A Guide for Managers
Managing Planned and Unplanned Absences/Non-Attendance

Human Resources June 2012
Introduction

This guide focuses on planned and unplanned periods of absence e.g. annual leave, accrued days off (ADO’s), sick leave, family/carers leave, non-attendance, late arrival, and should be read and implemented in conjunction with the Royal Children’s Hospital Leave Procedures and applied in accordance with our organisational values: unity, integrity, excellence and respect.

The Guide has been established as a set of principles to effectively manage and deliver a supportive and pro-active approach to attendance. It is recognised that there are times when an employee is unable to attend work and as such the guide outlines an appropriate and effective approach to supporting an employee’s return to work.

The guide details a flexible and supportive approach that deals with attendance in a fair, consistent and empathetic manner taking into account current employment and workplace legislation, operational requirements and best practice.

Management of Leave Balances

Effective management of employee leave liability is crucial to the financial viability of the organization, and to the efficient utilization of its human resources. Key leave entitlements which must be strategically managed in this regard include annual leave, accrued days off (ADO) and long service leave.
**Annual Leave**

The purpose of annual leave is to provide the employee with an extended period of rest and recreation each year.

**Accumulated Annual Leave Entitlement Limit:**

In keeping with the purpose and intent of Annual Leave, employees are required to plan for and take their leave as it accrues each year. Employees must not accumulate annual leave credits in excess of the equivalent entitlement accrual (i.e. 4, 5 or 6 Weeks).

**Responsibilities:**

It is the responsibility of the employee in consultation with the relevant manager to plan for and take his/her annual holiday before the expiration of a period of six (6) months after the date upon which the entitlement to the equivalent of 12 months accrual of annual leave is reached. It is the responsibility of Executive Directors/ Directors/Department/Unit Managers to ensure that staff under their direction, do not accumulate annual leave credits in excess of the RCH allowable limit.

**Management of Excess Annual Leave Credit:**

Managers will receive regular reports from the Performance Unit detailing the leave balances of employee for whom they are responsible. In addition to providing an overall record of leave credits, the reports will also flag those staff who have accumulated entitlements in excess of the RCH allowable limits. Within one month of being notified that an employee has accumulated annual leave credits in excess of the allowable limit, the manager must meet with the employee to agree a plan for the management of the excess leave. Once agreed, the plan will be documented on the standard RCH ‘Management of Excess Leave’ form (Appendix A). If an employee fails to implement the leave management plan within the agreed timeframes the manager will identify a suitable period of time with respect to workload demands, and direct the employee to take such leave as is necessary to bring the accumulated leave balance within RCH allowable limits. The direction to take leave should be made in writing and should clearly spell out the reasons why such action is being taken (i.e. leave in excess of allowable limits; failure to comply with an agreed and documented excess leave management plan etc.).

**Special Circumstances**

In exceptional circumstance consideration may be given to varying the normal requirements for the mode and/or timing of the taking of Annual Leave. Any request by an employee to vary the mode and/or timing of the taking of Annual leave outside the standard RCH guidelines should be made in writing to the relevant manager. If the manager is supportive of the request for special consideration he/she will forward the request to the relevant Executive Director for consideration and determination. The employee should be notified in writing of the outcome of his/her request for special consideration within one (1) month.
Accrued Day Off (ADO)

The purpose of an Accrued Day Off (ADO), is to facilitate the working of a 38-hour week for full time staff. The ADO provides full time staff with one full day off work with pay in every four-week period. It is recommended that where ever practicable, employees who are eligible for ADO’s are rostered to take one ADO in every four (4) week period of work.

Accumulated ADO Entitlement Limit:

Employees must not accumulate ADO credits in excess of two (2) ADO’s (i.e. 16 hours). In circumstances and where it is mutually agreed by the employee and his/her manager, a rostered ADO may be deferred however this day should be taken as soon as practicable.

Responsibilities:

It is the responsibility of the employee, in consultation with the relevant manager, to plan for and take the equivalent to 8 hours ADO every four (4) weeks. It is the responsibility of Executive Directors/ Directors/Department/Unit Managers to ensure that staff under their direction, do not accumulate ADO credits in excess of the RCH allowable limit (16 hours entitlement).

Management of Excess ADO Credit:

Managers will receive regular reports from the Performance Unit detailing the ADO credit balances of each employee for whom they are responsible. In addition to providing an overall record of ADO credits, the reports will also flag those staff who have accumulated entitlements in excess of the RCH allowable limits. Within six (6) weeks of being notified that an employee has accumulated an ADO credit in excess of the allowable limit, the manager must ensure that the ADO credit balance is brought back within the allowable limit. The manager will meet with the employee to reach agreement on the days on which the required number of ADO’s will be taken in the course of the forthcoming 6 week period. Once agreed, the plan will be documented on the standard RCH ‘Management of Excess Leave’ form (Appendix A), and entered onto the staffing roster.

Special Circumstances

In exceptional circumstance consideration may be given to varying the normal requirements for the mode and/or timing of the taking of ADO’s. Any request by an employee to vary the mode and/or timing of the taking of ADO’s leave outside the standard RCH guidelines should be made in writing to the relevant manager. If the manager is supportive of the request for special consideration he/she will forward the request to the relevant Executive Director for consideration and determination. The employee should be notified in writing of the outcome of his/her request for special consideration within one (1) month.
**Long Service Leave**

The purpose of Long Service Leave is to facilitate an extended period of recreational leave for staff who have been engaged in continuous service with the same employer for a long period of time. An employee is entitled to Long Service Leave with pay, in respect of continuous service with RCH or service with institutions or statutory bodies (as defined), in accordance with the relevant Award and/or Enterprise Bargaining Agreement. On completion of fifteen years ‘continuous service’ as defined in the relevant Award, EBA or Contract of employment, an employee is entitled to six months Long Service Leave and thereafter an additional two months Long Service Leave on the completion of each additional five years service. By mutual agreement, an employee is entitled to pro-rata Long Service Leave on the completion of ten years continuous service. Where an employee becomes entitled to Long Service Leave, such leave shall be granted if requested by the employee, within six months from the date of the entitlement accruing.

**Accumulated Long Service Leave Entitlement Limit:**

In keeping with the purpose and intent of Long Service Leave, employees are required to plan for and take their leave as it accrues (after 15 years and every five years thereafter). Employees must take their Long Service Leave within three years of the entitlement becoming due (6 months LSL within 3 years after 15 years service, 2 months LSL within 3 years after 20 years service, 2 months LSL within 3 years after 25 years service etc.). Where an extended period of long service leave is planned, the employee must take a minimum of two weeks leave per occasion.

**Responsibilities:**

It is the responsibility of the employee, in consultation with the relevant manager, to plan for and take his/her Long Service Leave before the expiration of a period of three (3) years after the date upon which the entitlement to Long Service Leave accrues as indicated above. It is the responsibility of Executive Directors/Directors/Department/Unit Managers to ensure that staff under their direction, do not accumulate Long Service Leave entitlements in excess of the RCH allowable limit.

**Management of Excess Long Service Leave Credit:**

Managers will receive regular reports from the Performance Unit detailing the Long Service Leave credit balances of each employee for whom they are responsible. In addition to providing an overall record of LSL credits, the reports will also flag those employees who have accumulated entitlements in excess of the RCH allowable limits. Within six (6) weeks of an employee accruing an entitlement to Long Service Leave (15 years service and every 5 years thereafter), the manager must conduct a formal meeting with the employee and commence the process of developing an agreed plan for the taking of the accumulated leave within a maximum period of three (3) years of the LSL entitlement accruing. A formal plan for the taking of LSL must be agreed and documented on the standard RCH ‘Management of Excess Leave’ form (Appendix A), within one (1) year of the LSL entitlement accruing. Failure to implement the leave management plan within the agreed
timeframe(s) may result in the employee being directed to take leave at the discretion of the manager until such time as the leave balance is within the limits specified.

**Special Circumstances:**

In exceptional circumstances consideration may be given to varying normal requirements for the mode and/or timing of the taking of Long Service Leave. Circumstances under which postponement may occur include:

a) The level of responsibility held by the employee;
b) Any special skills possessed by the employee that cannot be readily replaced;
c) The effect of any other leave entitlements granted to the employee at the time the long service leave falls due; or
d) The exceptional personal situation of the employee.

Any request by an employee to vary the mode and/or timing of the taking of Long Service Leave outside the standard RCH guidelines should be made in writing to the relevant manager. If the manager is supportive of the request for special consideration he/she will forward the request to the relevant Executive Director for consideration and determination. The employee should be notified in writing of the outcome of his/her request for special consideration within one (1) month. In circumstance where approval is granted to postpone, or in some way vary the mode and/or timing of the taking of Long Service Leave the agreed plan must ensure that all accumulated entitlements are taken within five (5) years of the entitlement accruing.
**Personal Sick Leave**

Personal sick leave is a form of authorized absence from work on account of personal illness or injury, which is due to a cause that does not entitle the employee to other forms of compensation. Personal sick leave should only be granted when an employee is unable to report for duty on account of personal illness or injury, and appropriate notification and certification is provided. Managers must ensure that appropriate procedures are in place in their department(s) for the notification of personal leave, and that employees are familiar with these procedures.

**Responsibilities:**

It is the responsibility of the employee to ensure that he/she is aware of, and adheres to RCH policy with respect to the taking, notification, certification and documentation of personal sick leave. It is the responsibility of Executive Directors/Directors/Department/Unit Managers to ensure that staff under their direction, are provided with the support and guidance needed to safely and effectively manage each episode of sick leave in accordance with RCH policy.

**Management of Personal Sick Leave:**

RCH is committed to supporting and assisting its employees in a proactive way to minimize the adverse effects of personal illness and/or injury. The establishment and maintenance of open and constructive communication between the employee and his/her manager is vital to the effective management of personal sick leave. The steps outlined below provide a framework to guide managers in the implementation of effective and supportive management of employee sick leave:

**Notification of Absence**

Each department must have in place a clearly documented absence notification procedure for staff to follow in the event of their being unable to attend work due to personal illness or injury. It is generally recommended that employees be instructed to make direct contact with their manager, or where this is not possible, the most senior person on duty at the time of notification. The employee must provide notification of his/her inability to attend a rostered shift(s) as soon as is practicable. When providing notice, the employee should give an indication of the nature of the illness or injury and the anticipated duration of absence.

**Maintaining Contact**

Where it is anticipated, or becomes known that the employee will be absent from work for more than one shift and the manager has not spoken with the employee at the time of notification of the absence, the manager should make contact with the employee to offer support and assistance, and to ascertain the need for coverage of the ill/injured employee in his/her absence. During periods of extended absence (> 1 week), the manager should maintain regular contact with the ill/injured employee (at least weekly), to monitor progress, offer support and re-enforce the commitment of the workplace to the absent employee.
Coverage of Staff on Personal Sick Leave

Replacement of staff should occur as far as is practicable, sufficient to ensure that minimum staffing ratios and/or levels contained in enterprise bargaining agreements are met. In circumstances where staff replacement is not mandated by award provisions and/or department agreed minimum staffing levels, the manager should assess the need for coverage on a case by case basis. The assessment of need for staff replacement should take account of:

- the likely duration of the period of absence
- the nature of the role(s) and function(s) of the absent employee
- any outstanding or urgent projects the absent employee is responsible for
- the likely impact of non-replacement of the employee on other staff and/or vital services
- the availability of effective and timely staff replacement

If the manager deems that temporary replacement of an employee on extended personal sick leave may be necessary, he/she should discuss the situation with the relevant Executive Director. The Chief Executive Officer, on the recommendation from the appropriate Executive Director shall authorize temporary relief, subject to budget constraints, where it can be demonstrated that a department’s ability to provide essential services may be affected if such temporary relief is not provided. A ‘replacement employee’ is an employee specifically engaged for the purpose of covering an employee on extended sick leave, or to replace an existing employee who has been temporarily transferred or promoted to cover the employee who is on extended personal sick leave.

Before engaging the replacement employee the Hiring Manager must inform that person in writing, of the temporary nature of the employment and of the rights of the employee who is being replaced.
Non-Attendance

Non-attendance refers to staff taking unscheduled periods off work for a variety of reasons which may include minor ailments, caring for dependants or attending appointments, bereavement leave or other unanticipated periods of leave. Absence for significant periods due to illness or injury or other reasons are also included.

When dealing with non-attendance the main issues to consider include;

- The instances and pattern of non-attendance. The employee’s attendance record can provide historical information
- Whether there is an underlying medical or health problem that requires investigation, treatment and a return to work plan and support
- The nature of working relationships, the clarity of job roles and responsibilities and the quality of other working conditions

We must not create or reinforce a culture where staff feel pressure to report to work even when they are not in a fit state to do so. “Presenteeism” is the term used to describe the process where staff report for work in an unfit state to the possible detriment of themselves and others.

Managers and supervisors at the workplace level are primarily responsible for monitoring absences within their workplaces and for applying the organisation’s attendance procedures. Managers should always endeavour to be proactive in providing employees with the support, direction and, where necessary, counselling needed to effectively manage unplanned leave in accordance with Royal Children’s Hospital leave procedures.

Employee Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the employee to ensure that he/she is aware of and adheres to the RCH procedure with respect to the taking, notification, certification and documentation of personal sick leave.

Staff must advise their manager directly if they will be absent from work, not a friend or colleague. It is expected that all attempts are made to contact your manager/supervisor directly i.e. via telephone or face to face. Text messaging or email is not appropriate unless previously agreed.

Notification of Absence

(i) An employee who is too ill to attend work is required to notify his/her immediate supervisor as soon as practicable of the inability to attend work and the likely duration of the absence. This notification is required to allow for work to be re-scheduled and for alternative staff arrangements where appropriate.
(ii) Notification should be no later than 1 hour following the scheduled commencement time, except as follows:

(a) Nurses, Junior Medical Staff and HSUA No.2 (Psych Services) Employees: Notification must be made at least 2 hours before the commencement of the shift;
(b) HSUA No.1 (Health & Allied) Employees, and Management and Administrative Employees; Prior to the commencement of the shift, unless it is impractical to do so.

(iii) Failure to provide notification, as specified above may result in the forfeiture of entitlement to paid sick leave for the relevant absence.

**Manager Responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of Executive Directors/Divisional Directors/Department/Unit Managers to ensure that staff within their teams, are provided with the support and guidance needed to safely and effectively manage each episode of sick leave in accordance with RCH procedures.

Managers must ensure that appropriate procedures are in place in their department(s) for the notification of personal leave and that employees are familiar with these procedures.

Managers are responsible for approving sick leave in relation to notification of absence and evidence of incapacity as per the applicable award/agreement/procedure.

**Maintaining Contact:**

Managers should maintain regular contact with staff who, are away for more than 2 consecutive days to ensure staff are aware of the support mechanisms in place such as, Employee Assistance Services. The establishment and maintenance of open and constructive communication between the employee and his/her manager is vital to the effective management of personal sick leave.

During periods of extended absence (> 1 week), the manager should maintain regular contact with the ill/injured employee (will depend on the duration of the absence), to monitor progress, offer support and reinforce the commitment of the workplace to the absent employee.

Managers are also responsible for ensuring they meet with the employee on their first day back at work or as soon after as practicable to develop a return to work plan as necessary.
Managing Unplanned Absences/Non-Attendance

The RCH has a framework to assist managers with the implementation of effective and supportive management of employee sick leave.

Upon receiving notice of non-attendance;

- Record the details of the discussion with the employee i.e.
  - Name, position title
  - Date & time notified
  - Reason for and brief details of absence
  - Anticipated return to work date if known

- Enquire if the absence is the result of an accident or grievance in the workplace and ensure appropriate incident form or other supporting documentation has been completed

- Advise other staff, as relevant for operational reasons, of the absence and anticipated return date if known, and make operational adjustments as required

- If there has been no notice received and the required notification time has passed or if the Manager has been made aware indirectly, the Manager may attempt to contact the employee, seeking advice from people & Culture as required

- Keep written records of the initial contact with the employee and any subsequent discussions during the period of absence

- Initiate a discussion with the employee immediately following each absence. This should be a support session, enquiring about the wellness of the employee and the support if any the employee needs to maintain attendance

Return to Work Following Sick Leave:

The manager should always make a point of meeting with the employee as soon as is practicable on the day he/she returns to work following personal sick leave.

The meeting will provide an opportunity for the manager to:

- offer support and reassurance;
- ensure that the employee has recuperated sufficiently and will not be placing himself/herself or others at risk by returning to work in an unfit state;
- enable the employee to communicate any concerns or special needs relating to the return to work;
- ensure that the employee is re-oriented to the department and brought up to date with any significant developments which have occurred during the period of absence; and
- complete and sign off the timesheet (or leave form for auto-pay employees) and attach the medical certificate or statutory declaration.

**Alternative Working Arrangements:**

An employee may be certified by a medical practitioner as being fit to resume work under modified conditions (reduced hours, modified duties).

The manager is able to consider options for negotiating alternative working arrangements, with advice from the People & Culture Division and having regard to operational requirements and the management of risk to the employee, patients/clients or colleagues.

If approved, a return to work plan must be documented and signed by the employee, their treating medical practitioner and the department manager. Regular monitoring and updating of the return to work plan must occur until such time as the employee resumes his/her contracted working hours and duties.

**Managing Flexible Work & Leave Arrangements:**

To build a working environment that recognises employees' personal circumstances and balances RCH operational requirements the following flexible work arrangements may be considered:

- Flexible use of Accrued Days Off (ADO) e.g. using ADO's for limited periods of absence to attend dental or medical appointments rather than having to take a day of sick leave.
- Swapping rosters where appropriate and with mutual agreement having regard to Award/Agreement implications
- Time-in-lieu arrangements
- Working from home arrangements, where appropriate and in consultation with the Divisional HR Partner in People & Culture – please refer to the Working From Home Procedure & Agreement on the People & Culture website in the first instance
- 48/52 arrangements, where appropriate and in consultation with the Divisional HR Partner in People & Culture.

**Managing Persistent Non-Attendance**

If an employee's sick leave situation or absence becomes a source of concern, the manager should contact their HR Partner in People and Culture to discuss the matter and options available.

To determine what action, if any, should be taken the following factors should be taken into consideration:
- occasions of sick leave;
- total sick leave days taken;
- provision of certificates;
- pattern of sick leave;
- absences on particular dates;
- duration of absences;
- reasons provided;
- other leave and attendance levels and patterns;
- the working environment;
- personal circumstances; and
- any other relevant matters

The Manager should:

- Arrange a one to one informal discussion with the employee to highlight the area of concern based on the information and data
- Seek to identify the underlying cause of the absence
- Keep accurate records of all absences including reasons for absence
- Provide a supportive approach to improve attendance and gain agreement from the employee for an agreed timeframe for improved attendance levels
- Where absence is due to a non-health related matter provide offers of support e.g. EAP and advise the employee that it is inappropriate to take sick leave to resolve these matters. Advise the employee that other authorised leave may be requested as outlined in the leave procedures
- Document the incidences of absence, the discussion, agreed action, planned timeframes and expected outcomes. Clearly state what is expected of the employee e.g. following correct absence notification procedure and include a review date. This should be confirmed in writing to the employee
- Recognise that absence can be a performance related issue with negative impacts on service quality and effectiveness and on team work and relationships with colleagues. As such any discussions should relate to performance impacts and the level of absence not about the reason for the absence
- Monitor the attendance pattern. If there is no underlying medical or work related reason for the absence and where there is no improvement in attendance levels as per the agreed plan the a formal process may be required. The Manager must meet with the employee and his/her representative to inform the employee of the serious implication of continued poor attendance, including possible disciplinary action.
- Grievances concerning the management of attendance must be managed in accordance with the RCH dispute resolution procedures and in consultation with People & Culture.
Attendance Violations

Attendance violations, whist generally being of a relatively minor concern when occurring in isolation, can pose significant problems (e.g. staff replacement costs, increased workload demand on other staff, sinking morale, and lowered productivity), where an employee develops of pattern of repeatedly violating attendance rules.

Attendance Policies and Procedures:

It is very important that attendance violations are not tolerated, and that managers have work policies and guidelines in place and known to all staff which provide clear definitions of acceptable, and unacceptable employee behavior and conduct with respect to work attendance. The guidelines must also spell out the processes and strategies which will be adopted if an employee falls outside what is considered ‘acceptable’ limits.

Examples of unacceptable attendance behavior may include:

- unauthorized absence (failing to report for work)
- arriving at work late without authorization or just cause
- leaving the workplace during a roster shift without authorization or just cause
- taking longer than the allotted time for scheduled breaks (tea breaks, meal breaks)
- early departures from work without just cause
- failing to give advance notice of an absence when possible
- failing to report an absence properly (to the correct person, in a timely manner)
- failing to submit medical certification upon request.

Managing Attendance Violations:

Managers must utilise the basic principles of underperformance management in dealing with attendance violations (investigate not blame; get to the source of the problem; work with the employee in the first instance to find a way to resolve the problem; enforce the attendance policy through the normal disciplinary process if the problem persists; document everything).
EXCESS LEAVE MANAGEMENT PLAN

EMPLOYEE SURNAME: .................................. DEPARTMENT: ..........................................

GIVEN NAMES: ........................................ EMPLOYEE NUMBER: .............................

CURRENT LEAVE BALANCES

Annual Leave accrual entitlement (>4/5/6 weeks) _______ weeks

Accrued Days Off (>16 hrs) _______ hours

Long Service Leave (>26 weeks) _______ weeks

REASON FOR LEAVE CREDIT OVER RUN

(Please provide how/why the accumulated leave entitlements are in excess of the allowable limits as set out in the RCH Leave Entitlement Procedures)

..............................................................................................................................................................

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AGREED LEAVE MANAGEMENT PLAN

(Please provide full details of the leave plan (dates, timeframes, strategies etc) which will be employed to bring the accumulated leave entitlements back within the allowable limits as set out in the RCH Leave Entitlement Procedures)

..............................................................................................................................................................

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Agree Plan Completion Date ________/______/____

Employee: ............................................... DATE: .....................

Department/Unit Manager .................................................. DATE .....................

NB Failure to implement the leave management plan within the agreed timeframes may result in the employee being directed to take leave at the discretion of the manager until such time as leave balances are within RCH allowable limits.
# SICK LEAVE MANAGEMENT PLAN

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Describe the issues relating to the sick leave record requiring corrective action (what, where, when, previous action taken to address the issue)

Employee’s comments

Develop an action plan including corrective action(s), any support or resources needed, who is responsible, when the action(s) should be completed and the required outcome(s) – see over page.

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**OUTCOME OF REVIEW**

Manager’s comments:

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Employee’s comments:

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