

Research St. Joseph's – Hamilton (RSJ-H)		Pages 1 of 13	Number 068-RSJ-H
Policy Title Attendance Support Program		Date 23 March 2017	
Supersedes New policy	Cross Reference	Issuing Authority RSJ-H Scientific Director	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Charlton Campus	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> West 5th Campus	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> King Campus	

Position responsible for developing and maintaining the policy: RSJ-H Scientific Director

1.0 PURPOSE AND GOALS

The Research Institute (RI) recognizes that the personal commitment of every staff member to regular attendance at work and to reasonableness and good judgment in all matters pertaining to wellness and safety is critical to our success.

RI is committed to a fair and consistent approach in attendance support. The Attendance Support Program promotes awareness between the Supervisor/Principal Investigator and the employee regarding the impact of their attendance. RI acknowledges that personal illnesses do occur, which may preclude an employee from performing his/her regular duties. The Absence Reporting Procedure (Appendix A) and the Return to Work Procedure (Appendix B) outline the steps to be followed when reporting an absence and when returning from an absence.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

Absence Hours - All scheduled work hours (paid or unpaid) associated with absence due to employee personal illness/injury.

Absence Incident - The first day of absence, ending on the first day of return to work.

Administrative Termination - Non-disciplinary termination that occurs as the result of a frustration of the employment contract.

Attendance Letter - A letter signed by an employee's Supervisor/Principal Investigator and provided to an employee who exceeded the RI Attendance Standard. The letter is provided to the employee, in person, during an Attendance Stage meeting.

Attending Physicians Statement (APS) - Required form to communicate health and functional information in order to ensure the Employer can determine the Employee's eligibility for salary replacement benefits or approval of unpaid medical leave of absence/ ongoing medical absence and to determine accommodation requirements.

Culpable/Blameworthy Absenteeism - Refers to absence from work caused by reasons within an employee's control (i.e. include but not limited to lateness; leaving work early or absence problems for which the employee should be held responsible as these absences are within the employee's power to control, address and correct). These types of absence do not form part of the Attendance Support Program and may be subject to discipline.

Exclusion – Absences due to illness or injury which are not monitored within the Attendance Support Program. Exclusions from the Attendance Support Program may be approved for an employee if they have been substantiated and the employee's absenteeism is due to:

- A serious chronic condition which has been medically established;
- An on-going course of treatment;
- A catastrophic event;
- A medically necessary surgical intervention; or
- An asymptomatic period for a confirmed communicable disease which is under a doctor's care.

To have an absence considered for an exclusion, the employee shall fully complete the required documentation (*see section 5.0 Procedure*) and submit to OH&S for review. If the required documents are not submitted within the review period, these absences will be included in the Attendance Support Program.

If an employee has an absence unrelated to an approved exclusion, these unrelated absences will be reviewed under the Attendance Support Program.

Employees with approved Exclusions will have their absences reviewed outside of the Attendance Support Program.

Extended Daily Tour - Greater than 7.5 hour shift (i.e. 9.38 hours, 11.25 hours).

Innocent Absenteeism - Refers to absence from work caused by circumstances beyond an employee's control; (i.e. subject to counseling under this policy). Innocent absenteeism is not culpable which means that it is "blameless". These absences include illness and other absences that may qualify for Emergency Leave under the Employment Standards Act, 2000.

Regular Daily Tour - 7.5 hour shift or less.

Review Periods - January 1st to June 30th and July 1st to December 31st.

RI Standard for Absenteeism - 4 separate incidents and/or 38 hours of absence in a 6 month period (for regular daily tour shifts).

3.0 POLICY

Regular and consistent attendance at work by all employees is an implied term of the employment agreement and is an essential duty of every job. It is every employee's responsibility to take the appropriate steps necessary to meet this requirement.

This Policy provides a consistent approach with respect to managing excessive absenteeism by providing feedback and assistance to employees regarding the impact of absenteeism, and supports to attend work regularly.

3.1 Attendance Support Policy Objectives

The Attendance Support Program is designed to:

- Emphasize the responsibility of every employee to attend work regularly;
- Ensure employees understand that regular attendance at work is an implied term of the employment agreement;
- Recognize improved attendance;
- Promote availability and use of resources such as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and other health and wellness programs;
- Foster open communication between Supervisors/Principal Investigators and employees regarding absenteeism and RI attendance expectations;
- Address matters related to personal absences on an individual basis through discussion and counseling;
- Be respectful of personal information;
- Provide Supervisors/Principal Investigators with the training and tools required to apply a consistent and proactive approach to the management of absenteeism;
- Assist Supervisors/Principal Investigators in helping those employees who may need accommodation;
- Provide employees with procedures, guidelines and support for achieving and maintaining acceptable attendance;
- Improve attendance and reduce direct and indirect costs related to absenteeism;
- Promote a healthier work environment and positive attendance culture.

The Attendance Support Program will be administered in accordance with the provisions of the Ontario Human Rights Code, and where applicable, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

3.2 Attendance Support Program

RI maintains the Attendance Support Program to promote regular attendance by monitoring individual absences. Every 6 months each employee's attendance will be formally reviewed in relation to the RI standard for absenteeism. Supervisors/Principal Investigators, or their delegates, may address an employee's attendance more frequently and offer support services whenever necessary.

Only sick time, paid and unpaid, will be reviewed under the Attendance Support Program. These absences will be addressed by discussion and counseling. Non-culpable (innocent) absenteeism, no matter how excessive, is not a disciplinary matter. Culpable (blameworthy) absenteeism is subject to discipline and will be addressed separately from the Attendance Support Program. *(Refer to 2.0 for definitions on types of absenteeism)*

Work related illnesses or injuries (WSIB) are not part of the Attendance Support Program as these absences are handled through the Workplace Safety Insurance Act. Pre-approved non-medical leave of absence or leaves covered under the Employment Standards Act (ESA) are not part of the Attendance Support Program.

Absences related to serious chronic conditions, ongoing treatments, catastrophic events, medically necessary surgical interventions and days where the employee is asymptomatic and is under a doctor's care from the commencement of symptoms for a confirmed communicable disease but is required to be absent under the Hospital or public health authority protocol will not be part of the Attendance Support Program provided proper documentation has been received by OH&S to substantiate the exclusion.

3.3 RI Standard for Absenteeism

(Refer to 2.0 for definitions that apply to the standard)

For employees who work 7.5 hour shifts the RI standard for absenteeism due to illness is:

- **4 separate incidents and/or 38 hours in a 6 month review period**

3.4 Employee Responsibilities

Every employee is expected to:

- Attend work regularly thereby fulfilling their contractual obligation with RI;
- Take preventative health measures and obtain treatment for any health problems;
- Report absences as per the call in procedure outlined in Appendix A;
- Follow the return to work procedure as outlined in Appendix B;
- Schedule personal or medical appointments outside of work hours whenever possible;
- Provide their Supervisor/Principal Investigator with a satisfactory reason for the absence and the expected date of return to work;
- Maintain regular contact with their Supervisor/Principal Investigator during all absences;
- Recognize that the Supervisor/Principal Investigator has the right to initiate contact in order to determine an expected return to work date;
- Provide a satisfactory Attending Physician Statement (APS) when absent for 4 or more consecutive shifts, or when requested, in order to support the absence(s) and sustain sick benefits;
- Maintain contact with OH&S as directed during an absence and utilize all available services;
- Submit receipts for required medical documentation to Occupational Health for reimbursement;
- To have exclusions considered, fully complete and submit the Exclusion Request Form and Attending Physician Statement to OH&S. *If the employee does not provide the appropriate documentation to OH&S, exclusions cannot be confirmed, and therefore related absences will be counted within the Attendance Support Program;*
- Submit medical to OH&S by February 1 of each year for ongoing conditions which have been excluded from the ASP, and/or more frequently if required by OH&S;
- Advise the RI of any accommodation required on returning to work;
- Participate in work accommodation programs;
- Ensure that sick benefits are only used for their own personal illness;
- Retain an awareness of sick hours taken.

3.5 Senior Management Responsibilities

Senior Management is expected to:

- Ensure Supervisors/Principal Investigators and staff have policies, procedures and guidelines related to absences and regular attendance expectations;
- Provide encouragement and support to Supervisors/Principal Investigators in their role to monitor and meet program objectives;
- Ensure appropriate training and resources are provided to enable monitoring and consistent application of policies;
- Review compliance reports and take action required to ensure program objectives are met.

3.6 Supervisor/Principal Investigator Responsibilities

Supervisors/Principal Investigators are expected to:

- Be accountable for effectively managing the attendance of all employees who report to them;
- Initiate and maintain regular contact with absent employees;
- Ensure employees are aware of the Attendance Support Program and communicate the value of regular attendance at work;

- Develop, document and communicate departmental guidelines and procedures;
- Fairly and consistently apply policies as they relate to attendance;
- Meet with employees who are identified on the reports provided in order to discuss their absences;
- Assist the employee in problem solving attendance concerns as needed;
- Use the Absence Notification Email to notify OH&S when an employee is absent for 4 or more consecutive shifts, or when an Attending Physician Statement (APS) is required.;
- Request a health assessment if appropriate and refer employees to OH&S;
- Assist employees with return to work initiatives;
- Ensure sick benefits are only being used for personal illness;
- Ensure accurate payroll coding prior to time sheet sign off;
- Determine entitlement for payment of sick benefits in consultation with Human Resources (HR) and OH&S as appropriate.

3.7 Occupational Health Nurse (OHN)/Disability Management Coordinator (DMC)/Occupational Health Physician (OHP) Responsibilities:

(Please note employee's medical information is confidential)

An OHN, DMC, or OHP is expected to:

- Determine if an Attending Physician Statement (APS) is satisfactory based on SJHH requirements;
- Notify the employee's Supervisor/Principal Investigator when the APS has been received and whether it is satisfactory or unsatisfactory;
- Complete a health assessment with an employee when requested;
- Review documentation submitted requesting exclusion for both new and existing conditions to ensure the exclusion continues to meet the defined criteria;
- OH&S will advise the employee in writing, by returning the exclusion request form to the employee, if an exclusion request fails to meet the required criteria;
- Provide employee's capabilities and limitations to the Supervisor/Principal Investigator with consent from the employee;
- Maintain regular contact with the employee during the absence;
- Provide education and counseling to support an employee's health;
- Plan any work accommodation programs in accordance with the Work Accommodation Policy.

4.0 PROCEDURE

Attendance Support Process

(Refer to Attendance Support Process Flowchart)

Every 6 months managers will receive attendance reports identifying employees with sick time exceeding the RI standard. Managers will meet with all employees on the report unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The Attendance Support Program consists of 5 stages. At each meeting employees will receive an attendance letter confirming the content of the meeting and outlining the expectation for future improved attendance.

If an employee continues to exceed the RI standard, he/she will receive another attendance letter and move to the **next stage**.

If an employee, who has previously received an attendance letter, maintains his/her attendance at or below the RI standard for two (2) consecutive six-month periods (i.e. 12 months) and then subsequently exceeds the RI standard, he/she will remain at the **same stage** of the program.

If an employee who has previously received an attendance letter does not exceed the RI standard for three (3) consecutive 6 month periods (i.e. 18 months), then he/she will be **cleared from the program stages**.

An employee who receives a stage 4 or 5 letter is strongly encouraged to make an appointment with Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S) in order to determine if there is any assistance the RI can provide to help the employee improve attendance at work.

To ensure exclusions are reviewed and appropriately applied, please follow the below process:

- For initial exclusion requests fully complete and submit to OH&S the Exclusion Request Form and an Attending Physician Statement (APS) which are available online at [Request for Exclusion Consideration Form](#) on MyStJoes, or available in hard copy at the OH&S office.
- For exclusion review and continuance, please fully complete and submit the Exclusion Request Form to OH&S for specific dates to be reviewed in relation to the ongoing exclusion. Updated medical must be submitted by February 1st each year, or as required by OH&S in order to confirm the ongoing exclusion. Should the required medical not be provided to OH&S to confirm the ongoing exclusion, absences will be reviewed within the ASP.

When it is medically established that an employee has been appropriately accommodated for return to work, and/or no longer has a medical condition/illness preventing him/her from attending work on a regular basis, the employee's absences from work will be reviewed within the ASP and will be subject to the RI standard for absenteeism.

Upon review of the circumstances related to absenteeism, options to consider may include, but will not be limited to, work accommodation, a change of employment status (i.e. part time or casual), or non-disciplinary termination based on a frustration of the employment contract.

5.0 ATTACHMENTS/APPENDIX

Appendix A: Absence Reporting Procedure

Appendix B: Return to Work Procedure

Appendix C: Attendance Support Program Process Flowchart

Examples of Improvement in Individual Employee Attendance

Example of an Exclusion Reviewed

APPENDIX A ABSENCE REPORTING PROCEDURE

First Day Reporting:

1. Employees, who are absent from work due to personal illness or urgent situations, must call the appropriate Supervisor/Principal Investigator, or delegate, at the earliest opportunity.
2. Employees must provide the following:
 - A. Reason for absence – sick, family or personal emergency;
 - B. Expected length of absence ;
 - C. If you have had a previous illness within the last three weeks, is this the same illness or a new illness;
 - D. Whether it is work related;
 - E. A phone number where the employee can be reached.
3. The call-in to report an absence must be made on the first day of absence by the employee, not by their spouse or other individuals, unless they are unable to do so due to extenuating circumstances. The employee must, however, place a follow-up call to the Supervisor/Principal Investigator or delegate as soon as able.
4. At any point, the Supervisor/Principal Investigator may contact the employee to clarify information (A-D in point 2 above) and may request that an Attending Physician Statement (APS) be provided.
5. The Supervisor/Principal Investigator and employee will determine a reasonable schedule for continued contact.
6. The Supervisor/Principal Investigator or delegate notifies Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S) that the employee requires a satisfactory APS and the date(s) the employee has been absent using the Absence Notification Email.
7. The Supervisor/Principal Investigator or delegate completes the payroll record accordingly and the Supervisor/Principal Investigator authorizes the sick pay if appropriate by signing the timesheet with the correct codes.

Continuing Absence:

1. The Supervisor/Principal Investigator and employee will follow the established schedule for continued contact.
2. If the employee is absent for 4 or more days due to personal illness a satisfactory APS must be provided to OH&S. The employee must contact OH&S and be cleared to return to work prior to their first shift back. They can do this in person or fax the APS and make a follow up phone call to OH&S.
3. Following reasonable notification to provide a satisfactory APS, the Supervisor/Principal Investigator may code the absence unpaid and suspend sick benefits upon direction from OH&S if the required medical documentation has not been provided.

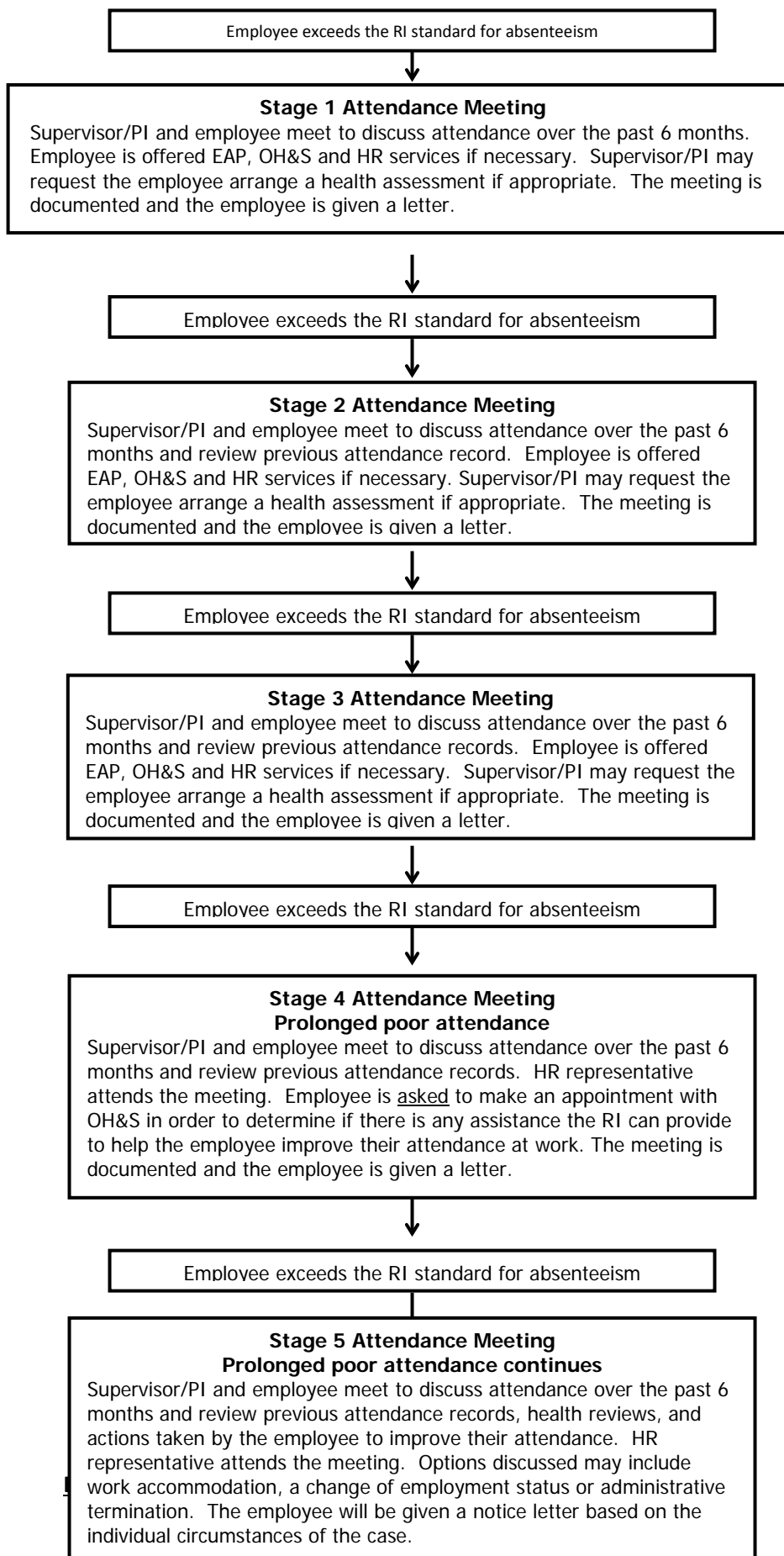
4. The Supervisor/Principal Investigator may request an APS for the first day absent and use reasonable discretion to code the absence paid or unpaid until medical documentation has been provided to Occupational Health & Safety.
5. Employees who have been absent due to sickness within the past 3 weeks and are absent with a new unrelated illness might be asked to provide a satisfactory APS to support the new illness.

Employees who require a medical absence for prescheduled surgeries and/or medical treatments should notify their Supervisor/Principal Investigator, in writing, in advance of the actual required time off using the Leave of Absence Request Form. See policy #069-RSJ-H Leaves of Absence.

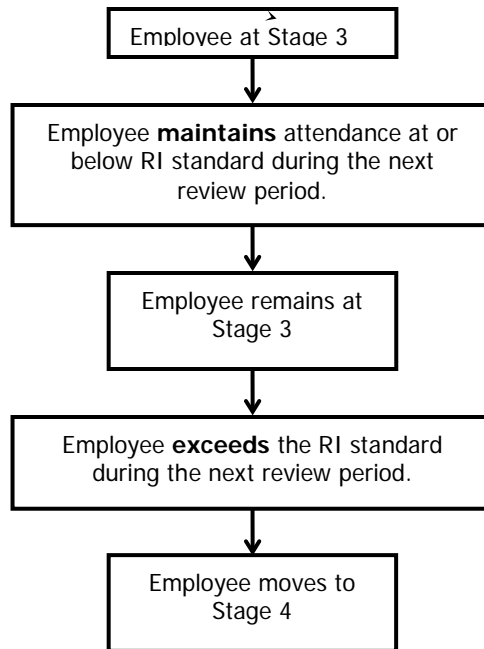
APPENDIX B
RETURN TO WORK PROCEDURE

1. The employee is responsible for notifying the Supervisor/Principal Investigator or delegate of his/her return.
2. The employee is required to contact Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S) and provide a satisfactory Attending Physician Statement (APS) for return-to-work clearance under the following circumstances:
 - a) When requested by the Supervisor/Principal Investigator;
 - b) The absence is 4 or more days;
 - c) There is uncertainty about the employee's ability to return to full, regular duties/hours or the need for modified work; or
 - d) There is the possibility that the employee has contracted a communicable disease.
3. With the employee's consent, the employee's treating practitioner may be requested to provide medical information to OH&S regarding the employee's ability to return to full, regular duties/hours or to modified duties.
4. RI may request the employee have a health assessment by the Occupational Health Nurse/Physician in a situation where RI determines the information provided is inadequate, insufficient, ambiguous or conflicting. This information will assist in determining capabilities and limitations to assess clearance to return to work and to develop an appropriate work accommodation program, if necessary.
5. The Occupational Health Physician/Disability Management Coordinator may request a medical assessment from an independent medical practitioner as applicable. The purpose of the assessment is to clarify information for clearance to return to work or for capabilities and limitations for work accommodation.

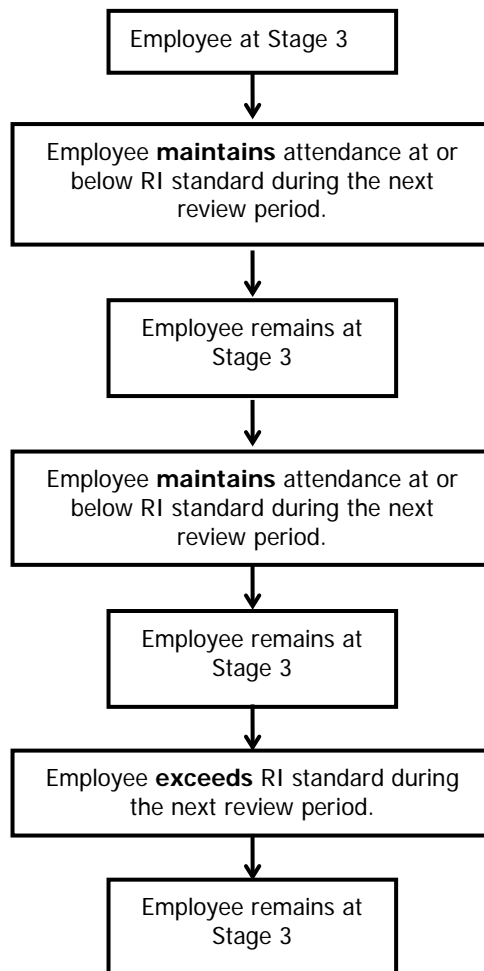
APPENDIX C
ATTENDANCE SUPPORT PROGRAM PROCESS FLOWCHART



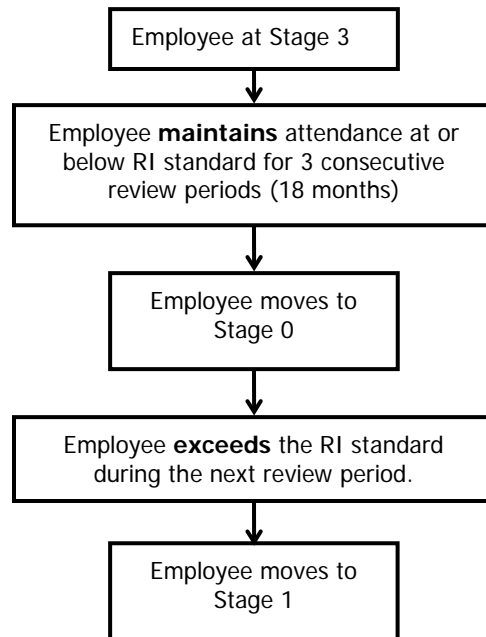
Example 1:



Example 2:



Example 3:



Example of an Exclusion Reviewed

