

# Advice for Supervisors Regarding Absenteeism and Lateness

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## **General**

Valdosta State University's primary objective is to educate our students and at the same time efficiently operate the departments that support this effort. In order to do this in a tradition of high quality, our departments must be fully staffed. Absenteeism and lateness distract from this service and cause an undue burden for those employees who must fill in for absent employees. Each employee is expected to report to work promptly at the beginning of the day and after lunch. If an employee finds it necessary to be absent from work, such absence should be immediately reported to the supervisor. A record of tardiness and inexcusable absence may interfere with promotion and may result in loss of pay or disciplinary action.

In regard to attendance and lateness, employees are expected to:

1. Maintain good personal health standards which will allow them to perform their work in a competent manner on a regular basis.
2. Avoid letting minor ailments keep them from performing their jobs. At the same time, good judgment should be used with respect to contagious ailments which might have an adverse effect on other employees.
3. Attend to personal affairs during nonworking hours.

## **Procedure**

The department supervisor is responsible for maintaining the lowest practical level of absence. The most effective way for the supervisor to do this is to talk with the employee returning from an absence. This will place emphasis on attendance and set the climate in the unit. At the same time the supervisor can ascertain if there is a reason behind the absenteeism. Although it is the employee's responsibility to correct problems and prevent absenteeism, the supervisor can counsel the employee on the importance of maintaining good attendance. In order to accomplish this the supervisor should:

Receive the call concerning absence personally (if possible).

1. Speak directly to the employee rather than a relative or friend.
2. If the employee appears to be suffering only minor ailments, encourage the employee to come to work.
3. Inquire whether the employee has taken steps to improve the condition causing the absence.
4. Determine when the employee expects to return to work.

By following the pattern outlined above, the supervisor should be able to detect poor attendance habits and take corrective action. There is no substitute for working closely with an employee and determining the validity of each absence as it occurs. The supervisor might also bear in mind the following:

1. Frequency of absence. Frequent short-term absences often indicate the formation of poor attendance habits.

2. Patterns of absence. A pattern of Monday or Friday absences, or absences on the day before or after a holiday or long weekend, will indicate an unsatisfactory attendance pattern.
3. Causes of absence. Absences of a questionable nature or those absences which could have been avoided by proper advance planning should be monitored closely.
4. Lateness record. Lateness should be considered with absenteeism in determining unsatisfactory attendance patterns.
5. Length of service. An employee with long service and an attendance record which in previous years has been good would be given a little more latitude in any particular year when there is a noticeable change in attendance.

### **Supervisory Counseling-- Chronic Absenteeism or Lateness**

Early steps toward correcting chronic absenteeism should take the form of private, individual counseling between supervisor and employee. This counseling session should cover the following:

1. A review with the employee of his personal attendance record.
2. A statement of why the record is unsatisfactory, and that it must be corrected.
3. A discussion of the reasons for absence and for not calling in, if applicable. Here the supervisor should listen closely to the employee's stated reasons and try to assess their validity.
4. An inquiry to the employee as to whether he thinks his personal attendance record is satisfactory. Let him be his own judge.
5. An inquiry to see if Human Resources may assist the employee with problems causing absence. This may include solving transportation difficulties, a medical assessment by a doctor, or referral to the Employee Assistance Program. While the supervisor should not become deeply involved in personal problems of employees, he/she may be able to suggest ways to solve absence-causing problems.
6. Emphasizing to the employee that he/she is expected to:
  - be at work, on time, all the time.
  - notify the supervisor of absences.
  - let the supervisor know in advance of impending absences, whenever possible.
  - come in late rather than not report at all.
  - call in every other day, if absent for an extended period (if requested).
  - bring in a doctor's release to work, if absent over 5 days or sooner if requested by the supervisor, especially in cases of chronic absenteeism.
7. Finally, the supervisor should emphasize (if the absences are considered excessive) that the employee is jeopardizing his/her own future with Valdosta State, his merit increases, his vacation earnings, and his potential for promotion. The threat of discipline should be avoided at this point, as it may undermine the positive impact of the face-to-face meeting. At this stage the supervisor should try to be helpful. If discipline actually becomes necessary, the employee can be told that he is in danger of losing his job.