

**3212 Attendance**

## A. Review of Attendance Data

- a. A record shall be kept of the attendance of each teaching staff member, including teachers; educational services personnel; administrators; and other certificated staff members. Any absence, for part or all of a school day, shall be recorded along with the reason for the absence. The record will distinguish sick leave, professional days, unpaid leaves of absence, personal leave, bereavement leave, and any other leaves of absences taken by the teaching staff member. The teaching staff member's attendance record will include notation of verification of an absence where such verification is required by the Superintendent or by Policy and Regulation 1642.01. The teaching staff member's rate of absence shall be calculated at least once per school year and entered on the teaching staff member's attendance record. A teaching staff member's attendance record shall be part of the teaching staff member's personnel file.
- b. A cumulative attendance record shall be assembled for each school in the school district and also for the school district as required by the New Jersey Department of Education.
- c. An attendance summary shall be prepared from the cumulative attendance record. The attendance summary shall show the rate of absence for each school in the district and also for the school district.

## B. Attendance Reporting and Improvement Plan

- a. Planning
  - i. Each absence of a teaching staff member shall be reported by the teaching staff member in accordance with the school district's procedure.
  - ii. The absence of a teaching staff member shall be provided to the teaching staff member's Principal or supervisor designated by the Superintendent, as appropriate, who shall determine if a substitute or replacement is required for the period of the absence.
  - iii. A report of such absences shall also be provided to the Superintendent or designee.
  - iv. The Principal or supervisor designated by the Superintendent shall determine if an absence requires further verification. Reasons for further verification may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. A pattern of absences on the same day(s) of the week;
  2. A pattern of absences before or after nonworking days;
  3. The habitual exhaustion of personal leave.
- v. The Superintendent or designee will meet with Principals and supervisors to discuss attendance records of teaching staff members. The attendance records shall be analyzed for patterns of absences, such as excessive absenteeism in a given department, school, or work place in the school district, among certain groups of teaching staff members, for certain specific causes, or on certain days of the week, month, or year. Specific strategies for reducing the rate of absences shall be developed.

b. Implementation

- i. The Superintendent or designee or the teaching staff member's Principal or supervisor designated by the Superintendent shall be responsible for implementing a plan for the improvement of teaching staff member attendance.
- ii. The teaching staff member's Principal or supervisor designated by the Superintendent shall encourage the regular attendance of teaching staff members in their workplace, school, or department. The teaching staff member's Principal or supervisor designated by the Superintendent shall maintain contact with absent employees and may confer with teaching staff members who return from an absence of any duration.
- iii. The Superintendent shall direct Principals and supervisors designated by the Superintendent to incorporate a teaching staff member's attendance record in the teaching staff member's evaluation, only when there is a concern about a pattern of absence or deviation from regular attendance.
- iv. The teaching staff member's Principal or supervisor designated by the Superintendent shall report to the Superintendent or designee any teaching staff member whom the Principal or supervisor designated by the Superintendent suspects of misusing sick leave or falsifying the reasons for an absence.

c. Counseling

- i. The Superintendent, Principal, or supervisor designated by the Superintendent may schedule a conference with a teaching staff member where the number and/or pattern of the teaching staff member's absences or the reasons offered for the teaching staff member's absences may indicate a concern.
- ii. Prior to the giving of any admonition, reprimand, or imposition of discipline of any kind, the Superintendent, Principal, or supervisor designated by the Superintendent shall determine the nature of the absences and consider any extenuating circumstances.
- iii. A written report of any attendance conference shall be prepared and retained with the teaching staff member's evaluations. The teaching staff member shall be permitted to examine the report and affix their comments, if any, to evaluation reports.

#### C. Record of Attendance

- a. A record shall be kept of the attendance of all teaching staff members, including supervisors. Any absence, for part or all of a school day, shall be recorded with the reason for the absence. A teaching staff member's attendance record shall be part of the teaching staff member's personnel file.
- b. The record will distinguish sick leave; professional days; unpaid leaves of absences; personal leave; bereavement leave; and any other leaves taken by the teaching staff member. The teaching staff member's attendance record will include notation of verification of an absence where such verification is required by the Superintendent, Policy 1642.01, or any other law or Board policy.
- c. A teaching staff member's rate of absence shall be calculated at least once per school year and entered on the teaching staff member's attendance record.
- d. At the end of each school year, the Superintendent of Schools, Principals, and teaching staff members' supervisors designated by the Superintendent will review attendance records for teaching staff members.

#### D. Attendance Improvement Plan

- a. The attendance record prepared for teaching staff members shall be analyzed for patterns of absence, such as excessive absenteeism in a given school or work place, among certain groups of employees, for certain specific causes, or on certain days of the week, month, or year.

- b. Specific strategies for reducing the rate of absences shall be developed.
- c. The Superintendent shall designate an administrator or supervisor to be responsible for implementing the approved plan for the improvement of teaching staff member attendance in the school district and in schools in the district.
- d. The record of a conference(s) dealing with excessive absenteeism may serve as an element in the evaluation of any teaching staff member's performance.

#### E. In-Service Training

- a. The teaching staff member's Principal or supervisor designated by the Superintendent shall meet with teaching staff members at the beginning of each school year to:
  - i. Inform teaching staff members of Board policy and district regulations on attendance;
  - ii. Familiarize employees with the procedures to be used in requesting, reporting, and verifying absences; and
  - iii. Acquaint teaching staff members with the degree to which attendance will affect evaluation reports.

The purpose of the Attendance Improvement Plan (AIP) is to encourage District staff members to report to work and arrive on time. One of the District's most valuable resources is its staff. Every employee has an obligation to perform the functions for which they are hired regularly. The district intends to manage employee absenteeism and lateness in a fair and consistent manner. The Attendance Improvement Plan applies to all employees, including instructional staff members.

In the event an employee does not call in to report their absence and does not report to work, the Personnel Department must be notified immediately. The Director of Personnel may initiate wellness check measures, which could include contacting the police department in the city of the employee's residence. The employee should be issued a written AWOL (absent without leave) memo of warning if they have no prior record of AWOL violations. [The template of this memo may be found in the Administrators' Appendix for Attendance Improvement Plan (Appendix E)]. If the employee has a prior disciplinary record for AWOL violations, disciplinary action should be requested. [The template of this memo may be found in the Administrators' Appendix for Attendance Improvement Plan (Appendix F)].

All requested medical documentation must be submitted to the Personnel Department, not the schools/locations. The Personnel Department will confirm the existence and validity of all medical certifications with location administrators.

If an employee indicates that medical documentation is available but not currently in their possession, a final date for submission should be set during the conference (not more than 5 working days later). If the date passes without receipt of the documentation, a follow-up communication should be issued to support the fact that an opportunity was granted to the employee to submit appropriate documents.

Any and all copies of correspondence to an employee should be forwarded to the appropriate union.

Due to the high costs of absences and disrupted work schedules, the board is required to give continuing attention to the maintenance of regular attendance by employees. Chronic absenteeism and tardiness are subject to discipline and may cause adverse action, up to and including termination.

## **DEFINITIONS**

### **1. Absent Without Leave (AWOL)**

All employees are required to report their absences to their respective supervisor prior to their scheduled start time, via the absence management system. Any employee who does not provide notification of his/her absence shall be considered AWOL and will be recorded accordingly. Any employee absent from duty for five (5) or more consecutive days without notifying the absence management system shall be considered to have abandoned their position.

### **2. Administrative Day**

An approved and scheduled school and/or central office closing.

### **3. Administrative Day (Weather)**

The District schools and/or central office have been officially closed due to actual and impending weather conditions.

### **4. Administrative Leaves of Absence**

An employee has received formal notice of an administrative leave of absence with or without pay from assigned duties and responsibilities. These days are not counted as occasional absences and will not be counted against an employee's leave allotment.

**5. Bereavement**

An employee has reported absence under the appropriate contractual bereavement provision. These days are not counted as an occasional absence and are not counted against an employee's leave allotment.

**6. Board-Approved Leaves of Absence**

The Board has approved an extended leave of absence. These days are not counted as occasional absences and may or may not be counted against an employee's leave allotment.

**7. Military Duty**

An employee has received formal notice of requirements to report for duty (National Guard/reserves) and has submitted a formal request for a leave of absence to the Personnel Department, with a copy to their location supervisor. These days are not counted as an occasional absence and are not counted against an employee's leave allotment.

**8. Occasional Absence**

An absence from work due to valid causes or reasons beyond one's control, such as accidents or illness.

All staff absences are considered occasional absences exclusive of the following: bereavement, professional days, jury duty, military duty, authorized vacation, board-approved leaves of absence, authorized workers' compensation leave, and court appearance to testify on behalf of the Board (subpoena).

**9. Personal Days**

An absence from work for an employee to handle their personal affairs. These days are included in counting occasional absences.

**10. Professional Day**

An employee has received authorization for absence due to board-approved professional reasons, including but not limited to: workshops, conferences, conventions, in-service seminars, and out-of-district visitations. These days are not counted as occasional absences and are not counted against an employee's leave allotment.

**11. Sick**

N.J.S.A. 18A:30-1 - Definition of sick leave. Sick leave is defined as the absence from an employee's post of duty, for any of the following reasons:

- (1) the employee is personally ill or injured;
- (2) for diagnosis, care, or treatment of, or recovery from, an employee's mental or physical illness, injury or other adverse health condition, or for preventive medical care for the employee;
- (3) for the employee to aid or care for a family member of the employee during diagnosis, care, or treatment of, or recovery from, the family member's mental or physical illness, injury or other adverse health condition, or during preventive medical care for the family member;
- (4) absence necessary due to circumstances resulting from the employee, or a family member of the employee, being a victim of domestic or sexual violence, if the leave is to allow the employee to obtain for the employee or the family member:(a) medical attention needed to recover from physical or psychological injury or disability caused by domestic or sexual violence;(b) services from a designated domestic violence agency or other victim services organization;(c) psychological or other counseling;(d) relocation; or(e) legal services, including obtaining a restraining order or preparing for, or participating in, any civil or criminal legal proceeding related to the domestic or sexual violence;
- (5) the death of a family member for up to seven days;
- (6) to attend a child's school-related conference, meeting, function or other event requested or required by a school administrator, teacher, or other professional staff member responsible for the child's education, or to attend a meeting regarding care provided to the child in connection with the child's health conditions or disability;
- (7) the school or place of care of a child of the employee is closed by order of a public official or because of a state of emergency declared by the Governor, due to an epidemic or other public health emergency;
- (8) the employee has been exposed to a contagious disease or is quarantined for the disease in the employee's immediate household.

**a. Sick with documentation**

An employee has reported absence due to personal illness and has submitted doctor's certification for the date(s). These days are included in counting occasional absences.

**b. Sick without documentation**

An employee has reported absence due to personal illness and has not submitted doctor's certification for the date(s). These days are included in counting occasional absences.

**Please note:**

Any employee with three (3) or more consecutive absences must provide a note to the Personnel Department from their healthcare provider before returning to their work assignment/location.

**12. Subpoena/Jury Duty**

An employee has been lawfully served with a subpoena to appear in court on behalf of the District or served with a jury duty notice. These days are not included in counting occasional absence and are not counted against an employee's leave allotment.

**13. Suspension**

An employee has received formal notice of suspension with or without pay from assigned duties and responsibilities.

**14. Termination**

An employment relationship with the school district has ended.

**15. Vacation**

Vacation days are not counted as occasional absences for the AIP. Inclusion is solely for notation purposes.

**16. Workers' Compensation Leave**

An employee has sustained an injury or illness out of and in the course of employment, has an accepted claim, and has received authorization from central office for absence.

**Administrators'/Supervisors' Responsibilities when an Employee has not Received Prior Discipline**

**A. Chronic/Excessive Absenteeism**

**Phase I - Schedule Conference and Confirm Conference in Writing**

- a. After five (5) occasional absences for 10-month employees or six (6) for 12-month employees within a fiscal year (July 1 - June 30), the principal or location administrator shall schedule an informal conference with the employee to discuss their attendance, related issues and advise the employee that they have been verbally warned.

The location administrator shall discuss the following:

- The number of absences
  - The reasons for absences
  - The impact on the educational program of the school or department
  - The relationship between the absences and the employee's performance evaluation
  - The pattern of absences (if any)
  - The District's policy on staff attendance
  - The employee's attendance record from prior school years (if applicable)
- b. The template of the memorandum scheduling the conference can be found in the Administrators' Appendix for Attendance Improvement Plan (Appendix A).
- c. All district employees have the right to invoke their Weingarten rights, which allows them to have a union representative present for conferences. It is the employee's responsibility to request and arrange for union representation.
- d. A memo must be sent confirming the conference and informing the employee that they have been verbally warned regarding attendance. The template of the confirmation of conference memo can be found in the Administrators' Appendix for Attendance Improvement Plan (Appendix B).

The following absences are not to be considered when calculating the days:

- Bereavement
- Jury Duty
- Military Duty
- Board-approved professional days
- Board-approved leaves of absence
- Court appearance to testify on behalf of the Board
- Authorized workers' compensation leave
- Authorized vacation

### **Phase II - Issue Written Warning**

- a. After 10 occasional absences for 10-month employees or 12 for 12-month employees within a fiscal year, the principal or location administrator shall issue a written warning to the employee if circumstances warrant.
- b. The memo should include specifics, such as dates of absences and confirmation of the Phase I AIP counseling/verbal warning. The template of the memo to the employee may be found in the Administrators' Appendix for Attendance Improvement Plan (Appendix C).

The following absences are not to be considered when calculating the days:

- Bereavement
- Jury Duty
- Military Duty
- Board-approved professional days
- Board-approved leaves of absence
- Court appearance to testify on behalf of the Board
- Authorized workers' compensation leave
- Authorized vacation

**Phase III - Meeting with the Director of Personnel**

- a. After 14 occasional absences for 10-month employees and the issuance of a written warning, or 16 occasional absences for 12-month employees and the issuance of a written warning, within a fiscal year, the principal or location administrator shall arrange for the employee to meet with the Director of Personnel. If circumstances warrant it, the principal or location administrator may request to attend the meeting. The Director of Personnel shall issue a memo to the employee after the meeting.
  
- b. The memo should confirm the meeting, the topics discussed, and the Phase II written warning. It should also confirm the employee's current step in the AIP, which is Phase III.

The following absences are not to be considered when calculating the days:

- Bereavement
- Jury Duty
- Military Duty
- Board-approved professional days
- Board-approved leaves of absence
- Court appearance to testify on behalf of the Board
- Authorized workers' compensation leave
- Authorized vacation

The conference will focus on the relationship between the employee's performance, attendance, and the District's goal of improving student achievement. The conference will include, but not be limited to, a discussion of the following:

- The total number of absences
- Number of absences/incidents
- Pattern of absence (if any)

- Reasons for absence
- Impact of absences on the educational program

#### **Phase IV - Request Discipline**

- a. After any employee incurs absences in addition to those outlined in Phase III, the principal or location administrator may request disciplinary action.
- b. The template of the memo to be issued to the employee may be found in the Administrators' Appendix for Attendance Improvement Plan (Appendix D).
- c. Requests for disciplinary action must be forwarded to the Personnel Department.

### **B. Chronic/Excessive Lateness (Tardies)/Early Departures**

#### **Phase I - Schedule Conference and Confirm Conference in Writing**

- a. After five (5) late arrivals and/or early departures within a fiscal year, the principal or location administrator shall schedule an informal conference with the employee to discuss their punctuality and related issues and advise them that they have been verbally warned. The template of the memo scheduling the conference can be found in the Administrators' Appendix for Attendance Improvement Plan (Appendix A).
- b. All district employees have the right to invoke their Weingarten rights, which allow them to have a union representative present for conferences. It is the employee's responsibility to both request and arrange for union representation.
- c. A memo must be sent confirming the conference and informing the employee that they have been verbally warned regarding attendance. The template of the confirmation of conference memo can be found in the Administrators' Appendix for Attendance Improvement Plan (Appendix B).

#### **Phase II - Written Warning**

- a. After seven (7) late arrivals and/or early departures within a fiscal year, the principal or location administrator shall issue a written warning to the employee.
- b. The memo should include specifics, such as the dates and confirmation of Phase I AIP counseling/verbal warning. The template of the memo to the employee may be found in Appendix C.

### **Phase III - Request for Disciplinary Action**

- a. After nine (9) late arrivals and/or early departures within a fiscal year, the principal or location administrator may request disciplinary action.
- b. The template of the memo to the employee may be found in the Administrators' Appendix for Attendance Improvement Plan (Appendix D).

### **C. Absent Without Leave (AWOL)**

- a. If an employee is absent without notifying their principal or location administrator, the district will document this violation of its absence reporting procedure by providing the employee with the memo in Appendix E as a written reprimand.

## **Administrators'/Supervisors' Responsibilities when an Employee Has Received Prior Discipline**

When an employee has received prior discipline, it is not necessary to start from the beginning of the discipline process. There are only two (2) phases to this process: (1) issue a memo of warning, and (2) request disciplinary action.

### **A. Chronic/Excessive Absenteeism**

#### **Phase I - Issue Written Warning**

- a. If the employee's attendance pattern does not improve (meaning they continue to be absent), issue a warning memo (Refer to Appendix C in the Administrators' Appendix for Attendance Improvement Plan). At this point, it is recommended that the principal or location administrator meet with the employee to advise them that stricter disciplinary action will be taken if improvement is not made.

#### **Phase II - Request Disciplinary Action**

- a. If the employee's sub-standard attendance pattern continues, the principal or location administrator may request disciplinary action.
- b. The template of the memo to be issued to the employee may be found in the Administrators' Appendix for Attendance Improvement Plan (Appendix G).
- c. Request for disciplinary action must be forwarded to the Personnel Department.

### **B. Chronic/Excessive Lateness (Tardies)/Early Departure**

#### **Phase I - Issue Written Warning**

- a. If the employee's punctuality does not improve (meaning they continue to arrive to work late and/or leave early) issue a warning memo. (Refer to Appendix D in the Administrators' Appendix for Attendance Improvement Plan). At this point, it is recommended that the principal or location administrator meet with the employee to advise them that if improvement is not made, stricter disciplinary action will be taken.

#### **Phase II - Request Disciplinary Action**

- a. If the employee's substandard punctuality or early departures continue, the principal or location administrator may request disciplinary action.
- b. The template of the memo to be issued to the employee may be found in the Administrators' Appendix for Attendance Improvement Plan (Appendix G).
- c. Requests for disciplinary action must be forwarded to the Personnel Department.

#### **C. Absent Without Leave (AWOL)**

- a. If an employee continues to be absent without notifying their principal or location administrator, the principal or location administrator may request disciplinary action.
- b. The template of the memo to be issued to the employee may be found in the Administrators' Appendix for Attendance Improvement Plan (Appendix F).

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