

Virtual Meeting, audio posted the following day
Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
20 Education Court, P.O. Box 2558
Hamilton, ON L8N 3L1

AGENDA: 5:30 p.m.

- I. Call to Order
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Employee Attendance Monitoring Update



EXECUTIVE REPORT TO HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

TO: HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

FROM: Manny Figueiredo, Director of Education

DATE: April 20, 2021

PREPARED BY: Jamie Nunn, Superintendent of Human Resource Services
Cindy Francis, Senior Manager, Human Resource Services
Lori Steacy, Manager, Employee Support and Wellness

RE: Employee Attendance Monitoring Report

Action

Monitoring ☒

Background

Staff implemented a HWDSB Strategic Wellness and Absence Management Plan in September 2019 to support staff absenteeism. This plan set out specific goals to support our Strategic Directions and reduce employee absences by a minimum one-half day per year for four years. This year, HWDSB has adjusted our strategic plan in light of the global pandemic and our need to be responsive to staff physical and mental well-being.

Responding to COVID-19

HWDSB has a COVID Response Team in place that works closely with Public Health to operationalize any system-wide COVID-19 protocols to support staff and student safety and well-being. The COVID Response Team works closely daily with Public Health when positive COVID-19 cases are confirmed in the community and may impact HWDSB staff and students. Through the direction of Public Health, all staff are required to do a daily COVID-19 screening prior to attending work using the “COVID-19 School and Child Care Screening” online tool. If a staff member fails the daily screening, they are not to attend work. The absent staff member works closely Employee Support and Wellness and Public Health to be supported to return to work. Employee Support and Wellness supports staff with accommodation plans, where possible.

Difference between Personal Illness (Sick Leave) and COVID-19

Personal illness or “sick leave and short-term disability leave” is an entitlement in Collective Agreements and Terms and Conditions of employment. The Collective Agreement grants entitlements for staff to access sick time to attend medical and dental appointments. The HWDSB’s Employee Support and Wellness Department provides support to staff on a case-by-case basis related to medical absence and medically supported accommodation needs in the workplace.

At the beginning of September, Human Resource Services implemented new procedures within our automated absence reporting system (Smart Find Express) to assist with the Staff COVID-19 daily screening process highlighted above. The new absence codes allow for our Employee Support and Wellness Department to support staff with COVID-19 absence related intervention and support.

Staff Findings: Personal Illness compared to COVID-19

As we continue to implement the Employee Support and Wellness Strategic Plan, we improve our capacity to report on staff absence metrics. The chart below summarizes the number of days of Personal Illness and COVID-19 absences utilized by all permanent staff from September 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021. We have noted there is an increase of 2.51 days overall for combined personal illness days and COVID-19 related absences for the reporting period.

	Average Number of Personal Illness Days	Average Number of COVID-19 Days	Total Average Number of Days
September 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020	7.65	N/A	7.65
September 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021	9.70	0.46	10.16
Difference	2.05	N/A	2.51

Support for Staff

Employee Support and Wellness Department continues to support staff with return-to-work planning and accommodations, both in the physical and remote work environment. Some observations impacting the wellbeing of staff include but are not limited to:

- Staff are experiencing delays with accessing treatment and medical procedures in a timely manner through the health care system.
 - Hospitals have had to make decisions about canceling medical procedures that may be impacting a staff members ability to recovery and return to work. This is possibly extending their medical leave of absence or accommodations in the workplace.
 - Access to treatment is delayed based on booking system and protocols required by Public Health. (limited capacity, time between bookings for cleaning protocols)
 - Access to in person treatment can also be a barrier for some complex health conditions.
 - Staff have less flexibility to book in person medical appointments outside working hours. Staff are eligible to access sick time to attend medical appointments.
- Pre-existing health conditions that have been exacerbated due to the pandemic and we are seeing a slight increase in personal illness absences resulting in increased sporadic illness absences and extended medical leave of absence and/or increased workplace accommodation needs.
- The increased impact on mental health and the ability for staff to continue to cope with the pandemic and the impacts of daily life.

Employee Support and Wellness have also been supporting staff with COVID-19 related absences to early and safe return-to-work or remote work accommodations based on Public Health and works closely with the HWDSB COVID Response Team.

Staff Redeployment

Human Resource Services assesses unfilled job vacancies every morning at 7:00 am. Based on this job vacancy assessment, Human Resource Services collaboratively works with Superintendent of Student Achievement, Superintendent of Student Achievement – Learning Services and System Principals to redeploy itinerant staff to support elementary school locations, as needed. On average, between March 1, 2021 and April 9, 2021, the Board redeployed between 8 to 10 system staff daily to support our elementary schools.

Next Steps

Supporting all staff continues to be a top priority for the HWDSB and our Employee Support and Wellness Department and Human Resource Services Division. The protocols related to COVID-19 have continued to evolve as we work closely and follow the direction and support of Public Health as HWDSB plays a key role in reducing the spread of COVID-19 in our community.