

# MNPS Certificated Attendance Policy

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### 1. I have heard that I will be written up if I use 9 sick days in one year. Is this true?

**No, if you follow policy on reporting your sick days, you should not be written up for 9 absences.**

Representatives of the Human Resources Department of MNPS believe that teacher attendance and tardiness are serious issues and proposed an attendance policy borrowed from private industry. During the collaborative conferencing process, MNEA was able to make significant improvements to their proposed attendance policy to avoid having MNPS implement an even more punitive policy. MNEA is committed to representing members if the existing policy is applied incorrectly.

### 2. What is an “occurrence”?

**The term “occurrence” is defined in the MNPS Certificated Attendance Policy as “an unscheduled absence for a single workday, or more than one consecutive workday, for the same reason without advanced approval.”**

Guideline C-2 says, “Advanced approval means the employee has complied with the requirements for requesting time off and received authorization to be absent as outlined in Section A of this policy.” Guideline A-3 indicates, “An unscheduled absence will be counted as an occurrence unless the absence is requested at least 24 hours in advance.”

### 3. What if I get the flu or am injured on the job is that still an “occurrence”?

**No, Guideline G allows for such absences to be “excused with appropriate documentation.”** These include absences due to jury duty, bereavement leave, intermittent or continuous FMLA or ADA or other approved leave of absences, absences authorized for work-related injuries or infectious conditions.

### 4. How are tardiness and early departures treated under this policy?

**Tardiness and early departures are counted together as “incidents of tardiness/early departure.”** Under the corrective action chart in Guideline D, “occurrences” are treated separately from tardiness and early departure until one has a combination of 13 “occurrences” and incidents of tardiness/early departure. If a half-day absence is submitted to SmartFind Express 24-hours in advance, it cannot be counted as an occurrence or an early departure because to do so would violate Guideline A-3 and/or Guideline F.

### 5. What is MNPS policy on reporting a sick day? How can I avoid being written up?

**Write-ups and warnings are based on “occurrences” and “incidents of tardiness/early departure.” After 9 “occurrences” or 10 “incidents of tardiness/early departure” you may receive a warning in the form of “informal coaching.” Informal coaching also occurs after a combination of 13 occurrences or incidents of tardiness/early departure.** A written counseling memo can only be issued after 10 occurrences, 12 incidents of tardiness/early departure, or a combination of 15 occurrences and incidents of tardiness/early departure. **A sick day reported with 24 hours advance notice to SMARTFIND Express is not an “occurrence.”** (See Guideline A-3.)

### 6. Do I have to call my principal to tell him/her why I am absent?

**You will be required to call or notify your principal or direct supervisor of an absence only if required to do so by your school’s rules.** (See Guideline B: Call-In Procedures.) However, no reason can be required for a personal leave day under the *Memorandum of Understanding* or state law.

The *Memorandum of Understanding* specifies timelines for requesting personal and professional leave.

*Application for personal leave shall be made with the principal at least two (2) days in advance, except in cases of emergency.*

*Notification of [professional leave] shall be filed with the principal or immediate supervisor not less than five (5) days prior to such meeting.*

## 7. What will happen if I am out sick for a week? Will that be 5 “occurrences”?

**Not necessarily, sick leave days only count as an “occurrence” if not submitted to SmartFind Express 24 hours in advance.** (See Guideline A-3.) Two or more consecutive days will be counted as one “occurrence” when submitted as one absence with less than 24 hours’ notice. (See Guideline A-3, C-1, and C-2.) If submitted with 24-hours’ notice, a multi-day absence will not count as an “occurrence.” If you enter consecutive absences day by day and do not give 24 hours’ notice, multiple occurrences could be counted. (See Guideline A-3, C-1, and C-2.)

## 8. Can I be counted tardy if the principal says he/she says will count teachers tardy if they are not on their post of duty by 5 minutes before our scheduled reporting time?

**No, a teacher can only be counted as tardy if he or she fails to arrive to school by the designated start time for teachers.** According to the Memorandum of Agreement teachers are only required to work 7.5 hours in a day (30 minutes beyond the student day). Thus, the workday should follow one of these patterns: (a) Teachers arrive 15 minutes before the 7-hour student day begins and may leave 15 minutes after the 7-hour student day ends. (b) Teachers arrive 20 minutes before the 7-hour student day begins and may leave 10 minutes after the 7-hour student day ends. (c) In rare cases, a school may have other schedules showing a total of 30 minutes of teacher duty time beyond the workday.

## 9. What should I do if my principal is counting “occurrences” or incidents of tardiness/early departure incorrectly?

Members may contact MNEA for assistance or appeal a decision of the principal directly to the principal’s supervisor (EDSSI). See Guideline A-4.

## 10. What can I do to protect myself?

- Maintain your membership in MNEA.
- If possible, submit sick leave more than 24 hours in advance.
- If you think you may be out more than one day when you get sick, enter the absence as a two-day absence and cancel the second day as soon as you know you don’t need it.
- Keep a record of when you submitted an absence and notified your principal.
- Arrive to work on time and leave on or after your designated departure time to keep incidents of tardiness and early departure to a minimum.
- Take a half-day of leave rather than asking to leave work early whenever you get close to 9 incidents of tardiness/early departure, or ask your principal to approve your early departure to avoid an “incident.”
- Keep track of your incidents of tardiness and adjust your morning routine to arrive on time.
- Save all communication from your principal or supervisor related to tardiness, absences, and early departures.
- Appeal improper, unfair or unreasonable decisions made by your principal.