

1-05/130.00 Unscheduled Absences Policy

Whenever an employee must be absent, they shall notify their supervisor as soon as possible, but at least thirty (30) minutes prior to the start of their shift. Personnel must report their absence to their Supervising Sergeant or higher ranking supervisor. When a Sergeant is unavailable, they shall provide an adequate telephone number to allow a Sergeant to contact them. When required, employees shall submit satisfactory proof of their absence (doctor's certificate or other satisfactory proof) to their supervisor within 72 hours of their return to duty.

Employees will be familiar with their responsibilities designated in Manual Policy and Procedures relating to injured or sick while off duty.

Unnecessary unscheduled absences and tardiness creates undue hardships in maintaining safe staffing levels. Supervisors shall judiciously review all absence with the goal of reducing unnecessary absence and tardiness. Supervisors shall encourage employees to use the process of pre-approved time off whenever possible and make every effort to grant time off requests authorized by policy or law.

Supervisor Responsibilities

When an unscheduled absence is suspicious or appears to fit a pattern indicating absence abuse, supervisors shall use good judgment to determine the appropriate course of action. Supervisory actions may include:

- Checking that an employee is at home
- Requiring documentation prior to approving leave time
- Counseling and providing resources for improvement
- Restricting optional overtime assignments
- Performance contracts
- Performance evaluation ratings of "needs improvement"
- Discipline for policy violations

When an unscheduled absence occurs, the Sergeant shall determine the cause and confirm that the time benefit requested is appropriate to the circumstances. Supervisors shall maintain an updated "Unscheduled Absence Log", which can be found in "Forms" and shall be kept in a secure place. All unscheduled absences and instances of tardiness will be logged to identify patterns indicative of abuse, including repetitive absences and absences which occur in conjunction with:

- RDO's, holidays, or other previously-approved or scheduled absences
- Previously denied absence requests
- Overtime assignments

Suspicious Absences

When the circumstances of an absence are suspicious, the Supervisor shall, at the time of the call-in, advise the employee of the cause for concern and that the absence will initially be considered an "unauthorized absence" (unpaid). They shall direct the employee to submit documentation to support the absence upon their return to duty. The Telephonic Notification portion of the SH-R-96 absence request will not be approved (signed) until the employee provides an acceptable form of documentation. The issue shall be noted in the absence log.

County Code 6.20.120

“Any employee absent due to sickness, injury, pregnancy, quarantine, non-emergency medical or dental care, or any of the leaves provided for in 6.20.080 of this code, may be required, before such absence is authorized or payment is made, to furnish a doctor’s certificate or other proof satisfactory to their department head that his absence was due to such cause.”

If the employee refuses or fails to provide adequate documentation, their absence will remain “unauthorized or U/A.” The un-signed absence request form, noting a brief explanation will be submitted with the employee’s time card. A Unit Performance Log Entry (PLE) will be completed; documenting the Supervisor’s verbal counseling (See exemplars). As appropriate, supervisors may advise the employee of Department resources to assist in reducing the absences. (See “Unscheduled Absence (PLE) One” in “Forms” for appropriate performance log exemplar,)

Repeated or Pattern Absences

When a supervisor recognizes that an employee is frequently absent or demonstrates a pattern indicating absence abuse, they shall verbally counsel the employee about their concerns and require them to provide appropriate documentation in future unscheduled absences. Should the pattern of absence continue, the supervisor shall advise the employee that future absences may be deemed unauthorized. In some cases of clear abuse, absences may be unauthorized even when doctor’s certificates are provided. (See “Unscheduled Absence (PLE) Two and Three” in “Forms” for appropriate performance log exemplars,)

Repeated Unauthorized Absences

When absence abuse becomes notable, supervisors shall consult with their Unit Commander, through their Area Lieutenant for concurrence in taking additional action, including restricting optional overtime assignments and formal discipline for policy violations.
