Is Time Theft Grounds for Discipline? – Ask The Expert



Time theft is a serious violation that warrants discipline or termination, depending on the circumstances.

QUESTION

We just discovered that one of our employees was having her co-worker punch her timecard for her so she could come to work late and still get paid for a full day. Is that grounds for discipline?

ANSWER

Yes.

EXPLANATION

Deliberately falsifying hours worked to get paid for time an employee doesn't actually work is called time theft and it's grounds for discipline up to and potentially including termination, depending on the circumstances. What you describe is a common form of time theft called "buddy punching" and you may have the right to discipline both the employee and the co-worker she got to punch her timecard for her.

As with any other form of misconduct, discipline for time theft depends on a number of factors, that vary in each case. The more of these factors that pertain to your situation, the stronger your case for discipline will be:

- This isn't an isolated incident but a repeated pattern;
- Your company has suffered significant losses as a result of the employee's behaviour;
- You have a clear written policy on buddy punching and other forms of time theft;
- The employee has been warned about buddy punching or other forms of time theft;
- The employee committed the violation deliberately with the understanding that it could get her into trouble; and
- You consistently enforce your policy against all employees who engage in time theft.