

The VSB Employee Wellness and Attendance Support Initiative—A Primer

Where did it come from?

The VBE has been moving forward with the development of an Attendance Support Initiative over the past two years ostensibly to add as a third component of their overall Employee Wellness Program. Two other components, Disability Management and Wellness Initiatives, are already in place. Attendance management was referenced as early as 2012 in the Deloitte Report (on shared services) and the Price WaterHouse Cooper Report on resource allocation as a means of achieving *cost savings* for the Board. Over the last two budget cycles resources have been allocated to address the employer's need for data collection, staffing and training prior to implementation of this Attendance Support Initiative.

What is the VSTA's position?

The VSTA is opposed to the Attendance Support Initiative and made that clear in a formal submission to the Board at Committee IV on February 5, 2014. We see it as a cost saving measure that does not address the systemic factors in schools and society that impact teacher's physical and mental well-being. The very premise of a process which has administrators target potentially vulnerable employees through the use of sensitive, informal conversations puts teachers at risk.

What can we do about it?

Ask for a Staff Rep to be present.

Article A.26 of the Collective Agreement ensures that teachers have the right to have a Staff Rep present at any meeting with a Principal or Vice-Principal if there is reason to believe discipline and/or a grievance may result.

This means:

- No fly by meetings to ask after your health/absences.
- You have the right to have the meeting scheduled at a time when a Staff Rep can be present.
- You are required to attend a meeting if requested; you need not speak or answer questions.
- You and/or your Staff Rep may take notes.

What are the rules governing the sharing of medical information?

Doctor's Notes

The Collective Agreement makes it clear that in general, for the first ten days of illness, **no** doctor's note is required.

Article G.20.2.b. states *"When an employee is absent for more than ten (10) consecutive teaching days, he/she shall present a certificate signed by a duly qualified medical practitioner indicating the necessity for the absence."*

Medical notes are requested by Human Resources. You should not supply any medical information directly to school site administration.

Privacy

Personal medical information is protected as highly private and confidential. The employer has the right to only the information necessary to make a determination on granting health leave, accommodations and return to work. All requests to a doctor for information must come through the teacher. The employer does not have the right to information on **diagnosis** (your medical condition), **prognosis** (predictions of recovery) or **treatment** (any therapy or medication you are receiving).

If you have any questions, please speak with a Staff Rep at your school/site and/or contact the VSTA Office at 604-873-5570.