

Attendance Policy

Policy · US · Updated 2026-07-13 · Square brackets are placeholders to replace with your own details.

An attendance policy sets the expectations for showing up — on time, for scheduled shifts, ready to work — and the procedure for when someone cannot: who to notify, by when, and how. It also draws the line every US attendance policy needs: legally protected absences are handled under the laws and policies that protect them, and are never counted against anyone.

Attendance is where small-business friction concentrates: one uncovered shift cascades into overtime, missed service, and resentment from the people who did show up. A written policy replaces case-by-case improvisation — and the accusations of favoritism it breeds — with one procedure everyone follows and one standard everyone is held to.

This template gives you the expectations, the call-off procedure, the no-call/no-show rule, the treatment of protected absences, and the link into progressive discipline, with the state-law hedges built in.

Purpose and scope

This policy sets attendance expectations for all employees at [Your company] and the procedure to follow when you will be absent or late. Scheduling itself is covered by [the scheduling practice at location]; this policy is about what happens against the schedule.

Nothing in this policy creates a contract of employment or changes the at-will nature of employment at [Your company].

Expectations

- Be at your workstation, ready to work, at your scheduled start time — arriving in the parking lot is not arriving at work.
- Work your scheduled shift; leaving early or extending breaks without approval counts as an attendance issue.
- Record your time accurately in [timekeeping system] — falsifying time is a conduct matter, not an attendance matter, and is treated as such.
- Request planned absences — appointments, vacations — in advance through [system/process], per [the PTO policy].

Reporting an unplanned absence

1. Notify [your manager / the duty manager] by [phone call — specify whether a call is required rather than a text] as early as possible, and no later than [time] before your scheduled start.
2. Say what the situation is, how long you expect to be out, and whether anything urgent needs handing over.
3. Report each day of a continuing absence unless you have agreed a duration with [manager/HR], or the absence is covered by an approved leave.

4. If you cannot call yourself, someone may call for you — hospital situations happen, and the procedure bends for genuine emergencies.
5. On return from a sickness absence of [duration], check in with your manager before starting: what was missed, whether you are fit for full duties, and whether anything needs adjusting.

Lateness and early departures

If you will be late, notify [manager/channel] before your start time with an arrival estimate — a known delay is a staffing adjustment; an unexplained one is an empty station. Repeated lateness and unapproved early departures are addressed the same way as absence patterns: informally first, then under [the progressive discipline policy].

No-call/no-show

A no-call/no-show — missing a scheduled shift without any notification — is the most serious attendance event, because it leaves the team both short-handed and worried. [Manager] attempts to reach the employee the same day and documents the attempts.

An employee who fails to report or make contact for [number] consecutive scheduled shifts may be treated as having voluntarily resigned, subject to applicable law — but not before [Your company] has genuinely tried to make contact and considered whether a protected reason explains the silence. People in hospitals do not call; the investigation comes before the conclusion.

Protected absences

Some absences are legally protected, and this policy does not count, point, or discipline them. If any of the following may apply, the absence is routed to [HR / name/role] and handled under the relevant law and policy rather than under this one:

- FMLA leave, where [Your company] is covered and the employee is eligible — see the DOL's current guidance for the rules.
- Absences that are reasonable accommodations for a disability under the ADA, handled through [the accommodation process].
- Sick time protected by state or local paid-sick-leave laws, which may also limit what documentation [Your company] can require — [list the laws that apply at your locations].
- Jury duty, voting time where protected, military service and related leave, and other absences protected by federal, state, or local law.
- When in doubt, the question goes to [HR / name/role] before any attendance consequence is applied — the expensive mistake is pointing a protected absence.

Attendance issues and discipline

Patterns — frequent unplanned absences, repeated lateness, a call-off procedure ignored — are raised with the employee early and informally first; there is often a fixable cause, and sometimes a legally protected one nobody had flagged. Issues that continue are handled under [the progressive discipline policy], whose steps are guidelines and create no contractual rights.

[If [Your company] uses a points system, describe it at location — and exclude every protected absence category above from it.]

Records and review

Attendance records, call-off logs, and related documentation live in [system/location] and are retained for [period]. [Name/role] reviews attendance data [frequency] — for patterns worth addressing, and for consistency between managers.

This policy is reviewed [frequency, e.g. annually] and whenever the paid-sick-leave rules change where we operate. Owner: [name/role]. Next review due: [date].

How to use this template

1. Fill in the call-off channel precisely — who, how, by when — and make it one channel; "tell someone" produces disputes about who was told.
2. List the paid-sick-leave laws for every location where you have employees and align the protected-absences section to the strictest one.
3. If you run a points system, audit it against the protected-absences list before adopting this policy — no-fault systems fail exactly there.
4. Train managers to route doubtful absences to [HR] before assessing consequences, and to document contact attempts before any job-abandonment conclusion.
5. Check the data quarterly: if one team generates most of the attendance issues, the problem is usually the schedule or the manager, not the employees.

Official guidance

- › [DOL — Family and Medical Leave Act \(FMLA\)](#)
- › [DOL — Wage and Hour Division](#)
- › [EEOC — Information for employers](#)

This template is provided in good faith and for general information — it is not legal advice. Adapt it to your organisation and, where your sector carries specific legal requirements, have the finished document reviewed by a qualified adviser. The live version at <https://trainedteam.com/templates/attendance-policy-us> is kept current; this file is a snapshot.