetings that focus on proactive intervention and employment accommodation, as appropriate, with the goal of reducing the number of employee absences, over the course of a year.
- 9.2 The Attendance Support Program includes three levels that incorporate a total of six steps – two informal, and four formal steps. Each step is intended to raise awareness of absence rates and to provide increasing support and/or referrals to available resources to assist employees in reducing their number of absences.
- 9.3 There are several features common to each level of the program:
- All employees have the right to have union/association representation for additional support.
 - Any level can be extended, repeated, or suspended based on individual circumstances and whether attendance goals have been achieved.
 - If attendance goals are not maintained for one year, the employee will repeat the last level attained or progress to the next level.
 - If attendance goals are achieved for one year, the employee is commended and removed from the program.
 - Attendance goals can be modified, based on new medical information or other supporting information.
 - If after having been removed from the program, the employee is required to re-enter the program, they will generally enter Level One, unless they are reentering the program within a one-year timeframe.
 - If the employee indicates, at any point in the process, that a medical condition or disability contributes to their attendance, a request for medical documentation will be made and appropriate accommodation(s) identified and implemented, as necessary. Continued participation in the Attendance Support Program may not be necessary and will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

10.0 Initial Meeting

- 10.1 Once it has been identified that an employee's absences warrant review, the supervisor, with the support of the Employee Health & Wellness Specialist, will schedule a meeting to discuss the employee's attendance. This meeting is informal and an opportunity to engage the employee in conversation to better understand what may be contributing to the increasing number of absences and whether there are supports/strategies that could be put in place to assist the employee. Although not required, if an employee requests union support for this meeting, site-based stewards/branch presidents may provide support.
- 10.2 Following the meeting, the supervisor will notify the Health and Wellness Team of the date the initial meeting took place.

11.0 Initial Follow-Up Meeting

- 11.1 Approximately one month following the initial meeting, a follow-up meeting with the employee, their supervisor, and union/federation/association representation (if requested by the employee) will be scheduled.
- 11.2 In cases where the employee's absences continue to be of concern, the employee, their supervisor, and their union/federation/association representative will meet to:
- Review the employee's attendance since the initial meeting.
 - Discuss any supports and/or strategies that were implemented.
 - Assess progress and determine whether additional measures or resources may be required.
 - Review the Attendance Support Program as a potential next step, if applicable.
- 11.3 Following the meeting, a written summary will be provided to the employee outlining the discussion, any next steps/supports identified, and advising the employee that continued absenteeism may warrant placement into the Attendance Support Program for additional support.
- 11.4 In circumstances where an employee's attendance has improved since the initial meeting, the employee, their supervisor, and union/federation/association representation (if requested) will meet to:
- Commend the employee for their improved attendance since the initial meeting.
 - Discuss strategies moving forward to support the employee's regular attendance at work.
- 11.5 Following the meeting, a written summary will be provided to the employee to commend their improved attendance, outline the discussion, including any supports identified.

12.0 Attendance Support Program

12.1 Level One

- 12.1.1 If the employee's absences continue to be of concern after both the initial meeting and the initial follow-up meeting(s) have been held, and the employee's absences have reached the established 11-day threshold, the employee may be placed into Level One of the Attendance Support Program. A meeting will be scheduled to review ongoing attendance concerns and establish attendance goals moving forward. The meeting will include the employee, their supervisor, union/federation/association representative, and Employee Health & Wellness Specialist. The intent of this meeting is to further explore the number of absences, contributing factors, and possible solutions. Employees should be advised of the right to bring their union/federation/association representative(s) for support. During this meeting, the parties will:

- Review the employee's number of absences.
- Suggest available resources to assist the employee such as EAP, workplace accommodation, where appropriate, or other sources of support.
- Explore the possible need to request (update) medical documentation.
- Establish attendance goals for the review period.

12.1.2 A summary of the meeting will be provided in writing to the employee with a copy placed in the employee's attendance file. The employee's attendance will be monitored over the next four months.

12.2 Follow Up

12.2.1 An email summarizing the meeting, the supports offered, attendance goals identified, and next steps will be sent to the employee following the Level One meeting.

12.2.2 The employee's attendance will be monitored over the four-month period following the Level One meeting. If the goals set during the Level One meeting are met, the employee is to be commended in writing. Attendance records will continue to be monitored every four months. If after one year no further attendance concerns are identified, the employee will be removed from the program and annual monitoring resumes.

12.2.3 Where the employee is unable to meet the established attendance goals, Level One may be extended or the employee moved to Level Two, depending upon individual circumstances.

13.0 Level Two

13.1 In some cases, some employee absence rates may not improve after at least two attempts at intervention. In this case, the employee, the supervisor, union/federation/association representation, and the Employee Health & Wellness Specialist will:

- Meet with the employee to review attendance records, re-emphasize attendance expectations, including previous goals, which may be adjusted as deemed appropriate.
- Request (updated) medical documentation and discuss other options that might support the employee in reducing the number of absences, such as EAP, accommodation and/or other potential supports.
- Advise the employee that there is a continuing concern with respect to their attendance, emphasizing that improvement is required over the next four months.
- Confirm attendance goals and expectations in writing.
- Advise the employee that continued absences, albeit innocent, may result in termination from employment.
- Monitor attendance over the next four months.

13.2 Follow Up

- 13.2.1 An email summarizing the meeting, the supports offered, attendance goals identified, and next steps will be sent to the employee following the Level Two meeting.
- 13.2.2 The employee's number of absences will be monitored over the next four-month period following the Level Two meeting. If the goals, as set during the Level Two meeting, are met, the employee is to be commended in writing. Attendance records will continue to be monitored every four months. If after one year, no further attendance issues are identified, the employee will be removed from the program and annual monitoring resumes.
- 13.2.3 Where the employee is unable to meet the established goals, Level Two may be repeated or the employee may be placed in Level Three of the program, depending upon individual circumstances.

14.0 Level Three

- 14.1 If there is no improvement after participating in Level Two of the Program, the employee will progress to Level Three of the Attendance Support Program.
- 14.2 A meeting is scheduled with the employee, their supervisor, union/federation/association representation, the Employee Health and Wellness Specialist, and the Superintendent of Human Resources, or designate to further investigate the employee's number of absences, contributing factors and possible solutions, while raising the employee's awareness that continued excessive absences may lead to termination. At this stage, the Superintendent of Human Resources, or designate, will:
 - Review the employee's past attendance record and the reason why the employee has been placed in Level Three of the Program.
 - Encourage the employee to seek additional resources to assist them such as EAP, treating physicians, alternative leave, or other sources of support.
 - Where deemed necessary, ask the employee to provide (updated) medical or other supporting documentation that clearly outlines their ability to regularly attend work.
 - Advise that a follow-up meeting will be scheduled to discuss the results of the requested medical assessment.
 - Implement any required accommodation(s).
 - Confirm attendance goals / expectations or establish new goals for this review period, if new information is presented.
 - Advise the employee that continued absences, albeit innocent, may result in termination from employment.
 - Confirm the above in writing.
 - Monitor the employee's attendance over the next four months.

- 14.3 If the medical documentation is not submitted or the doctor indicates that regular and consistent attendance cannot be expected, Human Resources will begin a review of the employee's file to determine the viability of continuing the employment relationship.
- 14.4 If the employee provides medical information indicating that no medical condition exists that would prevent the employee from regularly attending work, the employee's absences will be monitored over the next four months. The employee should be advised that they have reached the final level of the program and if attendance expectations are not met and achieved for a one-year period, termination may be considered.
- 14.5 The employee's attendance will be monitored over the next four months following the Level Three meeting, where it has been determined that no medical reason is contributing to the employee's number of absences. The employee's attendance will determine the outcome as follows:
1. If the employee's attendance improves, the employee is to be commended in writing. Attendance records will continue to be monitored every four months. If after one year, no further attendance issues are identified, the employee will be removed from the program and annual monitoring will resume.
 2. If the employee is unable to meet the established goals, Human Resources will determine whether to repeat Level Three or proceed to termination.

15.0 Termination for Innocent Absenteeism

- 15.1 If after progressing through the Program, the employee does not exhibit any improvement in the number of absences, a review of the employee's file will be conducted to determine the viability of continuing the employment relationship.
- 15.2 Termination should only be considered after all steps in the process have been exhausted and the Board has determined that it has fulfilled its obligations under the applicable Collective Agreement, Terms and Conditions and/or Board procedures, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, the Human Rights Code and any other applicable legislation and the employee's non-culpable absenteeism has exceeded the threshold through Level 3 and there is no reasonable likelihood that the employee will be able to attend work regularly in the foreseeable future.

In determining whether termination is the appropriate course of action, the following factors should be carefully considered:

- Whether the employee has done everything reasonable in the circumstances to improve their attendance.
- Whether the Board attempted to assist the employee in a reasonable way, including, but not limited to counselling, time-off, workplace accommodation, or other appropriate support.
- Whether the Board has provided the employee with proper notice that their ongoing absences may result in termination.

- Whether the Board has determined if a disability exists, that may require accommodation.
- Whether the Board has provided sufficient time to allow the employee to address their attendance issues.
- Whether the available evidence indicates that there is no reasonable likelihood that the employee's attendance will improve in the foreseeable future.

16.0 Summary

- 16.1 The Attendance Support Program is designed to support employees to attend work regularly. Employees actively participate in the process, including establishing personalized goals. Levels are successive, with increasing intervention at each level. Goal setting is individualized and recognizes the employee's needs/circumstances. At any time, goals may be modified based on new information.
- 16.2 Goals may be quantitative or qualitative in nature as well as temporary or permanent, depending on the situation. Examples may include:
- Personal absence thresholds.
 - Reduced hours.
 - Modified work.
 - Relocation.
 - Time off (paid or unpaid, depending on the circumstances).
- 16.3 Most issues with respect to employee absences will be resolved at Level One or Level Two of the Attendance Support Program.
- 16.4 Supervisors can support their employees through the implementation of positive strategies such as EAP referrals, counseling, time off, accommodations, and by maintaining regular contact with employees, particularly when an employee is off work for an extended period. The goal is to promote optimal attendance with a focus on early and safe return to work strategies.
- 16.5 At any point in the process, an employee may apply for and be approved for Long Term Disability (LTD) benefits or Workplace Safety & Insurance Board (WSIB) benefits. Employees in receipt of LTD or WSIB will no longer actively participate in the Attendance Support Program. When an employee receives medical clearance to return to work, a return to work and, where necessary, accommodation plan will be developed. Further absences unrelated to WSIB or LTD may result in the employee re-entering the Attendance Support Program.

17.0 Program Review & Evaluation

- 17.1 The Board's Attendance Support Program will be reviewed regularly to evaluate the effectiveness and overall impact of the program. Amendments may be made, as necessary, to meet the overall goals and objectives of the program.

17.2 Any changes made to the Board's Attendance Support Program will be communicated to the respective union/federation/association parties.

Process Summary

Attendance Support Process	Outcome
Initial Meeting(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased awareness of absences ▪ Offer of support ▪ Request medical documentation, where appropriate
Level One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish attendance goals ▪ Offer support ▪ Request for (updated) medical or other supporting documentation, as deemed necessary ▪ Identify accommodation, where required ▪ Four-month review period ▪ Removal, extension or progression
Level Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish attendance goals ▪ Offer support ▪ Request for (updated) medical or other supporting documentation, as deemed necessary ▪ Identify accommodation, where required ▪ Four-month review period ▪ Removal, extension or progression ▪ Notice that excessive absences may lead to termination
Level Three – Initial Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish attendance goals ▪ Request for updated medical or other support documentation ▪ Identify accommodation, as required ▪ Offer additional support ▪ Four-month review period ▪ Notice that failure to improve may lead to termination
Level Three – Absence monitoring continues based on supporting medical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review history of participation in ASP ▪ Identify/update accommodation as appropriate based on updated medical ▪ Offer additional support, as appropriate ▪ Four-month review period

Level Three – No Improvement in foreseeable future expected or no improvement based on established goals

- Notice that failure to improve may lead to termination.
 - Careful review of employee file and employment history to consider viability of continuing the employment relationship
 - Possible termination for innocent absenteeism
-