



## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

**Subject: Employee Attendance**

**Policy No. 12**

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### Policy Statement

Punctuality and regular attendance are essential to insure optimal productivity and client service. In order for the University to achieve these goals employees are required to maintain a satisfactory record of attendance. Supervisors are responsible for communicating the attendance policy to staff and for fair and consistent application of the policy.

### Scope

This policy applies to all Classified (Maintenance, Clerical, Protective Services, and Administrative & Residual), SUOAF, and Management/Confidential Employees. Other bargaining units may be guided by the goal of this policy. It is the intent of the University to apply this policy on as consistent a basis as possible among all employee groups.

### Definitions

**Absenteeism** – Failure to report to work or to remain at work as scheduled, regardless of reason. This includes tardiness, unauthorized leave, unanticipated use of sick leave, and emergency use of any accrued leave. Absenteeism does not include appropriately scheduled leave such as vacation, personal leave, compensatory leave, military leave, medical leave, medical appointments, maternity or other long-term medical leaves.

**Abuse of Sick Leave** – Use of sick leave for reasons other than those defined under the appropriate bargaining unit contract provisions, the “Management / Confidential Personnel Policies”, or State Personnel Regulations. Abuse of sick leave includes, but is not limited to: 1) falsely

reporting that sick leave is being used for other purposes; 2) excessive absenteeism; or 3) failure to provide medical documentation supporting an absence(s).

**Medical Certificate** – The form prescribed by the State Department of Administrative Services (DAS) and signed by a licensed physician or other practitioner whose method of healing is recognized by the State and is acceptable to the University.

**Occasion of Absence** – One continuous *unscheduled or unapproved* continuous day(s) or partial day(s) of absence for the same reason and/or a period of absenteeism related to a single cause. A medical certificate is required to support non-consecutive absences related to the same cause if they are to be counted as a single occasion.

The following Absences are exceptions and will not be counted as an Occasion:

- Approved Vacation time
- Personal Leave time
- Approved Compensatory Time
- Bereavement Leave (advance notification to your supervisor is required, when possible)
- Jury Duty / Subpoenaed court appearances on behalf of the State (but not as a Defendant or as a result of a Misdemeanor Summons or other personal matter; court provided documentation and advance notification to your supervisor is required)
- Military leave
- Workers' Compensation time
- Scheduled and approved Sick time (i.e. surgery, scheduled doctors' appointments)
- Sick Family time (up to 5 days per year, or as governed by the employee's labor contract) Advance notification to your supervisor for staff planning is required, when possible.
- Designated and documented leave under the *state or federal* FMLA.

**Occurrence** – is an absence of any portion of a scheduled work day, or any block of consecutive days, without notification to, and authorization from the supervisor prior to the time the absence commences, when for reasons normally covered by sick leave an employee requests and uses sick, or vacation leave.

**Tardiness** – Failure to report for duty at the time scheduled and/or failure to return to duty promptly at any point during the normal schedule (lunch, breaks, etc.).

**Unauthorized Leave** – Failure to report an absence of any duration according to this policy or to leave or be absent from the worksite without proper authorization.

**Unscheduled** – means less than one day notice to your direct supervisor.

**Work** – Regularly scheduled and overtime duty.

### **Attendance Policy**

The employee retains the ultimate responsibility for reporting to work on a consistent basis in order to fulfill the requirements of his or her job. Attendance at work must be reliable, predictable, regular, and prompt.

All employees are expected to report to work on time every day they are scheduled to work and to maintain a satisfactory record of attendance. If an employee is unable to report to work they are required to report their unscheduled absences, including tardiness, to their supervisor **prior to one (1) hour before their start time**. The employee must state the expected duration of the absence and expected return to work. Unless an emergency situation dictates otherwise, messages may not be left by third parties (i.e. friends, relatives, etc.) or left with Administrative staff or co-workers unless instructed otherwise by the immediate supervisor. All employees are expected to provide documentation to support sick leave usage when required.

Unpredictable attendance, habitual tardiness, and absenteeism are particularly detrimental to planning, organizational efficiency and employee morale. They are considerations when evaluating performance and are cause for corrective action up to and including dismissal.

### **Policy Purpose**

The ability to best serve our students, faculty, staff and the overall University community requires regular attendance. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for deans, directors, supervisors and employees which define acceptable attendance expectations.

Each employee has the responsibility to maintain good attendance and is expected to use good judgment in managing absences from work. Regular and punctual attendance is essential to the best performance of employees and the University. Excessive or habitual absenteeism and tardiness affects costs, efficiency and competitiveness, and creates a heavy burden on fellow coworkers.

The occasional need to be absent due to illness, medical appointments, etc., is understood, and for the large majority of employees, absenteeism is legitimate, occurs infrequently, and presents few problems. These guidelines are intended

to address the majority of instances in which sick leave is typically used, but they do not preclude individual assessments on a case-by-case basis.

### **Policy Application**

This policy does not supersede the terms of any collective bargaining agreement. The objectives of this policy are in general, to communicate the attendance expectations of the University and to establish guidelines for the effective and fair administration of sick leave usage and specifically, to 1.) Ensure service standards are met; 2.) Improve productivity through better attendance; 3.) Minimize costs associated with employee absences due to tardiness and sick leave; 4.) Standardize sick leave procedures and ensure that sick leave use is consistent with the provisions of collective bargaining agreements or other guidelines.

### **Sick Leave Usage Expectations**

Eligible employees shall accrue and may use sick leave in accordance with the terms of their appropriate contract agreement or other guiding principle.

- **Monitoring Use of Sick Leave**

Supervisors shall monitor the amount of sick leave used by employees and review sick leave usage for individual employees *when use reaches three (3) occurrences in any six-month period*. Calling in sick just prior to the start of the shift is an example of an occurrence.

- **Sick Leave Usage Not Counted as Occurrences**

The following types of sick leave are not counted as occurrences (proper documentation may be required):

- Use of pre-approved sick leave, with at least 24-hour advance notice, to attend scheduled medical appointments with documentation from a health care provider stating the date and time the employee was scheduled to be seen. Employees are encouraged to schedule their appointments outside normal business hours. When this is not possible, employees are encouraged to schedule their appointments at the beginning or end of their work shift or during the lunch period;
- Use of sick leave to attend a funeral, as defined by the contract agreement or the State Personnel Act;
- Use of sick leave for injuries occurring while on duty and covered by workers compensation or for injuries occurring while on duty that result in three or less lost work days;
- Use of sick leave for hospitalization;
- An FMLA leave; (Refer to FMLA policy for absences greater than three

- consecutive days).
- Chronic or serious medical conditions or other situations deemed exceptional by the supervisor and reviewed by the Human Resources Office which will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

### **Supervisor Responsibilities**

Each supervisor shall:

- Be responsible for bringing to the attention of employees under his/her jurisdiction this procedure and any other related University policy or procedure that has been established for the purpose of providing direction and guidance for reporting employee absences.
- Have employee submit any medical certification completed by a health care professional to the Office of Human Resources in order to return to work after any health related absence of at least five consecutive work days.
- Establish a system for monitoring and recording the attendance of his/her staff. This record should include the date of absence, reason for the absence, length of the absence, type of leave charged, and, if appropriate, a notation indicating that the employee failed to provide proper notice of the absence.
- Monitor employee leave balances and ensure that employees do not exceed contractually earned benefits, i.e. annual accruals for family sick or funeral leave benefits, personal leave, vacation, or compensatory leave.
- Use regular progressive discipline (i.e. verbal and written counseling, reprimands, and suspensions) according to the guidelines outlined in this policy to correct attendance deficiencies in consultation with Human Resources.
- Incorporate the employee's attendance and any progressive disciplinary action into the employee service rating.

### **Criterion for Evaluating Attendance**

Attendance records will be reviewed in terms of the criterion listed below to evaluate an employee's attendance and/or determine whether corrective action is warranted. Human Resources will determine the action to be taken upon the accumulation of a certain number of criterions within a given time period, taking into consideration the following: The criterions are as follows:

- **Number of Occasions of Absence** – The number of occasions of absence is generally provided greater weight than the cumulative number of days/hours absent since a single cause, such as major surgery, might be the reason for the number of days absent. There are situations when an employee may be absent on non-consecutive days resulting from a single illness or injury. Those series of absences may be considered a single occasion provided that:

1. The employee provides a medical certificate from the physician that the treatment program is required and indicating the expected number of visits.
  2. Advance notice of the appointments is given to the employee's supervisor.
  3. Sick leave taken due to the death of an immediate family member shall not be counted as an occasion.
- **Number of Days/Hours Used** – While the first criterion analyzed is the number of occasions of absence, the number of days or hours used by the employee should be considered. Employees who continually exhaust their accumulated sick leave may be an indication of an attendance problem.
  - **Pattern of Absences** – Absence occurring in patterns (same day of week, same time of year, adjacent to a weekend, holiday, vacation, or other leave, etc.) may be indicative of an attendance problem.
  - **Mitigating Circumstances** – There are circumstances that may warrant a deviation from the general rating guidelines identified in this procedure. Mitigating circumstances include, but are not limited to, major illness or injury, ongoing therapy or medical treatment, approved family or medical leave, etc. When a supervisor deviates from these general rating guidelines of these procedures, they are required to specify the reason for non-conforming with the rating scale.
  - **Unauthorized Leave Without Pay** – Is an unapproved absence. Occasions of unauthorized leave are serious and consequently will accelerate discipline and will negatively impact an employee's attendance rating.
  - **Tardiness** – In addition to absences, tardiness should be taken into account when rating an employee's attendance. The number and duration of the occurrences should be examined as well as any mitigating circumstances. Excessive tardiness, in and of itself, may be the basis for disciplinary action and corresponding evaluation rating.
  - **Guidelines** established through collective bargaining will also be taken into account when considering action. In evaluating an employee's attendance, all leave time chargeable to sick leave that was not pre-scheduled, including medical/dental appointments; leaves without pay due to illness; tardiness; unauthorized leaves; etc. should be considered. Do not include leaves associated with a workers compensation claim, approved Family Medical Leaves (FMLA), pre-scheduled medical/dental appointments, funerals, or family sick leave.

It is recognized that situations may arise that are not specifically addressed in this document. In those situations, employee and/or supervisory personnel are encouraged to contact the Human Resources Department for assistance.

### **Documentation of Reasonable Use**

Supervisors may, at any time, require a medical statement, signed by a health care provider, if there is a reasonable reason to believe that sick leave is being used inappropriately. Examples (not all inclusive) of inappropriate use of sick leave include, but are not necessarily limited to: sick leave used for any purpose other than that defined in the collective bargaining agreements or the State Personnel Act; developed repeated patterns of sick leave usage, such as sick leave usage adjacent to weekends, holidays or scheduled vacations; and sick leave usage during inclement weather.

An employee who is absent for five or more consecutive work days for any reason, may be required to be seen by a health care provider and/or provide a medical statement, signed by the health care provider, which provides evidence of their inability to work for the period of time absent, in accordance with the appropriate collective bargaining agreement or civil service rules.

If a medical statement is required, it must:

- 1) specify the date the health care provider was contacted;
- 2) specify the dates the employee was unable to perform their job;
- 3) specify whether the employee was seen by the health care provider; and,
- 4) be submitted within the first week the employee returns to work.

If the above conditions requiring a medical statement are not met, employees will not be paid for their absence, and may not be allowed to continue to work until they provide the medical statement, signed by a health care provider.

### **Absences During Inclement Weather**

When the University is officially closed due to serious weather conditions or some other emergency, employees should follow the procedures set up by their Department to determine whether or not they should report to work.

During inclement weather, when the University is officially open, all employees are expected to report to work, unless they have a scheduled leave which has been approved by their supervisor.

Employees requesting sick leave during inclement weather, when the University is officially open, may be required to provide a medical statement signed by a health care provider verifying their inability to work, in accordance with the appropriate collective bargaining agreements or State Personnel Act.

## **Responding to Sick Leave Usage Problems**

If the supervisor determines that a problem exists the supervisor and Human Resources shall consider and may implement any one or all of, but not limited to, the following additional measures, as appropriate, to respond to sick leave usage problems:

- Refer the employee to the Employee Assistance Program;
- Require the employee to provide documentation for subsequent requests to use sick leave over a specified period of time;
- Consult with Human Resources about possible alternative arrangements for the employee (e.g., part-time work schedules, disability leaves of absence); and/or,
- If methods to remedy sick leave usage problems are not successful, consideration shall be given to the effect that the sick leave use has on the employee's performance and on the University's operations. Disciplinary action may be taken, up to and including termination.
- The supervisor shall document all actions taken.

## **Tardiness**

Failure to report to work on time at the beginning of the scheduled workday and/or failure to report to work on time after a scheduled break is tardiness. Supervisors will establish reasonable work rules regarding tardiness within their respective areas in accordance with the appropriate collective bargaining agreement or this policy.

Repeated tardiness may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. Tardiness of one quarter or more of a scheduled work shift will be considered "Unauthorized Leave Without Pay". The event will be recorded as "Unauthorized Leave" (LU) on the employee's record and the time will be deducted from their paycheck.

## **Unauthorized Leave Without Pay**

The use of "Unauthorized Leave Without Pay" may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Employees who absent themselves for five consecutive working days without authorized leave shall be considered to have resigned "not in good standing" in accordance with the State Personnel Act (Sec. 5-243-1(b)).

## **Exhaustion of Sick Leave Accrual**

All employees are responsible for monitoring their own sick leave balances. In the event that an employee is unable to report for work due to illness, but has

exhausted all sick leave accruals, the employee may be authorized to utilize other accruals (vacation, personal leave or other accrued time) or be granted "authorized leave without pay", if the employee so requests in writing, and provides an acceptable Medical Certificate supporting the absence within 48 hours of the employee's return to work. Otherwise the absence shall be recorded as "Unauthorized Leave Without Pay" and be subject to disciplinary action as follows:

1. First Occurrence. The employee shall be charged with "unauthorized leave without pay" their pay deducted and counseled regarding proper procedure.
2. Second Occurrence. The employee shall be issued a Written Reprimand if the second occurrence is within six (6) months of the prior occurrence. Otherwise, the employee may again be counseled.
3. Subsequent Occurrences. Progressive discipline shall be imposed.

### **Working Test Period**

An employee may be terminated for any combination of three (3) absences or instances of tardiness in the first six (6) months of employment, regardless of the length of the working test period. Any employee who fails to report for duty and fails to notify the employee's appropriate supervisor in the first six (6) months shall be terminated.

### **Miscellaneous Notes**

**Administrative & Residual (P- 5 Members)** – Pursuant to an arbitration award and related stipulated agreements, A & R employees have certain important distinctions concerning sick leave use, including:

1. A&R employees may receive a "Fair" or "Unsatisfactory" rating in the "Dependability" category of their performance appraisal if:
  - a) They use more than the contractually earned 15 sick days per year with frequent occasions, **or**
  - b) They use less than 15 days but have a clearly identifiable pattern of usage (i.e., Mondays, Fridays, day before or after holiday, etc., **or**
  - c) They use less than 15 days but have repeated or extended occasions of unauthorized leave without pay.
2. If they use less than 15 sick days, and there is no identifiable pattern of usage, no unauthorized leave, or no adverse effect on other aspects of their work, A&R employees **cannot** receive a Fair or Unsatisfactory Service Rating in the "Dependability" category.

**Protective Services (NP- 5 Members)** – This service rating form does not include an evaluation category for “Attendance”. The rating for attendance falls within the “Other Elements” rating category. Additionally, SCSU Department of Police Services has a specific internal policy on this topic.

**Managerial and SUOAF** – These evaluations do not include a separate category for “Attendance”. Attendance needs to be considered in relation to performance in the other evaluation categories.

**Facilities Operations Employees (NP- 2 Members)** – See the “Revised Attendance Policies and Procedures for Facilities Operations” dated March 16, 2007 for further guidance.

**Clerical Employees (NP- 3 Members)** – See also the document entitled “Guidelines for Managing Attendance for Clerical Employees” for amplification on this topic.

#### **Authority**

- Human Resources Policies for Management and Confidential Professional Personnel of the Connecticut State University System (Version 2.0)
- Connecticut General Statutes, Sec. 5-247, 5-248, and 5-251.
- Collective Bargaining Contracts
- Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies
- SCSU Employee Handbook

#### **Exceptions**

Any exceptions to this policy shall require prior written approval from the Associate Vice President of Human Resources and Labor Relations or designee.





