

ELIZABETH POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDERS



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SUBJECT: REPORTING SICK, EXCESSIVE ABSENTEEISM

EFFECTIVE DATE:

October 14, 2020

ACCREDITATION STANDARDS:

BY THE ORDER OF:

Chief Giacomo Sacca

BY AUTHORITY OF:

Police Director Earl J. Graves

SUPERSEDES ORDER #:

G.O. V.2 C.30 of February 2016

PURPOSE: To establish a policy and guidelines intended to monitor and reduce chronic and excessive absenteeism among employees of the Elizabeth Police Department.

POLICY: It is the policy of the Elizabeth Police Department to recognize that reliable employee attendance is essential to the orderly operation of the facility. Excessive absenteeism creates an undue hardship for fellow employees and disrupts the daily operation of the facility.

PROCEDURE

I. Reporting Sick

A. Sworn Personnel

1. If sick leave is necessary, sworn employees are required to submit their sick leave status into the agency time management system. (*PlanIt* is the current scheduling system)
2. Sworn personnel requiring sick leave are to enter their sick leave status, including the nature of the illness, into *PlanIt* no later than two hours before their scheduled tour of duty.
 - a. Employees are to enter the nature of their illness into *PlanIt* via a private message. To enter a private message:
 - i. Hover over "Communications" at the top of the screen and select "Messages".
 - ii. Select "Compose message" from the left side of the screen.
 - iii. Underneath "To:" type in "Confidential Sick".
 - iv. In "Subject" type in "Sick"
 - v. Type the nature of the illness in the message box and hit "Send Message".
 - b. At times, extraordinary circumstances may exist where a sworn employee is unable to enter their sick leave status into the time management system in a timely matter. In such exceptional circumstances, sworn employees are to contact their Division Commander for approval directly.
 - c. In the absence of a Division Commander, a Station House Commander may make the data entry. Absence means that the Division Commander is off duty.
 - d. Upon approval, the Division Commander will then enter the sworn employee's sick leave status into the time management system.
3. Sworn employees are to enter their sick leave status into the time management system for each day they will be unable to report to work. For example, if a person will be out sick on any consecutive days, a second, third, fourth, etc. day, data entry is required into the time management system. The Office of Human Resources Supervisor will enter the data for extended sick absence from duty when an employee is out for more than two weeks.
4. When any sick leave exceeds four (4) consecutive days, the employee must notify the Human Resources Supervisor at (908) 558-6542, regarding their work status. The Human Resources Supervisor will then notify the Police Director accordingly.

5. Employees who anticipate being on extended sick leave (over ten consecutive days) must contact the Human Resources Supervisor for the completion of all necessary medical forms and releases.
6. Personnel on extended sick leave, including officers injured on duty, shall call the Human Resources Supervisor every Friday, and provide a work status update. The Human Resources Supervisor shall notify the Police Director accordingly.
7. Any employee who is absent from duty due to personal illness or injury shall not leave their place of residence or place of confinement during the period in which the employee was scheduled to be at work. If an employee must leave their place of confinement, they must notify the Station House Commander on duty.
8. The supervisor receiving notification from an employee, who needs to leave their home or place of confinement, shall document the phone call.

B. Civilian Personnel

1. If sick leave is necessary, civilian employees are required to notify their Unit Commander no later than two hours before their scheduled tour of duty, unless exceptional circumstances prevent such timely notification.
2. In the Absence of their Unit Commander, the civilian employee's immediate supervisor may be notified. Absence means the Unit Commander is off duty.
3. Upon approval, the Unit Commander or immediate supervisor will then enter the civilian employee's sick leave status into the time management system.
4. Civilian employees are to call in to report their sick leave status each day they will be unable to report to work. For example, if an employee will be out sick on any consecutive days, a second, third, fourth, etc. day, notification to the Unit Commander or, in the Unit Commander's absence, the civilian employee's immediate supervisor, is required.
5. When any sick leave exceeds five (5) consecutive days, the employee must notify the Human Resources Supervisor at (908) 558-6542, regarding their work status. The Human Resources Supervisor will then notify the Police Director accordingly.
6. Employees who anticipate being on extended sick leave (over ten consecutive days) must contact the Human Resources Supervisor for the completion of all necessary medical forms and releases.

7. Personnel on extended sick leave, including officers injured on duty, shall call the Human Resources Supervisor every Friday, and provide a work status update. The Human Resources Supervisor shall notify the Police Director accordingly.
8. Any employee who is absent from duty due to personal illness or injury shall not leave their place of residence or place of confinement during the period in which the employee was scheduled to be at work. If an employee must leave their place of confinement, they must notify the Station House Commander on duty.
9. The supervisor receiving notification from an employee, who needs to leave their home or place of confinement, shall document the phone call.

II. Sick Time Use

1. When an employee demonstrates a developing pattern of poor attendance because of sick time use, the Chief of Police or designee shall initiate a review of the employee's attendance records. Employees are expected to maintain regular attendance. Among the criteria that shall be considered in evaluating possible attendance problems are:
 - a. Instances where it appears that the employee has an excessive number of pattern absences. Pattern absences are absences either immediately before or after an employee's weekend or other approved leave, vacation, administrative leave, bereavement leave, holidays, etc.
 - b. Any other circumstances suggesting improper absenteeism and/or an inability to meet the standards of reliable attendance.
2. Employees demonstrating chronic or excessive absenteeism or pattern absences will be put on notice through a documented verbal discussion, to be confirmed in writing utilizing an Internal Affairs data entry. The employee will be informed that corrective actions will be undertaken, including progressive discipline, if attendance is not improved and maintained at an acceptable level. Discipline up to and including termination may result if corrective measures are not successful.
3. Once a verbal discussion occurs, any continuation of attendance problems within the same calendar year will result in the commencement of progressive discipline.
4. For repeated absences in subsequent calendar years, progressive discipline will continue from the previous step taken if the employee continues a pattern of absences, which will lead to an excessive rate of absenteeism for the year.
5. Approved leaves of absence taken pursuant to the New Jersey Family Leave Act and/or Federal Family and Medical Leave Act will not be considered in evaluating possible attendance problems that are subject to disciplinary action.

6. Nothing in this policy shall prevent the Elizabeth Police Department from taking disciplinary action against an employee for misuse/abuse of sick leave or falsely calling in sick or injured or any other violation of Rules and Regulations pertaining to leaves not addressed within this policy. Likewise, nothing shall prevent the Elizabeth Police Department from requiring an employee to report to the City of Elizabeth Medical Services to verify illness if an employee is suspected of misuse/abuse of sick leave.

III. Supervisor Responsibilities

1. The Commanding Officers of all Bureaus and Units shall conduct daily and monthly reviews of all sick leave utilized by employees under their command.
2. Commanding Officers shall make evaluations and/or conduct investigations based on their reviews in order to determine whether there is possible sick leave abuse. All recommendations by commanding officers shall be forwarded to their respective Division Commanders (Deputy Chief).
3. The Human Resources Supervisor shall provide the Division Commanders with departmental Time Liability Reports quarterly.
4. Division Commanders shall review departmental Time Liability Reports quarterly for signs of sick leave abuse, as described in section II.
5. Division Commanders shall provide a quarterly report to the Chief of Police and Police Director, verifying the completion of the Time Liability Reports, its review, and the results.
6. Division Commanders shall be responsible for completing and documenting verbal discussions with employees regarding sick leave abuse as necessary. Commanders shall also ensure that the proper records are entered into the IA Pro system.

IV. Return to Duty (Sworn Personnel)

1. When a sworn employee is out on sick leave for four (4) or more consecutive days, they must provide a note from a medical doctor indicating the nature of their illness as well as the status of the employee for return to duty.

2. Sworn employees are to submit the note from a medical doctor to their Commanding Officer in a sealed envelope. The Commanding Officer shall submit the sealed envelope to the Human Resources Supervisor.
3. Sworn employees out on sick leave for four (4) or more consecutive days who fail to provide a note from a medical doctor will not be allowed to return to duty until one is provided.
4. Employees who fail to provide a note from a medical doctor when required will remain on sick leave, will be required to enter their status into the agency time management system pursuant to Section I of this policy, and may be subject to discipline.

V. Return to Duty (Civilian Personnel)

1. When a civilian employee is out on sick leave for five (5) or more consecutive days, they must provide a note from a medical doctor indicating the nature of their illness as well as the status of the employee for return to duty.
2. Civilian employees are to submit the note from a medical doctor to their Commanding Officer in a sealed envelope. The Commanding Officer shall submit the sealed envelope to the Human Resources Supervisor.
3. Civilian employees out on sick leave for five (5) or more consecutive days who fail to provide a note from a medical doctor will not be allowed to return to duty until one is provided.
4. Employees who fail to provide a note from a medical doctor when required will remain on sick leave, will be required to enter their status into the agency time management system pursuant to Section I of this policy, and may be subject to discipline.