[Sick, Sleepy and Getting Paid: Presenteeism](#)

❌*4 steps for reporting presenteeism in the workplace*

Question: Often, employees come into work when sick. This causes my organization major headaches. When they are sniffling, sneezing or drowsy this causes a potential health and safety issue in the workplace. How can I become better informed about when to send home sick workers? I was thinking of creating an anonymous reporting process that asks employees to inform managers when they suspect another employee is to0 ill to be at work.

Presenteeism

Presenteeism is a many layered issue. In some occupations, presenteeism has less of an impact and creates less liability compared to others. Employees who are ill and operating equipment or engaged in highly skilled or dangerous jobs can be a danger to themselves and others. Furthermore, liability risks increase if employees are are not performing at their best.

It is important to note that presenteeism consists of more than sleepy, sneezing, bleary-eyed employees dragging themselves out of their sick bed and heading into work. Most presenteeism is tied to chronic illness in addition to mental health concerns such as depression, and anxiety. Presenteeism is also tied to physical health conditions like heart conditions, diabetes and so on. Determining when an illness is a real problem versus just an unattractive inconvenience is tricky.

Provide Information on Presenteeism

Education and information are important components of managing presenteeism in your workplace. Before you ask employees to report on one another, consider addressing the bigger picture.

Two steps to take right now to begin to address presenteeism in the workplace.

1. One of the best ways to combat worrisome presenteeism is to educate all of your employees about the potential costs. This can be a component of your organizational wellness program. As part of this program, educate everyone to recognize the signs of illness, take better care of themselves and learn to identify when health concerns are serious enough to hamper workplace performance.

2. Give your employees the tools to make the right decisions about coming into work when ill. Create a presenteeism policy that gives employees guidelines for procedure if they do decide they are too ill to attend work. This includes making decisions about how you will or will not pay employees who leave or are sent home.

Three Options For Reporting Presenteeism

Consider carefully what you want employees to report on. While employees may be concerned they could 'catch a virus' from another employee there are precautions they can take to minimize any risks and this alone may not be a good enough reason to report on the health of another employee. Consider using the element of risk assessment to help identify genuine concerns for the workplace. **These risks can include:**

1. **Risk to the health and safety** of the employee or others including other employees, customers or the general public.
2. **Risk of mistakes and errors** that could **cost the organization financially**. This can include errors in managing money, negotiating contracts, damage to equipment or other errors that could hit the financial bottom line.
3. **Risks to reputation or relationships** with other organizations, customers, the public, the media, and more.

Inform employees that if they have a genuine concern that another employee's health is putting the organization as risk, there are four options for addressing the issue.

Four Options for Reporting on Presenteeism

1. A concerned employee may choose to speak directly to the employee who they believe is ill.
2. They may choose to express their concern to a supervisor (outlining what they have observed and why they believe the organization is at risk).
3. They can express their concerns to human resources, again, outlining what they have observed and why they are concerned.
4. You may institute an anonymous reporting procedure that includes an employee's observations and concerns . Anonymous reporting can be tricky as you must weigh and balance anonymity with the damage a false report. However, it can be a useful and important option in some circumstances.

Each of these steps can be outlined in a presenteeism policy such that you make it the responsibility for all employees to take steps when they believe there is a genuine concern of risk as a result of another employee's illness.