

Memo #2

Date: October 7, 2024

To: Members

Re: **Employee Attendance Support Program (EASP)**

Employee Attendance Support Program (Formerly known as Attendance Management Program)

The Ministry of Education required each school board to create and roll-out their Employee Management Programs (now Employee Attendance Support Program - EASP) several years ago.

Last year the Board sent out notification to the unions, and the members they would be restarting the Employee Attendance Support Program. This was after a pause due to a grievance resolution, and the pandemic. Therefore, for about 6 years our Board did not have an Employee Attendance Program.

Unfortunately, the name has changed from Attendance Management Program to [Employee Attendance Support Program](#), but the purpose is still the same: They want teachers at work and not to take days off from work.

Since the program was halted for a number of years, many teachers probably felt the program wasn't going to amount to much.

Last year, we had well over 100 teachers enter, at Step 1, to the Board's EASP. Furthermore, we had over 10 teachers move into Step 2 of EASP.

Below you will find important information about the program, and how it can affect you based on the number of days – sick/medical – you take in any given year.

Entering the Employee Attendance Support Program (EASP):

An employee will enter Attendance Support when they **meet** (11) full-time equivalent (FTE) days of sick leave absence in a school year, September 1st to August 31st, **which have not been deemed to be medically supported** by SMCDSB's Health and Wellness Department (formerly Disability Management Office). You will receive notification from the Board's Employee Attendance Support Program (employeeattendancesupportprogram@smcdsb.on.ca). OECTA will receive notification in advance, and we will contact you via your Board email with information and a request to contact the Unit Office to discuss your situation.

Once in Step 1, doesn't mean you cannot move to Step 2 until the following year. Any teacher that the Board feels has too many absences (approximately twice the 11-day threshold) in one year, will be moved to Step 2 within the same school year.

Medically Supported Absences:

These are absences that a medical practitioner has completed a Medical Certificate and submitted to the Board's Health and Wellness Department (healthandwellness@smcdsb.on.ca). It is after medical is

provided, that the Board's Health and Wellness Department will either support the absence, not support the absence or ask for additional information.

Our Collective Agreement (Part A) states: Medical confirmation **will be required** to be provided by the teacher ... for absences of 5 consecutive days or greater. The completion of the Medical Certificate is required in these situations.

If supported, verification of medically supported dates is then sent to the Board's Attendance Management Program Department, and communication will be sent to AMD. These days will not count towards the 11 sick day threshold, **but they do still count as sick/medical days**.

If you are charged a fee by your doctor for completion of the Medical Certificate, please pay the fee, and submit the receipt, along with the completed medical certificate to healthandwellness@smcdsb.on.ca. Our Collective Agreement (Part A) states the Board will reimburse up to \$45.

The Board will not accept a "blank medical note" stating that teacher is off for "medical reasons" or any other medical note. We must use the [Medical Certificate](#). Specific dates of absences and nature of illness must be included on the Medical Certificate.

The Nature of Illness needs to apply to you and your health situation, as our sick/medical days apply to only ourselves. It does not need a diagnosis, as this information is personal and private.

Any medical information provided to the Board's Health and Wellness Department is private and treated as such.

Note: The [Medical Certificate](#) – which includes personal and confidential information – is sent to the Health and Wellness Department at healthandwellness@smcdsb.on.ca , **not the Attendance Management Department** and **not your principal or OECTA**.

Exiting the Employee Attendance Support Program:

An employee will exit Employee Attendance Support Program when they maintain an absenteeism rate that is below the threshold outlined in Section 3.1.1 of the EASP document for an entire school year, September 1st to August 31st. Upon exiting EASP, the employee will receive written notification via their Board email account.

Re-entry to Employee Attendance Support Program:

An employee who exits Attendance Support and subsequently meets/exceeds the threshold during either of the next **two (2) school years**, will re-enter Attendance Support at the step at which they exited the process.

For example, if Kent MacDonald enters EASP and the following year exceeds his 11 sick/medical days (exceeding any days that may have been supported), so now Kent is in Step 2 of the EASP. Over the following two years Kent manages to remain below the EASP threshold, however, during the subsequent year, he again exceeds 11 sick/medical days (exceeding any days that may have been supported). Kent receives notification that he has re-entered the SMCDSB EASP at Step 2.

Use of Sick Days and Medical Appointments:

It is important to point out that our 11 sick days (paid at 100%) and 120 Short Term Leave Days (paid at 90% - with potential to top-up) are for the **sole use of the teacher**. Any medical appointments or sick family members fall under 8:01 E of our local Collective Agreement, where it references the ability to use two (2) personal days, and two (2) serious family illness days.

Those with an Ongoing or Chronic Illnesses:

We had an established practice with the Board/DMO that dealt with those members who had an ongoing and/or Chronic Illness.

We have met with those working in the Health and Wellness Department several times to discuss our previous plan, and if they were amenable to rolling forward with it without change. They are hesitant to commit to the previous plan (not established in our Collective Agreement).

It has been made clear that the Health and Wellness Department is using the following:

- Absences of less than 5 consecutive days will not be supported by the Board
 - Periodic absences are considered a form of accommodation
- Medical Appointments will only be supported if your Doctor (Specialist) can provide information that appointments cannot be scheduled outside of the workday (they are given not chosen)

If you have an ongoing or chronic illness you will need to:

- Have your Dr complete a Medical Certificate
- Your Dr will need to indicate on the last page, they are times when the patient will need to attend medical appointments
- The Health and Wellness Department, after review, will (if they support the information) provide you a form to complete for times when you had to attend a medical appointment connected to your chronic illness/medical condition.

You can find the [Employee Attendance Support Program](#) (EASP) document on Employee Connect – under Need to Know as an Employee > HR, Payroll and Benefits > View All. To the right is a box of titles or scroll to the bottom and you will find a quick link.

IMPORTANT: If you are asked to attend an Employee Attendance Support Meeting, make sure you contact the Unit Office. OECTA will reach out in advance and discuss the situation, and OECTA will attend the meeting to support you.

If you have any concerns, please contact the Unit office at 705-733-9625 or 1 800 558 4815