

Unit Order 81 - Unscheduled Absences from Duty

PURPOSE:

Unscheduled absences from duty create undue hardships in our ability to maintain safe and effective staffing levels. This order will establish procedures for managing unscheduled absences.

ORDER:

This order shall apply to all supervisors and employees permanently assigned, loaned, or otherwise working at West Hollywood Sheriff's Station. Watch commanders shall judiciously review all unscheduled absence requests with the goal of reducing unnecessary absences. Supervisors shall encourage employees to use the process of pre-approved time off and/or shift swaps whenever possible and make every effort to grant time-off requests, unless otherwise mandated by policy or law. This order shall not be misconstrued to restrict any employee from absence for appropriate purposes. An employee may have an absenteeism problem when he or she has unexpected absences with the following frequency:

1. Has three or more separate incidents/absences in one month, or
2. Has two or more separate absences in one month that are next to the employee's regular days off, or
3. Has one or more Unauthorized Absences in one month, or
4. Has been late two or more times in one month, or
5. Has more unexpected absences in one calendar year than the employee earns in Sick Leave in one calendar year.

County Codes and Department policies allow for the requirement that an employee provide a doctor's note for absences due to medical reasons, and/or other satisfactory proof for non-medical reasons, upon return to work from an unscheduled absence.

County Code 6.20.120

"Any employee absent due to sickness, injury, pregnancy, quarantine, nonemergency 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."

This order requires personnel having repeated or a pattern of unscheduled absences as described above to provide a doctor's note or other satisfactory proof based on the nature of the unscheduled absence within 72 hours of returning to work. Any personnel who have reached any of the described thresholds as of the date of this order or who exceed any of the first four thresholds in a subsequent three month period shall fall under this requirement. Each individual falling under this requirement shall be given a unit performance log entry (PLE), documenting the supervisor's verbal counseling and placed on the Absence Tracking Log. The Absence Tracking Log will note the date the employee was first placed there. A review will then automatically be conducted after six months to assess how the employee is doing as it relates to unscheduled absences. If the employee has improved their attendance to acceptable levels, i.e., not again met any of the above-described thresholds, they will then be removed from the Absence Tracking Log. The Absence Tracking Log will note the date of removal and provide an area for any pertinent comments. If the employee continues to meet any of the thresholds, they will remain on the Absence Tracking Log and that will be noted. Each employee will be treated on an individual basis and the Absence Tracking Log is not meant to be a form of discipline in any

way.

SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

When an unscheduled absence request occurs, the watch commander shall determine the cause and confirm that the time benefit requested is appropriate to the circumstances.

When an employee on the Absence Tracking Log calls in for an unscheduled absence, the watch commander shall ask the employee what type of benefit time they would like to use. They shall direct the employee to submit documentation to support the unscheduled absence upon their return to duty, i.e. an acceptable doctor's note. 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. A "UA" or Unauthorized Absence designation will result if the employee refuses or fails to submit an acceptable doctor's note or other satisfactory proof supporting the absence to the watch commander within 72 hours of returning to work. The unsigned absence request form, noting a brief explanation, will be submitted to the timekeeper for processing.

If an unscheduled absence request from an employee not on the Absence Tracking Log is questionable or appears to fit a pattern indicating absence abuse, watch commanders 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 upon completion of an authorized investigation.
- Recommend addition to the Absence Tracking Log.

The sick absence coordinator (lieutenant) shall review sick call-ins weekly and update the Absence Tracking Log as necessary. Employees added to the log shall be verbally advised with documentation of the advisement in a PLE. Employees removed from the log shall be notified via email.

EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees will be familiar with their responsibilities designated in MPP 3-02/040.10-Injured or Ill While Off Duty. Whenever an employee must be absent, they shall notify their watch commander or supervising sergeant as soon as possible, but at least two hours prior to the start of their shift. When the watch commander or a sergeant is unavailable, they shall provide an adequate telephone number so they may be immediately contacted. When required, employees shall submit satisfactory proof to the watch commander within 72 hours of their return to duty.
