

Team Talk Good Work Design: Managing Absence



Australian Government
Comcare



This team talk is part of a series created to help you discuss good work design with your team. Read the team talk to your team and use the questions to start a discussion.

Introduction

Everyone will be absent from work at some point. Absenteeism goes beyond a few days off and includes all unscheduled absences which are unusual or excessive, such as:

- large or increasing number of sick days per year
- systematic pattern of absence, for example one day every week
- frequently leaving work early or arriving late
- taking excessively long breaks
- not being contactable during work hours.

Not all situations require you to be away from work. Often, with the right support a person can manage an illness or injury, caring responsibilities or other personal commitments and still get the work done.

Comcare's [Managing absence](#) video and [better practice guidance](#) outlines how great managers support people experiencing absenteeism. Let's watch the video – which is designed for managers but has messages that are relevant for all of us.

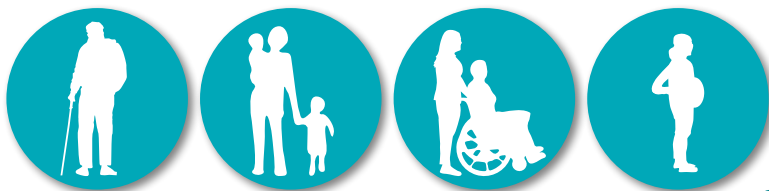
How you can be supported

- While you are away, your manager may reach out to see how you are and reassure you that your work is being taken care of.
- In many cases, you can be supported to work while managing an illness or issue through use of flexible work arrangements.
- It's important to focus on getting the right balance between working and time off. In some cases, it's better to rest and recover before returning to work. Speak up and let your manager know if you are struggling to combine work with a personal issue.

Address any work causes and manage the impact

Research shows high job demands are associated with high work-family conflict, emotional exhaustion and absenteeism.

- If a person's absence is related to workplace issues, such as work demands or conflict, it's critical to address these hazards straight away and protect the health of the team.
- As a team, talk about relevant hazards/issues:
 - discuss what can be changed to improve conditions
 - put measures in place to better manage psychosocial risks.





Can they be supported at **work**?



Discussion

What helps you to successfully balance work with managing personal circumstances, for example, taking time off work when needed? Is there anything that could be done differently at work that would help you to feel more supported?

Do you feel that absenteeism or presenteeism is an issue in our team?

Are there psychosocial hazards, such as high work demands, poor change management or inadequate reward and recognition, that are contributing to absenteeism or presenteeism in the team?

Notes

This section can be used to record agreed actions arising from your discussion and/or attendance.

