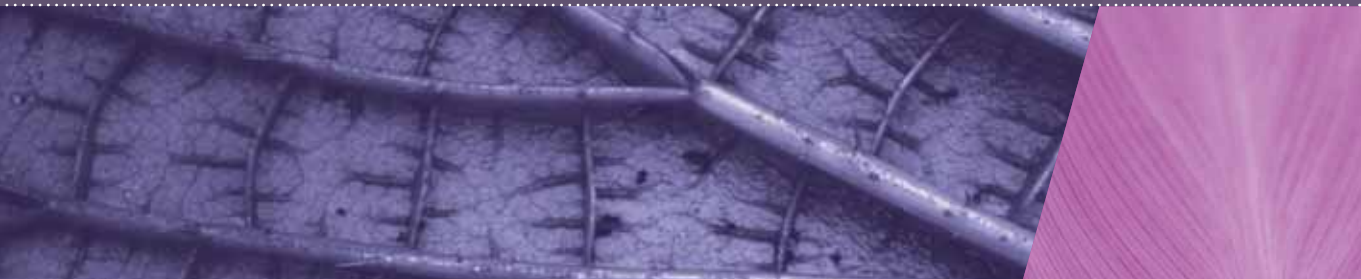**Australian Government**

Australian Public Service Commission

Turned Up and Tuned In

A manager's guide to
maximising staff attendance

What is your level of confidence?

to detect trends or patterns of absences?

to determine the causes?

to raise concerns with employees?

to support employees who are experiencing attendance problems?

to build and sustain employees' motivation to attend?

H igh

L ow

Contents

Absence comes at a cost
Why you can't afford to ignore it

> As much as 50% of workplace absence is considered discretionary and therefore avoidable[1]

> APS employees are absent 11.9 days each year on average[2]

> Total costs of absence can be up to three times the direct salary costs of the absent employee[3]

> The frequency of compensation claims is 3.14 for every 100 employees[4]

> The average cost of a compensation claim in 2005 was $28,424 and trending upwards[5]

> Mental stress (psychological injury) is the cause of 21.5% of workplace injuries[6]

You can do something about it

Salary cost
+
On costs
+
Costs of temporary replacement staff
+
Lost productivity
+
Impact on co-workers
=
Total costs of workplace absence

[1] Australian National Audit Office (ANAO), *Absence Management in the Australian Public Service*, Performance Audit Report No.52 2002–03, 2003, p.4
http://www.anao.gov.au
[2] ANAO, 2003, p.4
[3] ANAO, 2003, p.4
[4] Comcare, *Annual Report: 2004–2005,* 2005, p.10. http://www.comcare.gov.au
[5] Comcare, 2005, p.10
[6] Comcare, 2005, p.12

Background

Definition

A certain level of employee absence is an unavoidable element of working life, and a normal feature of healthy work environments and for supporting family friendly practices. However, this does not mean that all absences should be regarded as inevitable and accepted passively.

In many instances, high rates of workplace absence have a negative impact and reflect unhealthy organisational and management practices.

Workplace absence can be caused by a range of complex and interrelated factors which affect a person's ability to attend work, or their motivation to attend work.

The creation of an organisational culture where employees feel engaged and are committed has been shown to directly result in reduced absence. Good management is a key driver to staff feeling valued and involved.

Workplace absence comprises of five categories of leave; sick, carer's, compensation, specific types of miscellaneous (other) and unauthorised absence. It is defined as:

Absence from work in recognition of circumstances that can generally arise irregularly or unexpectedly, making it difficult to plan, approve or budget for in advance, and which is inclusive of planned medical procedures.

APS context

The advice given in this guide is framed by the *Public Service Act 1999* and other relevant APS legislation and policy directions. In particular, the APS Values[7] relating to a fair, flexible, safe and rewarding workplace, and workplace relations that value communication, consultation, co-operation and input from employees on matters that affect their workplace. Also, the *Public Service Commissioner's Directions*[8] that require agencies to:

> help APS employees to balance their work, family and other caring responsibilities effectively

> ensure APS employees have appropriate opportunities to contribute their views on issues affecting their workplace

> ensure that employment and workplace arrangements take appropriate account of APS employees who are seeking to balance individual needs and the achievement of organisational goals.

[7] Australian Public Service Commission, *The Public Service Act 1999*, part 3, sections 10, 11 and 12. http://www.apsc.gov.au

[8] Australian Public Service Commission, *Public Service Commissioner's Directions 1999*, as amended up to the Public Service Commissioner's Amendment Directions 2004 (No.1), chapters 2,4(d), 2.11(b), 2.11(a). http://www.apsc.gov.au

Purpose

Turned Up and Tuned In has been developed as a practical resource for managers. It is designed to complement your agency's policies and procedures by:

> distinguishing between the factors that affect an employee's ability to attend and those that act as barriers to attendance

> highlighting the organisational influences involved in motivating employees to attend

> identifying how to recognise a potential attendance problem

> suggesting good practice approaches and tips

> providing guidance on how to conduct those 'difficult' conversations.

Every day, people exercise their discretion to 'turn up' and 'tune in'. This guide recognises the importance of your role as a manager, and in particular, the quality of the relationships you have with your staff.

A key message is that *it's not about a manager doing more, but about doing the important things well*

By focusing some of your attention on workplace absence you stand to achieve the following benefits:

> staff return to work more quickly, minimising the intermittent loss of confidence, skills and knowledge

> your team maximises opportunities to pool resources to achieve outcomes

> you experience increased team morale and commitment

> others' perception and experience of your team is enhanced (this can attract skilled staff to your team)

> you experience a reduction in costly workplace injuries and staff turnover

> more of your resources can be invested in staff development and career and succession management

> your own performance and career potential is more favourably appraised

> staff are more motivated to attend work and therefore less likely to be absent.

How to use

This guide is in four main parts.

Part 1 identifies and explores the numerous causes of workplace absence. These are the personal factors that impact on an individual's ability to attend or create barriers to attendance, and the workplace influences that can affect an individual's motivation to attend.

A model is provided on page 5 to illustrate these factors and influences, and to highlight the areas where a manager has the greatest capacity to make a difference.

Part 2 outlines the preventative steps you can take to minimise the likelihood of a problem arising.

Part 3 is a checklist of good practice approaches to managing workplace absences on a daily basis. Use this to quickly assess your current approach and identify strategies to trial within your team.

Part 4 provides you with more detailed guidance on how to manage long term or recurring absences.

The *Shared experiences* provide valuable lessons learnt by some managers. These real life stories will enrich the depth and breadth to your own considerations, decisions and actions.

The *Frequently asked questions* and *Myths* provide tips and techniques to managing specific problems.

A concise summary in the form of practical do's and don'ts is provided in the section titled *Your responsibilities in a nutshell.*
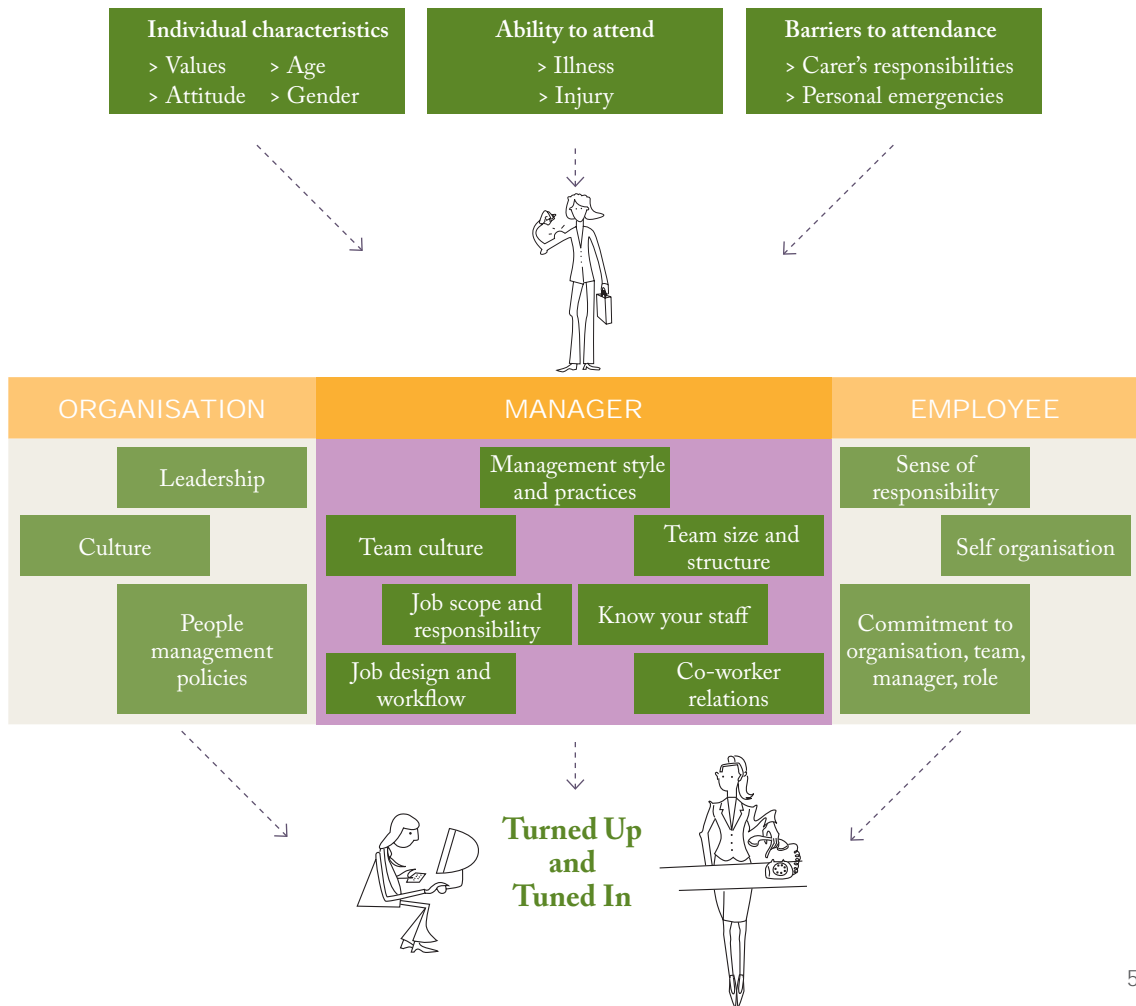
More information

For more detailed information on workplace absence, managers are encouraged to refer to the Australian Public Service Commission's companion publication, *Fostering an Attendance Culture: A guide for APS agencies,* which is available through the Australian Public Service Commission's website, www.apsc.gov.au

Further better practice guides focused on people management in the APS and also available through the Commission's website are; *Sharpening the focus: Managing Performance in the APS* and the forthcoming *Respect: A Good Practice Guide to Promoting A Workplace Culture Free of Bullying and Harassment.*

The Turned Up and Tuned In model identifies the influences on workplace attendance, a number of which occur at the individual level and are largely beyond the control of the organisation.
The model shows where organisations and managers should focus their attention to impact on motivation to attend. Individuals also have certain responsibilities in managing their own attendance.

The Turned Up and Tuned In model

Individual characteristics
> Values   > Age
> Attitude   > Gender

Ability to attend
> Illness
> Injury

Barriers to attendance
> Carer's responsibilities
> Personal emergencies

ORGANISATION	MANAGER	EMPLOYEE

ORGANISATION
- Leadership
- Culture
- People management policies

MANAGER
- Management style and practices
- Team culture
- Team size and structure
- Job scope and responsibility
- Know your staff
- Job design and workflow
- Co-worker relations

EMPLOYEE
- Sense of responsibility
- Self organisation
- Commitment to organisation, team, manager, role

Turned Up and Tuned In

1. Uncovering the causes
It's more complex than you think

Did you know?

> High absence rates are frequently a symptom of an underlying problem at the individual, managerial and/or organisational level

> Absence is sometimes an 'escape' or 'withdrawal' strategy and a characteristic stress response

> Identifying the cause is not always straightforward and often involves a combination of individual, workplace and non–work related factors

> Individual factors that impact an employee's ability to attend include: illness, injury and general state of health

> Non–work related factors act as barriers to attendance and include: carer's responsibilities and personal emergencies

> Possible workplace factors are numerous and can either positively or negatively impact an individual's motivation to attend. They include organisational culture, management practices and job design

> Agency consultations revealed no reliable correlation between high absence rates and any one specific individual characteristic, such as age or gender

> Individual work values are ingrained personal beliefs that guide behaviour and are the source of an individual's job satisfaction if met

> Job satisfaction factors consistently rated highly by APS employees are:

> > good working relationships
> > flexible working arrangements
> > regular feedback and recognition
> > good manager[9]

---

[9] Australian Public Service Commission, *State of the Service Employee Survey Results 2004–05*, 2005, p.37. http://www.apsc.gov.au

How to recognise a potential problem Manager's Checklist

Some indicators to look out for:

- You detect an emerging pattern occurring
- You encounter an 'entitlement' mindset
- When reasonable deadlines are not met regularly
- You observe a decline in overall work performance
- When conflict arises between team members and/or supervisors
- You detect a lack of enthusiasm or indifference
- Staff survey results indicate low job satisfaction or dissatisfaction with management

Potential triggers include:

- Work areas where the roles are characterised by high demand and low control
- Seasonal or intermittent peak business periods
- Forced relocation or redeployment
- Organisational and/or leadership change
- High turnover and recruitment of new staff
- Crises in an employee's personal life

- When an employee experiences physical or verbal assault, harassment or abuse
- When an employee is being formally counselled for underperformance
- When an employee is involved in an investigation of a suspected breach of the APS Code of Conduct

Ask HR

> For regular leave reports

> For guidance on interpreting the figures and next steps to take

> Other sources of information and trends that can shed light on the causal factors

Tips

> As a manager, you have little direct influence over the individual or non-work related factors. The key is to demonstrate care, concern, understanding and flexibility in your approach

> As a manager, your greatest opportunity to make a difference is in the workplace factors. Focus your attention on areas that can influence employee motivation to attend

2. Prevention is better than cure
What you can do

Did you know?

> A certain level of workplace absence is normal for the maintenance of a healthy workforce and for supporting family friendly practices and work/life balance

> Organisational culture can be described as *the way things are done around here.* It is what employees perceive or experience on a day-to-day basis at work to be accepted or rewarded

> Adversarial workplaces, indicated by low supervisor and OH&S support, job insecurity, ambiguity and boredom, contribute to workplace absence

> In relation to psychological injury claims, work pressure accounts for around 50% and harassment and bullying 25%[10]

> Up to 60% of psychological injury claims are preventable by improving morale, leadership and work team climate[11]

---

[10] Comcare, *Working Well, An Organisational Approach to Preventing Psychological Injury*, A guide for Corporate, HR and OHS Managers, 2005, p. 9

[11] Cotton P, address to Comcare/Health Services Australia conference, *Better Health at Work: Preventing Psychological Injury*, Canberra, August 2004

Manager's Prevention Checklist

Management style

- Maintain an approachable and supportive style
- Invest time in getting to know your staff
- Remain open to alternative ways of working
- Respect your staff by ensuring a workplace that is fair, flexible, safe and rewarding

Management practices

- Ensure staff have the necessary equipment to do their job and attend to any required workplace modifications and/or OH&S concerns promptly
- Involve your team in workplace matters and decisions
- Provide time for breaks and to socialise
- Keep track of absences and leave approved
- Acknowledge good attendance
- Encourage the regular use of recreation leave
- Attend to staff safety by ensuring ill or injured staff are not compelled to be at work

Communication

- Send positive messages that convey attendance does matter and that staff welfare is a key concern
- Frame your discussions on leave policies as employee benefits rather than as entitlements
- Sell the 'insurance' factor of personal leave—the 'peace of mind' a bank of leave can provide

Workflow

- Streamline workflow and avoid duplication
- Monitor work demands and review priorities so they remain realistic

Job design

- Provide staff with opportunities to utilise their skills and task preferences
- Consider the individual's work values, career goals and development needs
- Enrich jobs with meaningful work, variety and control of whole tasks

Recruitment

- Ensure advertisements reflect the real workplace and job
- Discuss attendance expectations with potential recruits
- Check with referees the impact of attendance generally on the individual's performance, noting specific details cannot be revealed in keeping with privacy legislation
- Consider the individual's 'fit' with the APS Values, as well as their capability and experience, in line with the merit principle

Induction and Probation

- Use the induction process to establish effective working relationships and clarify attendance expectations
- Use the probation period to observe attendance patterns and to identify and address concerns early if they arise

Performance management

- Include attendance in performance agreements and discuss at appraisals
- Focus on development to build staff confidence to perform
- Regularly acknowledge good performance, successes and achievements

Tips	
> Recognise the strong relationship between attendance and a positive and rewarding work environment	> Cultivate a culture and management style that makes your workplace safe, engaging and fulfilling for all

3. Missing someone?
What you should do

Did you know?

> Even the most committed employee's ability to attend can be hampered by unforeseeable circumstances like sickness, accidents, transport problems, family and household emergencies

> Employees are more inclined to take a greater number of days off when absences are not consistently monitored and recorded

> An individual's personality and coping style will influence the way they react to the demands placed on them

> Many of the signs indicating workplace stress are noticeable and include changes in a person's mood or behaviour. For example, deteriorating relationships with colleagues, irritability, indecisiveness, reduced performance, increased mistakes, increase use of stimulants such as smoking, alcohol and other drug use

Manager's Good Practice Checklist

■ Have a protocol in place

1. Who are absent staff to contact and by when

2. What appropriate questions will be asked when absent staff call, to ensure all important information is covered

■ Establish and maintain reasonable contact

1. Discuss circumstances and offer support

2. Explore all relevant leave options, and if suitable offer alternative leave arrangements

3. Check what essential work priorities need to be attended to

4. Agree on contact arrangements if the employee is going to be away for more than a few days

5. Note the absence and diarise next contact

■ Hold an informal discussion on return

1. Welcome the employee back to work and let them know they were missed

2. Check the employee is recovered and fit to return

3. Update the employee on work matters that have occurred during their absence

■ Attend to administration promptly

1. Cross-check leave applications with registered health practitioner's medical certificates and your diary notes
2. Promptly approve leave following your agency's procedure
3. Securely file medical documents and keep information confidential

4. When all else fails
What you need to do

Did you know?

> To determine if an individual's absence level is reasonable, managers need to consider the reasons for the absence. If a manager suspects that the reasons may not be legitimate then the level of absence might be unreasonable

> A more formal approach is required for frequent and prolonged absences that tend to show a pattern or where reasons given are questionable

> A more formal approach is required when an employee fails to follow procedures or displays erratic work patterns like frequent lateness, leaving early and/or taking long breaks

> Employees who make compensation claims for psychological injury take two to four times more unplanned leave than other employees prior to making a claim[12]

Manager's Discussion Guide

> Step 1—Prepare

Assess the situation and gather relevant information

> Step 2— Arrange

Make an appointment to meet with the employee and let them know what the discussion will be about so they can come prepared

> Step 3—Rehearse

Consider your approach and seek advice and feedback from your manager and/or peers

> Step 4—Conduct

1. Set the scene by establishing rapport and checking the employee's understanding of the purpose for the meeting
2. Outline your concerns and provide records of absences to support your concerns
3. Discuss how absences have impacted on the employee's and team's performance
4. Identify and explore possible solutions
5. Document details, including agreements and actions
6. Agree on time for follow-up to review progress

> Step 5—Follow-up as agreed

----
[12] Comcare, 2005, p.7

Manager's Post Discussion Checklist

- Articulated concern for employee's ongoing wellbeing
- Confirmed the employee is recovered and fit to return to work
- Updated the employee on work matters
- Reviewed the employee's absence record and discussed areas of concern
- Uncovered circumstances and causes
- Offered support to help the employee improve their attendance
- Explored opportunities to change work arrangements, e.g. start/finish times, working from home, job sharing, job rotation or part-time work
- Reaffirmed the agency's expectations
- Gained agreement to a way of moving forward
- Outlined possible consequences of further absences (if necessary)
- Made a written record of the discussion

Ask HR

> For expert advice and guidance

> How to utilise employee assistance programme services and other external support services

> To explore career counselling services and fitness for duty assessments

Tips

> It is more effective to work with staff to find a solution rather than to impose one from above

> Keep discussions focused on the issue rather than the person

Shared experiences

A story about trust and employee privacy

A manager told of a staff member who suffered from a chronic medical condition. Until the diagnosis and commencement of correct treatment the staff member had taken a significant amount of unplanned leave, during which the manager had been supportive. As a result, the trust between the manager and staff member developed to such a point that the staff member was readily sharing information and progress with the manager. The manager, in turn, was able to better steer the team's workflow and priorities.

On receiving the diagnosis the manager moved quickly to inform the team. Conflict arose when the staff member returned to work and found their condition being openly discussed by others. The manager had wrongly assumed the information could be shared without first obtaining the staff member's explicit consent. Following the manager's lead, the team wrongly assumed they too could discuss their colleague's condition, which exacerbated the breach of the staff member's privacy.

A story about responsibility and managers' delegations

A manager told of the challenging time when new to the public service. The requirements to manage and report on the group's budget, processes and customer satisfaction were so great they delegated control of the day-to-day staff matters to a senior team member, this included managing staff leave.

The manager found out a few months later through HR that only the agency head has the authority to formally delegate people management responsibilities. HR advised the data on the human resource information system showed none of the group's employees to have taken any leave since the manager began in the role.

On checking with the senior team member, the manager found no written records of absences had been kept, as it had been assumed staff would attend to the paperwork in their own time. This left the manager needing to invest considerable time to address the gaps in record keeping and administration.

A story about retention and workplace flexibility

A manager shared the successful approach taken when a top performing staff member was about to resign due to the need to relocate interstate. Given the independent nature of the work and the staff member's success working occasionally from home, the manager proposed the staff member not resign but continue in the role working continuously from home.

The arrangement worked well with the manager and staff member maintaining regular contact by telephone and email. Two years later the staff member and family relocated back and the staff member returned to the previous work schedule.

A story about management style and workplace support

A manager shared the initiatives taken when inheriting a team with chronic absence problems. The manager found many of the problems revolved around numerous staff members' ability to attend. As these had endured for some time without workplace support, the rest of the staff had become disengaged.

The manager held meetings with each staff member, where they discussed attendance patterns, expectations and the staff member's individual circumstances. Each meeting concluded in a plan to move forward which they regularly reviewed together. The manager also coordinated an on-site presentation by the agency's employee assistance programme provider to assist staff in appreciating the support services available.

Lastly, the manager volunteered to be included in the annual manager 360 degree feedback programme, openly encouraged staff to participate and made changes to management style and approach based on the feedback.

Frequently asked questions

Question	Answer
What should I look for on medical certificates from health practitioners?	> The name and address of the health practitioner issuing the certificate, name of patient, date on which the certificate was issued, and dates on which the patient is unfit for work > Registration or license details of the health practitioner > That it is the original and not a photocopy > That it has not been back-dated or post-dated (although there may be circumstances and medical conditions where the registered health practitioner certifies the period of illness occurred prior to the examination date) > Ensure the dates on the certificate match those on the leave application form and your diary notes Note that under the Workplace Relations Regulations, a registered health practitioner can only issue a medical certificate in respect of the area of practice in which that practitioner is registered or licensed under a state or territory law.
What other forms of documentary evidence are considered acceptable in place of a medical certificate?	If it is not reasonably practicable for an employee to obtain a medical certificate for a period of sick leave, then a statutory declaration can generally be provided. For example, a statutory declaration could be provided where an employee is unable to make an appointment with their health practitioner. Managers should check their agency's relevant policy and if in doubt seek clarification from HR.
Are the evidence requirements different for carer's leave?	The documentary requirements can be slightly different for carer's leave – an employee can provide either a medical certificate or a statutory declaration if requested by their agency.
Are there any circumstances that allow for an employee not to provide documentary evidence?	First check your agency's policy to clarify when documentary evidence is normally required. Generally circumstances found to be beyond the employee's control, such as the employee suffering severe mental or physical impairment will negate the need for documentary evidence. Managers should seek HR guidance if and when a situation arises.

Question	Answer
Can I contact the employee's registered health practitioner?	No. Under privacy legislation an employee's health and/or illness is regarded as both personal and sensitive information and requires the employee's explicit consent before a registered health practitioner can disclose or discuss an employee's medical condition. In addition, many registered health practitioners are also bound by a code of ethics or conduct that further prevents them from discussing an individual's health or illness with others. > Contact HR for advice if you are concerned about the validity of a certificate or require more information to confidently approve the leave > Note it is the employee's responsibility to provide satisfactory proof to have absences authorised > Contact with an employee's registered health practitioner is best managed through the expertise of HR and professional case managers
What should be my general approach when an employee states an absence/s is due to a generic or recurrent condition?	After showing concern always aim to make the link back to work—what can be done at work to assist the employee return as soon as possible or to safely work through these periods. Given the recurring nature of the condition, options can be planned in advance. For example, consider alternative work arrangements, workplace modifications, change of duties or alternative leave arrangements.
What does an employee's stress level have to do with me?	The cost of psychological injury claims (sometimes referred to as 'stress') is the highest of any compensation claim type because they usually involve extended periods of time off work, and higher medical, legal and other claim payments. Workplace influences, including management style, have been found to be significant contributing factors.
What if I suspect an employee has a second job?	Having a second job is generally okay but be sure to check your agency's relevant policy. If the second job is impacting on the employee's ability to perform their duties then raise the matter with the employee in private.

More frequently asked questions

Question	Answer

What if I suspect drug or alcohol abuse?	Like workplace absence itself, drug and alcohol abuse is a common response to personal stress or crises.
	 > Seek HR advice and support on the approach to take
	 > Share your concern with the employee in a private discussion:
	  > suggest employee assistance programme services. Provide contact details and highlight the confidentiality of these services
	  > discuss the consequences that can arise if the employee comes to work intoxicated or in an otherwise drugged state. This includes increased risk of injury to self and others, costly work mistakes and overall poor performance if not addressed.
	 > Advise HR who will provide you with guidance on managing future instances that may include referral to a specialist case manager, drug testing or fitness for duty assessment

What if I suspect an employee is having issues or crises in their personal life?	Personal issues or crises are a fact of life. Expect them to occur during your management career.
	 > Seek HR advice and support on the approach to take
	 > Share your concern with the employee in a private discussion:
	  > discuss how the employee's changed behaviour is impacting on their work and the team
	  > suggest the employee take some planned leave so they can focus on resolving the issue
	  > discuss what support the workplace can provide. For example, adjustments to regular hours, access to confidential employee assistance programme services, or working part-time until the issue/crises is resolved.

Question	Answer
What if I suspect my management style is the problem?	> Start actively reflecting on your behaviour when with others. Be conscious of your body language and general tone. Do you adapt your style to suit what each individual in your team best responds to? Are you doing most of the talking and not enough listening? Do you tend to react rather than respond?
	> Seek and be open to feedback. This feedback is more likely to be indirect than direct, i.e. through staff surveys, 360 degree feedback mechanisms and via others, such as HR. This is because many individuals find providing direct feedback to their manager daunting
	> Utilise expert and confidential manager assistance services offered through your agency's employee assistance programme. These services include general advice and coaching on interpersonal and conflict management skills
	> Regularly invest in developing your leadership and people management skills through the use of peer networks and off-the-job development programmes
Can I ask what the problem is?	Yes, but there is no requirement for the employee to provide extensive detail. Asking questions in a safe environment and supportive manner is more likely to encourage an open response from the employee.
When should I go to HR?	HR is there to support you with managing workplace absences in particular: > on a regular basis to access and interpret absence data reports > when you need guidance on interpreting and applying leave provisions > when you need coaching and advice for dealing with difficult cases > when you are seeking training to improve your people management capabilities.

Myths

Myth	Reality
If a staff member provides a health practitioner certificate, and they have the leave accrued, there is nothing a manager can do	A manager is still required to exercise their judgement when approving all leave taken. If a manager doubts the validity of an absence or requires further evidence before feeling confident to approve the leave then they should discuss their concerns with the employee and contact HR for further advice if these discussions are not productive.
There is nothing a manager can do until the staff member returns to work	The approach a manager takes can influence an employee's safe and timely return to work. For example, managers can start by responding quickly, as soon as an absence is notified, by discussing the circumstances directly with the employee, offering and providing useful support and exploring the suitability of other leave options.
Privacy legislation stops a manager from contacting people at home	Privacy legislation stops you from seeking or sharing medical information without the prior explicit consent of the individual involved. You have a duty of care to ensure the wellbeing of your employees. This can reasonably include contacting them at home during business hours. It is best to have a workplace protocol in place so that staff can expect to be contacted and to seek agreement on further contact arrangements when an absence looks like, or ends up, being more than a couple of days in duration.
It's the long term absences that managers need to focus on	Agency consultations revealed patterns of multiple 1 and/or 2 day absences have a significant impact on workplace absence rates. Managers should regularly analyse all the absences of their staff over the previous 6–12 months to gain a thorough picture.

Myth	Reality
All long term absences are unacceptable	Not necessarily, there are numerous situations that can result in an employee being genuinely absent from the workplace for an extensive period/s, for example, some medical conditions like cancer, stroke or heart attack and their associated treatments. A tragic event, such as the death of a spouse or child may also trigger an employee's longer term absence.
Carer's leave is the main issue	Whilst carer's leave is increasing as a result of improvements to agency's family friendly and work/life balance initiatives, sick leave still accounts for 73% of APS workplace absences.[13]
Part-time staff are not usually the problem	Agency consultations revealed part-time staff are just as likely as full-time staff to be absent on a scheduled workday for reasons that could be scheduled in advance and attended to in their own time or through the use of flex or time–in–lieu, for example, dental appointments.
Staff who are difficult to manage or who under perform are absent more often than others	Some of your quietest and/or best performers may be taking a day here and there because they may think you won't notice them missing, or feel you take for granted the 'extra miles' they go to deliver a consistently good job.
The public sector provides access to carer's leave that the private sector doesn't necessarily have	Managers should encourage relevant employees to discuss with their partner or other potential alternative carer, the provisions for carer's leave in their workplace award or agreement, and the opportunities these provisions present to share caring responsibilities.

[13] ANAO, 2003, p.4

Your responsibilities in a nutshell

1. Your management style	> Do be approachable and considerate > Do make allowances for individual circumstances	> Don't dictate terms and conditions
2. The workplace culture	> Do invest time to get to know your employees > Do tailor roles and work processes	> Don't demand hard driving work behaviour
3. Team communication	> Do keep it up, keep it open and two-way > Do regularly communicate that attendance matters and why	> Don't let tensions between team members go unaddressed
4. Individual discussions	> Do plan and prepare in advance > Do seek to understand before seeking to be understood	> Don't lose respect by losing your composure
5. Your decision making	> Do apply guidelines flexibly and consistently > Do customise rather than universally apply	> Don't delegate your formal responsibilities to others
6. Your approach	> Do be proactive and responsive > Do negotiate reasonable win/win solutions with staff	> Don't fail to recognise your duty of care to both the agency and employees
7. Expertise	> Do focus on prevention and day-to-day management > Do access HR for advice, guidance and referral to experts	> Don't try to diagnose what the condition is
8. Record keeping	> Do regularly access and analyse team absence reports > Do ensure that staff enter leave into the HR information system	> Don't miss making a diary note of each absence
9. Administration	> Do attend to the paperwork and processing quickly > Do cross check leave applications with certificates and your diary notes	> Don't fail to ask for evidence when required
10. Privacy and confidentiality	> Do maintain at all times > Do keep personal files and medical information secure	> Don't openly discuss private or sensitive matters

Never take your eye off the attendance ball as you and your team can quickly develop or fall back into poor practices