

Sick Leave Policy

Purpose

This policy outlines how unpaid, job-protected sick leave may be used, how employees should report absences, when documentation may be requested, and how the organization supports confidentiality, legislative compliance, and safe return to work.

Eligibility (Unpaid Sick Leave)

In accordance with Manitoba Employment Standards, employees who have been employed with the organization for at least 30 days are entitled to up to three (3) unpaid days of job-protected leave each calendar year.

- **Permitted Uses:** This leave is intended to be used when an employee is unable to work due to personal illness, injury, medical appointments, or the need to care for a dependent in a similar situation.
- **Allocation:** Unpaid sick days are allocated annually on a calendar-year basis and do not carry forward to the next year.

Notification of Absence

Employees must notify their supervisor or manager as soon as possible, preferably before the start of their scheduled workday. The notification should include:

- The general reason for the absence (e.g., personal illness or care of a dependent).
- The expected duration of the leave, including the expected first day back to work.

Employees are responsible for providing updates as soon as possible if their expected return-to-work date changes.

Documentation and Verification of Absences

The organization will request medical documentation only when allowed under Manitoba employment standards. Different documentation may still be required for return to work, accommodation, workplace safety, or protected leave requests.

1. When a Sick Note May Be Required

Employees should not obtain or submit a sick note unless the organization has specifically requested one.

For an absence caused by illness or injury, the organization will continue to follow its Return-to-Work policy and will not require a sick note unless:

1. The absence continues for a period of more than one week (more than 7 consecutive days);
or
2. The employee has been absent from work because of injury or illness on more than 10 scheduled workdays in that calendar year (prior to or as a result of the current absence).
 - *Part-day absences:* A partial-day absence for illness or injury may count as one full day when tracking the 10-day annual threshold.

2. Approved Health Professionals

When a sick note is required, it may be provided by any of the following authorized health professionals who treated the employee:

- A physician, physician assistant, or clinical assistant;
- A registered nurse, nurse practitioner, registered psychiatric nurse, or licensed practical nurse;
- A registered psychologist; or
- A registered midwife.

3. Verification for Shorter Absences

For illness or injury absences of one week or less, and before the 10-day annual threshold is exceeded, the organization may use other reasonable proof that does not require new paperwork from a healthcare provider, such as:

- **Self-attestation:** A signed employee declaration confirming the absence was due to illness or injury, submitted to the department manager or HR before or when returning to work.
- **Existing healthcare-related proof:** Pharmacy receipts, appointment confirmations, text messages or letters, hospital bracelets, or hospital parking receipts.

4. Reimbursement for Required Sick Notes

If the organization requires a sick note under Section 1, it will reimburse the employee for any reasonable fee charged by the health professional for the note.

- To receive reimbursement, the employee must provide evidence of the fee, such as an invoice or receipt, within 30 days of obtaining the sick note.
- The organization will issue reimbursement within 30 days of receiving the evidence.

5. Return to Work and Protected Leaves

Return to Work program remains in place: Sick-note limits do not limit or replace the organization's Return to Work program. The organization may still request documentation for return-to-work planning, accommodation, workplace safety, or protected leave purposes when allowed by law.

- Employees may be required to provide a Functional Abilities Form or other documentation confirming fitness to return to work or identifying work-related limitations as part of the Return-to-Work program.

- **Protected leave paperwork is still required:** Employees requesting legislated, job-protected leaves, such as Maternity, Parental, or Compassionate Care leaves, must provide the documentation required to confirm eligibility.

Longer Term Absences and Employment Insurance (EI) Sickness Benefits

Employees who require a prolonged period away from work due to illness or injury may be eligible for **Employment Insurance (EI) Sickness Benefits** through the Government of Canada. These benefits provide temporary income support and are separate from the unpaid, job-protected sick leave described in this policy.

- **Employee Responsibility:** It is the employee's responsibility to apply for EI benefits promptly and to obtain necessary medical documentation as required by Service Canada. Human Resources can provide general guidance but does not manage the application process.
- **Supportive Return:** Where possible, the organization will work collaboratively with employees on a graduated return-to-work plan or reasonable accommodations in accordance with applicable human rights legislation.

Misuse of Sick Leave

Unpaid sick leave is job-protected so employees can recover safely without fear of losing employment. Misuse of this leave may result in disciplinary action. Patterns of absenteeism, such as repeated unpaid absences immediately before or after weekends, holidays, or major performance deadlines, may be reviewed and followed up as appropriate.

Confidentiality

All information related to an employee's health or sick leave will be handled confidentially and in accordance with applicable privacy legislation. The organization will not ask for a medical diagnosis and will request only the information necessary to confirm the absence, understand any physical or mental limitations, or establish necessary workplace accommodations.

Review

This policy is reviewed periodically to ensure ongoing compliance with Manitoba Employment Standards legislation and organizational needs.

If there is any difference between this policy and current legislation, the legislation will apply.