**SICK LEAVE GUIDELINES FOR SUPPORT STAFF**

**Objective:**

This guideline is to support staff in the management of their sick leave. The sick leave allocation for each permanent staff member is 30 working days over a 3 year sick leave cycle. What is key in all of the scenarios’ outlined below is that it is crucial to keep an open line of communication with one’s supervisor/manager to avoid any confusion, tension or suspicion in the manager/employee relationship. It is also important to remember that sick days are for when one is genuinely ill and are ‘days off’ when one is not sick. Abuse and misuse of sick leave is a disciplinary offence and if you abuse and/or misuse sick leave, you will be disciplined. Depending on the circumstances and context disciplinary action could range from a verbal warning to a disciplinary hearing. Sanctions if found guilty could range from a warning to dismissal.

**Practical rules and guidelines to assist you:**

 **Scenario 1: Planned doctor/clinic/ Health Care Centre (HCC) appointment during work hours**

When booking a doctor’s/clinic/HCC appointment which will require you to be absent from work, as the staff member you must consult with your supervisor before making this appointment. This is to ensure that your planned appointment does not interfere with work unnecessarily.

* When you visit the doctor/clinic/HCC, this does not mean you can take the day off. Once you have had your appointment and if you are able and fit to work, you are then expected to return to work. Your absence while at the appointment will not count as sick leave unless you have been away for a considerable period of time.
* If are booked off by the doctor/clinic and have a valid medical note to prove so, you do not need to return to work after your appointment. You are however expected to contact your manager/supervisor as soon as you are finished with the doctor/clinic to notify them that you have been booked off work and for how long.
* A medical certificate is only needed if you will not be at work for 3 days or more. The Rhodes University Support Staff leave policy stipulates that you can be off sick for a maximum of 2 consecutive days without a medical certificate. However, if you are off sick for more than 2 consecutive days OR on more than 2 occasions (no matter how many days) over an 8 week period, a valid medical certificate must be presented if your supervisor/line manager asks for it.
* Furthermore, if a supervisor/line manager is concerned about a pattern of sick leave over any period of time, she/he may request that you provide a valid medical certificate each time you are off sick no matter how many days you are absent.

**Scenario 2: Waking up sick and unable to go to work**

If you wake up and are unable to get to work due to illness or injury, you must contact your manager/supervisor personally as soon as possible (preferably within 1 hour after your shift has started) OR before 10:00am (that is if you begin work at the standard time of 08:00am); in some departments this time is 09:00 am if you start work before the usual 08:00 am work start. The only acceptable reason for NOT contacting your supervisor/line manager before 10h00 is if you are faced with exceptional circumstances such as being rushed to the emergency room or to the hospital. Please note your supervisor/line manager has a right to request that you personally contact them and not member of your family, spouse, boyfriend/girlfriend, friend etc. It is also not acceptable to contact other people in your department and ask them to let your supervisor/line manager know you are not coming to work. It is your responsibility to personally make contact with your supervisor/line manager.

**Scenario 3: Going to work and then feeling too sick/ill to perform duties**

If you attend work and then feel ill or sick and need to rest or go home, then:

* You must speak to your supervisor/line manager before you go and rest and/or decide to go home. If you are too ill to work and it is 4 hours and 45 minutes after your shift started and you go home, in most instances the remainder of the day will not be viewed as sick leave. However, this will depend on the circumstances of the illness/work situation and history of each particular individual. This means that your supervisor/line manager is able to use his or her discretion when deciding whether your absence will be counted as sick leave or not. Supervisors/line managers will be expected to be able to justify their reasons for counting your absence as sick leave if asked.

**Additional Information to bear in mind:**

* You must phone your manager/supervisor every day you are sick unless you have a valid medical certificate that has booked you off for a period of time.
* As an employee, you are required to present yourself at work unless you are legitimately allowed to be absent, e.g. annual leave which has been approved by your supervisor/line manager, study leave approved by your supervisor/line manager etc. If you are frequently off work because of illness or other reasons that are not approved absences your reliability and ability to work will be questioned. If this happens too frequently, you could end up in a situation where you are dismissed for incapacity even if you are not being considered for medical boarding.
* No positive sick leave balances accrue from one cycle to the next. All positive balances are forfeited.
* Positive sick leave balances are never paid out upon termination. Negative sick leave balances may be converted into unpaid leave upon termination.
* The excuses listed below are examples of reasons that are not considered valid or acceptable for not contacting your manager/supervisor to let them know you are ill and will not be coming to work:
1. I had no airtime
2. I did not have my manager’s contact details
3. I do not have a phone/my neighbor does not have a phone
4. I asked my friend/family member/colleague to inform you and he/she forgot
5. I went to the doctor/clinic first so that I could know for how many days I would be booked off

For more information please refer to the Rhodes University Leave Policy which can be found by following this link: [http://www.ru.ac.za/humanresources/policies/policieHCCdprotocols/leave/](http://www.ru.ac.za/humanresources/policies/policiesandprotocols/leave/)

Last Updated: October 2013