



Memorandum

2001 Third Avenue, Trail BC V1R 1R6
Tel: 250-368-2226 / Fax: 250-364-2470

To: All Support Staff Employees

Cc: CUPE Local 1285
District Leadership Team

From: Hayley Colussi, Human Resources Coordinator

Date: August 30, 2024

Re: SmartFindExpress (SFE) Reminders and Discretionary Days

Please review the following reminders regarding submitting absences through SFE:

- The reason **"Medical/Dental Appt-For Employees only"** should only be used when the employee is attending their own medical or dental appointment. As per Article 13.09, attending your child or spouse's medical appointment should be entered as "Family Illness-CUPE".

13.09 Family Illness/Responsibility

Where no one at home other than the employee can provide for the needs during illness of an immediate family member or when the employee is the only one who can transport a family member for tests, treatment or other related medical matters an employee may use a maximum of five (5) accumulated sick leave days per year for those purposes.

- As per Article 13.08, please schedule your medical appointments outside of work hours when possible.

13.08 Medical Appointments

Reasonable time off with pay for medical and dental appointments for employees shall be permitted. All hours of absence to be charged to sick leave credit. Bus drivers will be paid one (1) extra hour for their annual bus driver medical which will be scheduled on their own time.

- There is no four-hour minimum for appointments. The four-hour minimum is only for callout of casual staff. If you have an appointment that will only require you to be absent from work for one hour or less, please submit your absence accordingly with "No Sub Required". If you need to schedule an appointment during the day because there is no other option, please schedule your appointments at the beginning or end of the day so that you would be either a little late for work or have to leave a little early.
- Absences will be approved Monday-Friday between 7:00am and 3:30pm. **They will not be approved in the evenings or on weekends.** In the rare circumstance that you need to submit a last-minute absence that requires approval outside of this timeframe, you must email hcolussi@sd20.bc.ca.
- To help ensure that you are replaced during your absence, please provide as much notice as possible by entering your absence in as soon as you know you will require the time off.

Please see the below FAQ regarding **CUPE Discretionary Days**:

1. How do I apply for a discretionary day?

Choose the absence reason “Discretionary – CUPE” when you enter your request in SFE.

2. What does “subject to the operational needs of the district” mean?

To manage the day-to-day work of the district, the district needs to ensure adequate staffing levels. For example, if the district has already approved three custodians to be away on one day with only four casuals, the district would not approve another discretionary day request given the potential of a last-minute illness called in for that day.

3. What is a “good and sufficient reason”?

Everyone has reasons for wanting to take a day off – many things come up in our personal lives that we want to attend. The expectation is these days are used for those circumstances that arise that are out of the employee’s control (i.e. child’s graduation, wedding, hockey tournament, dance competition etc.).

4. Can I use all my days together to take a holiday?

No. Twelve-month employees can access their vacation time or banked time to book holidays. 10-, 10.5- and 11- month employees have two weeks of holidays in December, March and then two months in the summer. The district needs to focus on continuity of learning for students during the school year. To do that, staff are required to be at work during the school year.

5. Can I take a discretionary day every Friday all in a row?

Likely no. The intention of these days is not to have all staff use five days of discretionary “just because”, but rather apply for them when those circumstances arise as described above.

6. I put in for a discretionary day and it was denied, what can I do?

The Collective Agreement language is clear and states “the parties agree the approval of these days is at the sole discretion of the Employer”.

7. I booked a trip over a long weekend and applied for two discretionary days, and they were denied. I can’t get a refund – can I still go?

No. It is important that you have received approval for your absence **BEFORE** you book and pay for trips, tickets etc. Do not assume any time off will be approved. You must go through the approval process first.

8. My partner surprised me with tickets to go to a concert – can I get the day off?

Maybe, but we would suggest that your partner contact HR to inquire in advance if the day off would be approved. Surprises are great – but again, please ensure the day off is approved **BEFORE** money is spent. Your partner can email hcolussi@sd20.bc.ca to inquire.

9. We bargained these days, so I can take them off when I want.

No. These days were negotiated, but the **approval** of the days is at the sole discretion of the Employer as they must ensure they can meet the operational needs of the district.

For assistance using SFE, please contact sfe@sd20.bc.ca.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at hcolussi@sd20.bc.ca.