

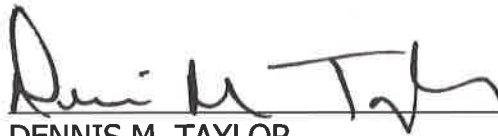
ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 66

Repealed By

88

An Administrative Order creating the following Human Resources Policy for the City of Billings: Absence Control dated November 2002.

Dated this 2nd day of December, 2002

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis M. Taylor", written over a horizontal line.

DENNIS M. TAYLOR
CITY ADMINISTRATOR

Absence Control

This policy supersedes all previous policies and/or handbooks published by the City of Billings. Negotiated labor contracts that conflict with this policy will take precedence to the applicable extent.

Purpose

This policy establishes guidelines to be used for monitoring and addressing employees' absenteeism from work.

Policy

Regular attendance at work for all employees is a crucial component in the delivery of quality public services, whether one works directly with the public or not. While the expectation is that employees work all of the shifts that they are scheduled, perfect attendance is not always possible. The absence control plan is designed to deal with those inevitabilities. This policy deals with excessive "unscheduled absences" (such as repeatedly calling in sick), tardiness, and failures to report to work.

A progressive corrective action process is outlined for supervisors to monitor and address attendance problems. Some attendance problems are symptomatic of other problems, which may be eliminated or reduced by referral to the Employee Assistance Program, Human Resources or other services available to employees.

The absence control plan mirrors the Corrective Action policy in that it is progressive corrective action. Supervisors are responsible for accurate and timely documentation and communication to employees.

The plan focuses on absences from work, and not on the reasons for them, with some exceptions covered below.

Supervisors should share the plan with employees and ensure that they understand the expectations for attendance at work.

Supervisors should communicate with employees when expectations are not being met, including suggestions for improvement and consequences if improvement does not occur. (The supervisor should keep Notes of this informal counseling.)

When formal corrective action occurs, supervisors must use a Corrective Action form to document the action. A copy is sent to the employee's file in Human Resources where it will remain for two years. If further corrective action for absenteeism occurs after one year (between corrective actions), but before two years, the corrective action would be repeated at the same level. (See Corrective Action policy.)

Exemptions from Absence Control

The following should not be included in absence control:

- Absences due to workers' compensation injuries or illness
- Absences qualifying under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) -- unless FMLA balance has been exhausted
- Paid funeral leave days
- Voluntarily chooses to go home before the scheduled end of the shift
- Vacation time or other prescheduled time off
- Military leave of absence
- Personal leaves of absence

Procedure

The absence control plan is a quarterly plan with fixed absence quarters, coinciding with the calendar year. Therefore, quarters are January-March, April-June, July-September, and October-December.

Supervisors will record unscheduled absences by some means convenient for the supervisor. At the end of each quarter, supervisors will review their records of their employees' unscheduled absences. This does not prevent the supervisor from discussing attendance issues with the employee prior to the end of the quarter. In fact, it is strongly suggested that these conferences be conducted as the issues are identified. The supervisor should review attendance in order to determine if corrective action is to be implemented, using the following tests:

Test 1

Total Hours of Unscheduled Absence

If a full-time employee meets or exceeds 18 hours of unscheduled absence, corrective action **may** or **may not** occur, depending upon Test 2. Hours are pro-rated for part-time:

FTE

Pro-Rated Hours

1.0

18 hours

0.9

16.2 hours

0.8

14.4 hours

FTE

Pro-Rated Hours

0.6

10.8 hours

0.5

9 hours

0.4

7.2 hours

0.3

5.4 hours

0.2

3.6 hours

0.1

1.8 hours

Test 2

Number of Occurrences

An occurrence is a separate event of absenteeism. For example, three consecutive days absent is one occurrence. Employees with one occurrence do not receive absence corrective action. Those with three or more probably will receive absence corrective action. For employees with two or more occurrences, supervisors should take into account several factors, including:

Absence patterns

Those exhibiting patterns of absence would more likely receive corrective action than if there were no patterns. Patterns also may be indicative of some other underlying problem, possibly warranting discussion or referral. An example of an absence pattern would be routine absences on Fridays, Mondays, or days after holidays.

"Playing the System"

"Playing the system" to be regularly absent the maximum number of times allowed without receiving corrective action will increase the likelihood of corrective action in borderline cases.

Effect on work

While all absenteeism affects work somewhat, the supervisor may lean toward corrective action in borderline cases where there is more significant impact on work performance.

The total number of hours in Test 1

A high number of total hours would increase the likelihood of corrective action.

If, after evaluating by Test 2, the supervisor determines there are sufficient occurrences to warrant corrective action, then corrective action would occur as outlined below in the Corrective Action policy.

Tardiness

Tardiness normally begins immediately after the scheduled start of the shift, unless otherwise defined by the work unit. Tardiness for work, especially when chronic, can create many problems for the work unit including difficulty accomplishing the normal work functions, as well as creating potential morale problems. Therefore, tardiness requires special attention under this policy.

Tardiness of one hour or greater counts toward the total hours of unscheduled absence (Test 1). Any incidence of tardiness of one hour or greater also may count toward the number of occurrences (Test 2).

Supervisors have the ability to deal with tardiness of less than one hour separately. The standard is three incidences of tardiness (of less than one hour) per quarter triggering progressive corrective action for the first offense. This separate tardiness corrective action needs to be monitored manually if there is a problem, and the incidences need to be less than one hour to count as one of the three incidences triggering corrective action.

Supervisors need not wait for the quarter to end to issue corrective action for tardiness. Tardiness corrective action may occur any time an employee is tardy at least three times of less than one hour, in the same quarter. Also, an employee could receive two steps of tardiness corrective action in the same quarter if tardy six times in the same quarter.

Failure to Report to Work Without Notification

It is imperative for the proper functioning of operations that employees give as much advance notice as possible when they will be unable to work all or part of a

scheduled shift. Failure to report to work without notification, unless such failure can be reasonably explained, will result in a written warning for the first offense, a suspension for the second offense, and termination for the third offense within one year. Failure to report to work without notification for three consecutive shifts will result in immediate termination. Tardiness officially becomes an incident of "Failure to Report to Work Without Notification" if an employee has not contacted the designated department contact by 30 minutes after the scheduled start of the shift. Departments who have safety positions, such as firefighter and police, may establish different requirements for notification.

Misrepresentation

Abuse of sick leave benefits by such misrepresentations as calling in "sick" without being ill, will be addressed through the Corrective Action policy, over and above the Absence Control guidelines.

Last Updated: November 2002
Next Scheduled Review: November 2003