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What Can You Do To Reduce Employee Absences?

Every time one of your employees takes an unscheduled day off, your other staffers may need to adjust their workloads accordingly. Apart from their disruptive impact, unscheduled absences can also create resentment in the workplace, affecting employee morale and productivity.

If such absences are becoming an issue at your medical practice, you may be able to reduce their frequency by asking -- and answering -- a few simple questions.

Why Do Unscheduled Absences Occur?

Research* shows that while 34% of employees call in sick due to "personal illness," an overwhelming majority (66%) are taking time off to deal with personal or family issues.

What Solutions Can Your Practice Use?

The survey found that employers use a variety of policies to reduce absenteeism. They might include:

Flexible work schedules or alternative work arrangements. If feasible, allowing flexible work hours can reduce employee absenteeism by providing employees some latitude for handling family issues. Telecommuting, compressed work weeks, and leave for school functions also reduce absenteeism.

Absence control programs. A paid leave bank, which combines sick days, personal days, and vacation time and allows employees to use the time as they choose, is one of the most effective programs for controlling absences, according to the survey. Disciplinary action, buy backs, bonuses, and verification of illness were also found to be effective.

"Soft" benefits. Giving employees access to employee assistance plans and wellness and fitness programs also can be beneficial. Healthier employees are generally better able to handle a variety of family and life issues.

Adopting a policy that combines work-life and absence control programs will have a positive impact on your practice's employees and on your bottom line.

* 2007 CCH Unscheduled Absence Survey, conducted for CCH by Harris Interactive®