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Attendance Management Tips & Traps

Excessive absenteeism and tardiness are two of the most common pain points for employers and very often a sign of employee disengagement. The lost productivity, scheduling issues and turnover that can result from attendance issues often cost businesses thousands of dollars each year. The following are some tips and traps to help you navigate through attendance management issues at your workplace:

- TIP:** Properly customize and implement Attendance, Absenteeism, Vacation and Sick Day policies to reflect your business culture, practices and reality.
- TRAP:** Do not forget to communicate expectations, acceptable/unacceptable behaviours and consequences for culpable absences in your policies.
- TIP:** Request proper medical documentation for lengthy absences.
- TRAP:** Avoid inconsistent application of your policies as this frustrates your ability to manage attendance issues and can create condonation issues.
- TIP:** Follow up regularly with employees on medical leaves of absence to ensure that you are not condoning AWOL status and losing your opportunity to establish frustration of contract, where applicable.
- TRAP:** Avoid asking employees or their health practitioners for diagnostic information. Employers are only entitled to prognosis information indicating how long the employee will be off work, when they will be capable of returning to work and whether they will resume duties of their position without limitations.
- TIP:** Progressively discipline for culpable absences.
- TRAP:** Do not forget about your obligation to accommodate disabled employees, including those suffering from mental health issues, to the point of undue hardship.
- TIP:** Document everything!
- TRAP:** Avoid attendance incentive programs which reward employees for perfect attendance. These programs can lead employees to claim reprisal if their leaves relate to a legislated entitlement (e.g. emergency leave under the Employment Standards Act) or allegations of discrimination under human rights legislation.

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