



SUPERINTENDENT'S ADVISORY: STAFF ABSENCE TRACKING SYSTEM (SA-3)

Revised October 11, 2017

Introduction

This **Superintendent's Advisory regarding the Staff Absence Tracking System** outlines new procedures for tracking and reporting staff attendance and, correspondingly, absences from work. Beginning September 1, 2016 all Salem Public Schools employees will be required to self-report absences from work through a new absence tracking system called Frontline (formerly known as AESOP) (www.frontlineeducation.com). Frontline Absence and Time Management provides each employee with an easy, user-friendly way to self-report daily absences either online, via a mobile app, or through a call-in number. Employee self-reporting of absences through this new system will help improve accountability for and accuracy of staff attendance and accruals. In addition, the enclosed Advisory clarifies the district-wide standards that will be used to determine appropriate use of earned sick time. Procedures for applying for leaves of absence are also discussed and clarified.

Ensuring clarity, consistency, and a high degree of accountability for staff attendance is important for any organization. For a school district, it is critical to our mission of improving learning for all students. Indeed, research shows that faculty attendance is highly correlated with student achievement¹ and the practices and behaviors we as educators, professionals, and other staff serve as a role model for the students in our midst. By working together and respecting the important role each employee plays in meeting the district's mission, we strive to create a positive working and learning environment for all within the Salem Public Schools.

The below guidelines are intended to help clarify disparate policies and past administrative practices in order to build a common set of expectations and procedures to follow. The guidelines apply to ALL Salem Public Schools employees. Any exceptions granted to specific employee groups based on agreements contained within a collective bargaining agreement are noted.

1. Frontline Absence Tracking System for All SPS Employees

All Salem Public Schools employees will be set up in the Frontline Absence Tracking System by August 30, 2016 and will receive an email and written notification of their employee login and/or call-in information for the system. All employees will be expected to begin using this system to report all staff absences (sick days, personal days, and vacation days) beginning September 1, 2016. **All absences must be reported. To report an absence, employees may either login to the Frontline**

¹ See: http://www.nctq.org/dmsView/RollCall_TeacherAttendance

system to report the absence online at www.aesonline.com or utilize the call-in number (Dial 1-800-942-3767). Employees may also download a mobile phone app which can be used to report absences as well. Resources to help guide employees with use of Frontline can be found on the Faculty/Staff Resource page and links of the SPS website at: http://salemk12.org/Pages/SPS_DistStaffRes/AbsenceTrackingSystem.

Whether you dial or call-in, you will be prompted to enter your ID number (followed by the # sign) and then enter your PIN number (followed by the # sign). The ID and PIN numbers you should use to get into the system are:

- **Your ID Number:** Your phone number (this will be the main phone number stored in the district's personnel/payroll records)
- **Your PIN Number:** The last 5 digits of your Employee ID number (your SPS Employee ID number is a six-digit number that begins with a "5". Your PIN will be the last 5 of those digits).

Note: Your Employee ID number is a unique identifier for all employees and appears on all of your pay stubs. You may also retrieve your Employee ID number by accessing the MUNIS Self-Service Portal at <https://salemma.munisselfservice.com/>.

2. Reporting Window and Expected Timeframe to Report Absences

All SPS employees should strive to report all absences on Frontline as soon as possible. **We ask that all absences be reported on Frontline by 6:00 am on the day an absence occurs.** This helps to ensure that coverage, whether in the form of a substitute teacher or other coverage for the day, is secured in time. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this matter. If the cutoff time is missed, please report your absence to your school or department's Attendance Liaison.

3. Notification of Unplanned Absences to Immediate Supervisors

Unplanned absences generally occur when someone becomes ill and calls in sick. When an employee is unable to report to work due to an illness, he/she should do the following:

- Login or call in to the Frontline system to report the absence (by 6:00 am on the day of the absence), and
- Notify his/her immediate supervisor. Such notification should occur as early as possible on the day of an absence and no later than 15 minutes past each employees regularly scheduled start time.

Other procedures include:

- a. **Illness during Work Hours.** When an employee becomes ill during regular work hours, the employee must notify his/her supervisor. It shall be the supervisor's responsibility to record the length of absence and to ensure its documentation through the Frontline system.
- b. **Failure to Notify.** Employees failing to give the required proper notice shall be considered absent without authorization and subject to progressive disciplinary action.
- c. **Medical Certification.** If the absence lasts more than five (5) consecutive working days, a physician's certificate must be provided and must at least include the following:

- A statement that the physician understands the nature of the employee's duties and that the employee is incapable of performing the duties of his/her position.
- A statement of anticipated duration of the absence or the expected date of return to work. If the duration is unknown, the letter should indicate when the physician would be seeing the employee again and an updated letter would be expected at that time.

4. Procedures for Requesting Planned Absences and Time Off

Planned absences include the use of vacation and/or personal time. Unless otherwise stipulated in a collective bargaining agreement, any planned time off must be pre-approved by a supervisor. Employees should submit a written request for planned time off at least 10 days in advance of the planned absence. Supervisors should respond to such requests in a timely manner. In evaluating these requests, supervisors are encouraged to support the ability of employees to take well-earned time off from work. From time to time, however, there may be factors that make it difficult to approve requests for time off (e.g., too many requests within a particular week, for example, making office or classroom coverage difficult). All SPS employees are asked to consider the importance of classroom or other district needs when requesting time off. If approved by the supervisor, employees should report the planned time off in the Frontline system.

ATTENTION TEACHERS: Beginning September 1, 2016, all requests for personal days requiring the Superintendent's approval should be directed to the Superintendent's designee, Liza Bento, in the Office of Human Capital at lizabento@salemk12.org or 978-740-1115.

Planned absences such as vacation time should also be reported in advance on Frontline. Employees are strongly encouraged to report all planned time off through the Frontline system as soon as approved by his/her supervisor and scheduled.

5. School/Departmental Attendance Liaisons

Each school and/or central office department has designated one employee to serve as the school/department's Attendance Liaison. The role of the Attendance Liaison is to work closely with the Payroll department to review, verify, and ensure the accurate reporting of employee absences on a daily basis through the Frontline system. Attendance Liaisons will be given administrative-level access to the Frontline system and will rely upon multiple sources of information to review and verify absence reporting for their school and/or department. These sources may include:

- Daily sign-in/sign-out sheets kept by each school and/or department (to determine which, if any, employees may be absent on a particular day)
- Communications with principals or other district administrators regarding employee absences
- Other information deemed relevant within each school and/or department.

Attendance Liaisons will be expected to review, verify, and reconcile any absences for their particular school and/or department by 10am on each day. The suggested procedure is as follows:

Step 1: Review the school/department's sign-in/sign-out sheet to identify any absences (based on staff who have not yet signed in for the day)

Step 2: Check-in with the principal and/or departmental leader to identify any staff members who may have reported an absence to them

Step 3: Login to the Frontline system to review the absences reported by staff members. Make note of any absences not self-reported through Frontline based on an employee who has not signed in or an employee known to be absent by the supervisor

Step 4: Using the administrative-level access given for Frontline, make any necessary corrections to employees' absence reporting within Frontline. Discuss any challenges or technical assistance needed with the Payroll Department

6. Accrual of Earned Time Off

The amount of earned time off accrued for each employee as specified in specific collective bargaining agreements or employment contracts shall not be affected by this Advisory or these procedures. Beginning September 1, 2016, all data regarding employee absences reported in Frontline will be used to determine appropriate deductions in each employee's accrued time. Employees may access an accurate record of their time accruals by logging into <https://salemma.munisselfservice.com/>. All questions and/or concerns related to employee accrual of earned time off should be directed to the Payroll department at 978-740-1224 or payroll@salemk12.org.

7. Attendance Monitoring Procedures

As a school district that strives to improve learning and results for all students, consistent attendance by faculty and all staff in the district matters. Beginning this year, Salem Public Schools will initiate attendance monitoring procedures designed to both increase accountability for appropriate use of earned sick and other forms of leave and to provide key data to improve staffing, planning, and substitute coverage procedures.

The Payroll office in partnership with the Office of Human Capital will run an attendance monitoring report for all employees within each attendance unit, twice per year. The reports will highlight any patterns associated with chronic or abuse of absences and be shared with school principals and other departmental leaders who will be expected to follow appropriate procedures with respective employees accordingly. Criteria that will be used to determine potential patterns of sick time abuse include, but are not limited to:

- Absences just before or after scheduled school Holidays
- Frequent absences on Mondays and/or Fridays
- Five or more days of absence without proper medical documentation
- Repeated, unacceptable attendance patterns
- Other patterns of excessive absence as identified in the City of Salem Absence Control Policy

Appropriate disciplinary actions will be followed for employees whose patterns of absenteeism fit the above criteria.

8. Appropriate Use of Earned Sick Time

Unless otherwise stipulated in a collective bargaining or other employment agreement, the administration supports the use of earned sick time as recently defined² by the MA Attorney General: Appropriate use of earned sick time includes time off from work in order to:

1. Care for oneself, when sick
2. Care for a child, spouse, parent, or parent of a spouse
3. Attend a routine medical appointment with their child, spouse, parent, parent of a spouse, or themselves;
4. Address the effects of domestic violence; or
5. Travel to and from the location related to the purpose for which the time was taken.

9. Leaves of Absence

All requests for a Leave of Absence should be directed to the Office of Human Capital at the contact information provided below. Relevant forms for requesting a leave can be found on the district's website at: http://www.salemk12.org/Pages/SPS_DISTAdmin/HR_Forms/

Liza Bento, SPHR
 Director of Human Capital & School Support
 Salem Public Schools
 29 Highland Avenue, Room 131
 Salem, MA 01970
 978-740-1115
 978-740-1279 fax
humanresources@salemk12.org
lizabento@salemk12.org

10. Absence Tracking System – Helpful Information and Resources

You will find helpful information and resources to support your use of the new Absence Tracking System on the Salem Public Schools Website (accessible via the Faculty/Staff dropdown menu – select “Staff Resources” or through the Human Capital Page). You can also access the site directly by pasting the below URL into your browser:

http://www.salemk12.org/Pages/SPS_DistAdmin/Absence%20Tracking%20System.

² See: <http://www.mass.gov/ago/doing-business-in-massachusetts/labor-laws-and-public-construction/earned-sick-time/>