

# What Constitutes Misuse of Sick Time In Your Organization?



## *Understanding employee misuse of sick time*

According to a recently published survey by Angus Reid, on behalf of [Kronos](#), 54% of Canadians admit to faking sick time. 65% of those who admitted to faking sick time, indicated they did so because they were feeling stressed, while 35 % did so to take care of a sick child, 13% faked illness due to overwork, and 12% claimed to do so because they did not enough vacation time.

If an employee is ill and cannot perform well at work, or could be a distraction to others, his presence is not desirable. If an employee with temporary or chronic health issues feels unwell, you probably recognize the importance of allowing him to use 'sick' time to manage his health. The questions of what constitutes "legitimate sick time" and how to prevent a misuse of sick time are important for many employers.

## **Days Lost To Illness in Canada**

According to stats Canada, Canadians who work full-time lose on average between 5.6 and 12.2 days of work in 2012 due to illness or disability.



Generally, Canadians do not take a lot of sick days, ranging between  $\frac{1}{2}$  and 1 day per month per full time non-government employee. Given these statistics, when an employee calls in sick, they are probably making a good choice. The cost of presenteeism in Canada is estimated to cost more than the cost of absenteeism.

## **2 Tips for Reducing Inappropriate Use of Sick Time**

### **1) Examine Your Workplace culture:**

One of the best ways to reduce misuse of sick time is to create a workplace that encourages a healthy, balanced approach to work. Consider initiating workplace health and wellness programs that encourage healthy lifestyles. Furthermore, introducing flex-time may reduce pressure on employees. Flex hours may also encourage employees to show up and work hard.

## **2) Explore Personal Issues:**

If you suspect an individual is abusing sick time, probe the individual. You may discover he or she has reasons for taking sick time that include physical or mental health concerns, family or personal problems, and workplace issues. You may address the issue making changes to help this employee manage his or her workload. You might change their work schedule or job duties. The final (unpleasant) option is deciding if this employee is the best fit their role or for the organization.

## **Addressing Employees Who You Suspect are Abusing Sick Time**

### **Focus on Workplace Performance:**

It is difficult to obtain proof that a person is misusing sick time. Without proof, address performance issues. An employee who misuses sick time puts an extra burden on co-workers who have to take on his or her workload. This is a performance issue and you may choose to address it as such instead of trying to prove misuse of sick time.

Most employees do not have malicious intent. It is very rare that someone simply calls in sick because they are truly a slacker, most people have what they believe is a genuine need to miss work.

By examining your organization's role in creating a workplace that encourages health, wellness and flexibility, create an atmosphere where employees genuinely want to come to work.

### **Sources**

[Sick or Tired: New survey finds 54% of Canadians admitting to playing hooky from work](#)

[Canadian Labour Force Survey \(LFS\)](#)

[Days lost per worker by reason, by province](#)