

■ HR 5.13 – ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Summary Statement

Regular attendance is important and expected in order to ensure our continued ability to provide consistent, quality health care and support services. Management recognizes that employees will be absent from the workplace on occasion; however, excessive absence from work has a negative impact on the facility's ability to provide quality care.

Applicability

All employees of Carolinas HealthCare System.

Definitions

Absence

An absence is a failure to report for the job on a scheduled work shift. For purposes of this policy, the following are not considered absences: Approved vacations and holidays, bereavement leave, absences due to work-related injuries/illnesses, Employee Health excused infectious diseases covered by HR 4.03, jury duty, and approved leaves of absence.

Patterns of Absenteeism

Absences which indicate a discernible pattern occurring **three or more times** will also constitute an abuse or violation of this policy. These successive absences will also subject the employee to formal counseling. Undesirable patterns may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Regular absences occurring immediately before or after scheduled days off, (i.e., vacations, holidays, weekends).
- Weekend or holiday absences during which the employee is scheduled to work.
- Regular absences occurring the day after pay day.
- Coming in to work, but leaving prior to the end of the shift.
- Repeated written or final warnings, i.e., accruing an additional occasion of absence about the same time another occasion of absence has dropped off.

- Combinations of offenses that show an undesirable overall attendance pattern or circumvent one area of attendance for another. This can include tardiness, leave early and unscheduled absences. Example - After a written or final counseling for absences, the employee begins to leave early, or after discipline for tardies, the employee begins missing entire work days.

No Call/No Show

- All employees are required to be at their work areas at the commencement of their shift or work period. Employees must follow established department procedures regarding timely notification of their inability to report to work at the beginning of a scheduled period.
- Each shift or work period missed where there is a failure to call or follow notification procedures, constitutes a separate violation for the purposes of this policy. Correction action begins with a written counseling on the first occasion and follows progressive discipline from there. Failure to call or report to work for a scheduled shift for **two** consecutive scheduled work shifts is interpreted as an abandonment of job, unless it is determined that such notice was not possible. On the third consecutive day of absence, mail a certified letter of job abandonment to the employee (see Policy 5.12, *Absent Without Notice*).

Leaving Without Permission

- Leaving without permission is defined as leaving the premises or the assigned work area during work hours without the permission or knowledge of a supervisor. Assigned duties that cause an employee to leave the work area are excluded from this rule.
- Leaving without permission is considered a serious offense which could jeopardize the safety, health or welfare of others; therefore, a written notice of counseling or other disciplinary action up to, and including, discharge, may be considered should the violation jeopardize patient care. This policy also applies to employees working in non-patient care areas who leave their work stations without the approval or knowledge of their supervisor or a member of management. These employees are likewise subject to disciplinary action.

Tardiness

Tardiness is defined as the failure to report at the starting time of the shift, or reporting back to work late from meal periods or work breaks. Each occurrence of tardiness shall constitute a separate incident for the purposes of this policy.

Leave Early

Leaving work prior to the end of the scheduled shift is considered a “leave early”. Failure to complete at least 50% of the scheduled work day is considered an absence. Each occurrence of leaving early is considered a separate incident under this policy.

New Employees (Within First 90 Days)

Employees who have been with CHS 90 days or less are in their orientation period and will be held to the same standards of attendance as all employees, however, the disciplinary process is shortened for employees still in this period.

An absence exceeding two calendar weeks in duration during the orientation period may be grounds for immediate termination of employment. Management (VP level) and Corporate Employee Relations may agree to continue employment and extend the 90-day orientation period to reflect the length of absence (two weeks or greater). Performance and discipline since hire will be reviewed before any exception is made.

Occurrence

Each continuous period of absence equals one occurrence under this policy. For example, an employee who is out three consecutive days would be charged with one occurrence, but an employee who is out one day, returns and is out the following day would be charged with two occurrences.

Absent Without Leave

If an employee is out for more than 15 consecutive calendar days not covered by PTO or without (1) requesting leave of absence or (2) providing all required information to complete the leave application process, employment may be terminated regardless of prior step in the attendance discipline process.

Employee Information

- When out on unscheduled time off, the employee must contact his/her supervisor daily unless other arrangements are made. Employees should advise the supervisor of the approximate date of return to work.
- If an employee is absent due to illness and does not work for seven consecutive calendar days, the employee must present a doctor's note releasing the employee to Employee Health prior to returning to work.

Supervisor Information

Counseling Steps

Employees whose absences are considered excessive or reflect an undesirable pattern of attendance are subject to formal counseling. As the employee accumulates absences over a 26 pay period cycle that qualify for discipline (see chart below for number of occurrence summary), the supervisor will issue and document the following disciplinary steps:

1. Verbal
2. Written
3. Final written
4. Termination

For more detail of documenting and dispensing discipline, see HR Policy 5.02, *Employee Counseling*.

Supervisor Notes

- Management must carefully weigh the regularity and/or patterns of absence resulting from chronic illness or disability before recommending termination.
- Supervisors are encouraged to recommend the services of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- For progressive discipline purposes, the patterns of excessive absenteeism or abuse are considered cleared if no additional steps are taken within 26 pay periods subsequent to the last disciplinary step.
- If an employee who is under formal counseling for attendance problems transfers from part-time or full-time status to a PRN status or weekender position, they will remain at the same point in the counseling process when the transfer takes place. If a PRN or weekend employee moves into a part-time or full-time position, they will retain the number of occurrences, but any subsequent discipline will be based on number of occurrences for that classification.
- The following criteria, as it relates to each category is applied on a rolling 26 pay period interval basis (unless otherwise noted), meaning that an incident of absence or tardiness experienced in pay period #1 should not be counted in the cumulative total after pay period #26 and so on.

Counseling Summary

Situation	# of Occurrences			
	Verbal	Written	Final	Termination
Absenteeism < 90 Days*			2*	3
Absenteeism	5	6	7	8
Weekender Employee	1	2	3	4
PRN Employee**	1	2	3	4
Patterns	3	4	5	6
Tardiness or Leave Early < 90 Days*			2	3 or more
Tardiness or Leave Early	4 within 3 months	6	8	10
No Call/No Show		1	2	3

*Each occurrence is based on a continuous period of absence. The occurrences outlined above are the **MINIMUM** number of occurrences for each action. Occurrences must be adjusted in the event previous discipline has not been dispensed. In those situations, adjust by the appropriate number of days. For assistance with the progressive discipline process, contact your Human Resources representative.*

**After successful completion of 90 day orientation period, the final warning can be removed from the employee's file.*

***PRN employees who work on average 1,128 hours per year or greater should have occurrences assessed under the regular employee absenteeism section.*