



## Administrative Report

**To:** Warden MacDonald and Members of Essex County Council  
**From:** Kyla Pritiko, J.D., Director, Human Resources  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 5, 2025  
**Subject:** Proposed Amendments to Attendance Support Policy  
**Report #:** 2025-1105-HR-R13-KP

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### **Purpose**

The purpose of this Report is to advise Council of amendments that are operationally required to Policy Number 07-002, Attendance Support Policy (the "**Policy**") and supporting documents. Further, Administration is seeking approval to reclassify this Policy as an Administrative policy rather than a Corporate policy, in alignment with the County's Policy and Procedure Governance Framework.

### **Background**

#### **History of Policy Revisions**

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This Policy was originally adopted by Council in 2004 under the title "Attendance Management Policy".

In 2007, Council approved revisions to the Policy, as outlined in Report number 2007-R06-HR-0718-GPS. Key updates included:

- Renaming the policy "Absences due to Non-Occupational Illness/Injury"
- Defining critical components, such as qualifying absences, a high absence rate, and the frequency of meetings
- Addressing considerations related to physical, psychological, and other potential human rights issues
- Incorporating standardized template letters

In 2015, Council approved further revisions, as outlined in Report number 2015-R2-HR-0506-GPS, which included:

- Revising the methodology to consider both occurrences and total days absent when determining the absence rate
- Renaming the Policy to “Attendance and Wellness Program”

In 2016, Council approved an additional revision, as outlined in Report No. 2016-R01-0120-GPS, allowing for a case-by-case assessment of employee circumstances rather than automatic progression through the attendance phases.

In 2020, Council approved an amendment to the Policy as outlined in Report number 2020-0219-HR-R01-GS, to allow employees to move back one step in the meeting progression after achieving two consecutive quarters of satisfactory attendance, rather than one. The Report indicated that the intent of this modification was to “better reflect industry best practices and to be more impactful in Administration’s efforts to manage attendance”.

### **Application of Policy Since 2021**

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In or around July 2021, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (“CUPE”) raised concerns regarding the lack of consultation on the 2020 Policy revisions and inconsistent application of the Policy. As a result, the Policy was placed on hold and has remained inactive since that time.

The absence of an active Attendance Support Policy over the past several years has contributed to unresolved attendance-related issues, which have, in turn, negatively affected workplace morale and organizational culture. The refreshed Policy, attached as **Appendix “A”** and related Standard Operating Procedure (“SOP”), attached as **Appendix “B”**, have undergone a comprehensive consultation process that included all union partners to ensure equitable input and shared understanding.

A key factor contributing to the previous inconsistent application was the limited administrative capacity to effectively support Policy implementation. On October 15, 2025, as part of staffing considerations for the 2026 budget deliberations, Council approved in principle the addition of a Human Resources Assistant position. The primary responsibility of this role will be to administer the updated Attendance Support Policy.

If the position is not approved as part of the final 2026 budget, Administration will revise the Policy and SOP with reduced administrative requirements. This adjustment will ensure the Policy can be implemented consistently and equitably—both of which are essential to its success.

## Discussion

The proposed amendments to the Policy are intended to make it less administratively burdensome, more equitable across all divisions, and to promote transparency and consistency in its application. The revised language also reinforces that the primary purpose of the Policy is to support employees who may be experiencing challenges maintaining regular attendance at work. Early, solution-focused discussions are often effective in preventing longer-term or more complex attendance concerns.

A redline version of the Policy is attached as **Appendix "C"**; however, the key revisions are summarized below:

- The Policy has been divided into a Policy and a corresponding SOP to reduce redundancy and streamline administration
- The title has been updated to "Attendance Support Policy"
- Accountable (i.e., culpable) absences are now addressed within the SOP to improve transparency regarding what constitutes an accountable absence and how such cases will be managed
- Definitions have been added to clearly distinguish between Supported and Accountable absences
- The entry criteria have been revised from an averaging formula to a standardized occurrence threshold:
  - Full-Time Employees whose incidental sick absences exceed 9 days within a 12-month period will be subject to an attendance review; and
  - Part-Time Employees whose incidental sick absences exceed 6 days within a 12-month period will be subject to an attendance review
- The progression framework has been adjusted to allow employees demonstrating good attendance to move back a phase—or remain at their current phase—more quickly than under the previous policy
- Language throughout has been enhanced to underscore the supportive nature of the Policy and the importance of early engagement with employees who may be struggling
- A new section has been added to outline special considerations that may be applied under the Policy and excluded from progression in the attendance process. Examples include short-term, critical, or unexpected leaves; serious time-limited or life-threatening medical

conditions; and absences for surgeries or procedures with a clear prognosis

### **Recommendation to Reclassify as an Administrative Policy**

Administration recommends that this Policy be re-designated as an Administrative Policy rather than a Corporate Policy, pursuant to Policy Number 2022-022, Policy and Procedure Governance Framework ("**Policy Framework**"), attached as **Appendix "D"**.

The Policy Framework defines a Corporate Policy as establishing "strategic direction consistent with resolutions or decisions made by Council and/or principles impacting employees, board members, elected officials or members of the public as it relates to County operations" or steering the "administrative process on matters of public interest or County function". For example, policies that "are required by legislation, establish standards for service delivery, provide funding, establish fees for services, or may become sensitive or controversial in the community".

On the other hand, the Policy Framework defines an Administrative Policy as establishing "the principles and protocols for staff to execute operations with consistent standards and established conventions...and address issues that may affect one or more departments" or "corporate direction which govern staff with consistent standards and practices on recurring issues that may affect one or more departments".

Based on the above-noted definitions and examples, Administration recommends that this Policy be reclassified as an Administrative Policy because the main purpose of the Policy is to create consistent standards and practices for staff related to attendance, which is a recurring issue that affects all departments.

### **Financial Implications**

There are no immediate financial implications associated with the approval of the updated Policy. However, once fully implemented and supported through consistent application, it is anticipated that the Policy will contribute to a measurable reduction in attendance-related concerns and an overall downward trend in employee absences.

Over time, improved attendance rates are expected to decrease the costs associated with backfilling and replacing shifts, including overtime expenditures. In addition, by fostering early, supportive, and solution-focused discussions with employees who may be struggling, Administration anticipates a corresponding reduction in short-term disability and WSIB claims.

The overarching intent of the Policy and related SOP is to provide employees with the resources and supports they need to maintain regular attendance and remain at work whenever possible. A consistent, compassionate, and proactive approach is expected to benefit both employees and the organization by improving well-being, engagement, and overall workforce stability.

**Consultations**

- Senior Leadership Team
- Danielle Dunlop, Manager, Human Resources and Administration, EMS
- Linda Greenwood, Human Resources Business Partner
- Gary Filiatrault, Human Resources Business Partner
- Claire Bebbington, Deputy County Solicitor

**Strategic Plan Alignment**

<b>Working as Team Essex County</b>	<b>Growing as Leaders in Public Service Excellence</b>	<b>Building a Regional Powerhouse</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Scaling Sustainable Services through Innovation  <input type="checkbox"/> Focusing “Team Essex County” for Results  <input type="checkbox"/> Advocating for Essex County’s Fair Share	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Being an Employer with Impact  <input type="checkbox"/> A Government Working for the People  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Promoting Transparency and Awareness	<input type="checkbox"/> Providing Reliable Infrastructure for Partners  <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Dynamic and Thriving Communities Across the County  <input type="checkbox"/> Harmonizing Action for Growth  <input type="checkbox"/> Advancing Truth and Reconciliation

## **Recommendation**

That Essex County Council receive report number 2025-1105-HR-R13-KP, Proposed Updates to Attendance Support Policy and supporting documents as information; and

That Essex County Council direct Administration to reclassify the Attendance Support Policy from a Corporate to an Administrative Policy, in alignment with the Policy and Procedures framework.

## **Approvals**

Respectfully Submitted,

*Kyla Pritiko*

Kyla Pritiko, Director, Human Resources

Concurred With,

*Sandra Swiers*

Sandra Zwiers, MAcc, CPA, CA, Chief Administrative Officer

<b>Appendix</b>	<b>Title</b>
A	Proposed revised Attendance Support Policy
B	Proposed Attendance Support SOP
C	Redline showing changes between current Attendance Policy and proposed SOP
D	Policy Number 2022-022, Policy and Procedure Governance Framework