



NIAGARA CHILDREN'S CENTRE SCHOOL AUTHORITY

Attendance Support & Wellness Program

Attendance Support & Wellness Program (ASWP)

Responsibility: Principal, Human Resources, & Board of Directors

Application: All Permanent and LTO Employees (Excludes Casual/Supply & Feeders)

Effective Date: September 2026

1. PURPOSE & PHILOSOPHY

1.1 The Niagara Children's Centre School Authority (NCCSA) is committed to providing a high-quality learning environment for students.

1.2 The Authority relies on the regular and consistent attendance of staff to achieve this.

1.3 Attendance Support & Wellness Program (ASWP) is an early intervention program designed to assist employees who are struggling to maintain regular attendance at work. The intent of the Attendance Support process is to provide non-disciplinary and supportive assistance to NCCSA employees who exceed the established absence threshold.

1.4 The primary goals of the ASWP are to:

- Facilitate the return to work of staff and assist them in maintaining regular attendance, with or without accommodation.
 - Identify and provide workplace accommodations under the Ontario Human Rights Code.
 - Provide early intervention for health challenges via LTD Early Intervention and EAP.
-

2. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 Employee Responsibilities

- Maintain regular attendance
- Report and code absences correctly in EasyConnect
- Provide medical documentation that may be requested as per employee agreement at or after five (5) consecutive or as requested in Step 1+

- Cooperate and collaborate in the ASWP and setting personal attendance goals
- Contact her/his/their union representative if the employee wishes them to be involved.

2.2 Principal Responsibilities

- Communicate the ASWP and expectations to employees in collaboration with HR
- Review staff absences and identify patterns in collaboration with HR
- Exercise management discretion for exceptional circumstances in collaboration with HR
- Maintain medical confidentiality
- Communicate expectations
- Review reports
- Support employees
- Attend meetings
- Contact the union representative where necessary and applicable

2.3 Human Resources Responsibilities

- Monitor attendance trends
- Identify threshold exceedances
- Facilitate meetings Step 1+
- Issue written notices and summaries
- Maintain medical confidentiality
- Support employees
- Provide EAP and wellness resources

2.3 Board of Directors Responsibilities

- Provide support to Principal/HR
- Provide oversight for Step 3 (Escalation)
- Determine ongoing employability
- Collaborate and approve Last Chance Agreements (LCA)

2.4 Bargaining Unit / Association

- Support members.
- Attend meetings at the employee's request

3. SCOPE & DEFINITIONS

3.1 Innocent (Non-Culpable) Absenteeism Managed in ASWP

3.1.1 Refers to absences resulting from illness or injury beyond the employee's control and unrelated to work.

3.1.2 Refers to medical/dental appointments scheduled during working hours or WSIB declined claim-related absences that are not a part of a disability claim. Specialist appointments may require clarification, e.g. questionnaire, sufficient medical documentation.

3.1.3 Employees are supported through this ASWP.

3.1.4 The ASWP focuses exclusively on sick leave and does not include protected or pre-approved absences.

3.1.5 Excluded Leaves

The following are excluded from attendance threshold calculations:

a) Medical & Health Related

- Approved Long-Term Disability (LTD) claims
- Work-related illnesses or injuries (approved by WSIB)
- Periods of mandatory quarantine
- Medical leaves approved by HR (with medical evidence and treatment compliance)

b) Statutory & Contractual Leaves

- Pregnancy and parental leaves including half day ultrasound appointments due to pregnancy.
- Bereavement leave
- Jury or subpoena duty
- Other protected leaves as defined by the Employment Standards Act

c) Operational & Personal Leaves

- Union business leave
- Observance of recognized religious holy days (creed)
- Examinations and convocations.

d) General Leaves

- Other leaves formally approved by HR or the Board outside of standard sick leave
- Approved unpaid leave days.
- Grant Days

e) Culpable Absences (refer to 3.2).

3.2 Culpable Absenteeism

3.2.1 Refers to absences for which employees can be held accountable.

Examples include:

- Failure to notify employer of absence
- Lateness

- Coding absence days inconsistently with reason for absence
- Leaving early without approval
- Falsifying illness claims
- Misuse of leave

3.2.2 Culpable absences are subject to Progressive Discipline Policy.

3.2.3 Culpable absences are not managed through the ASWP.

3.3 Management Stream Table

Type of Absence	Definition	Policy/Procedure
Non-Culpable	Absences beyond the employee's control (medical/dental appointment, illness, injury, medical disability).	Attendance Support Wellness Program (ASWP)
Culpable	Absences within the employee's control (unauthorized leave, misuse of sick time).	Progressive Discipline Policy

4. SICK LEAVE & MEDICAL DOCUMENTATION

4.1 The program tracks sick/appointment leave usage only.

4.2 Employees are encouraged to schedule appointments outside school hours to minimize disruption to student programming.

4.3 Medical Documentation:

- May be requested as per employee agreement at or after five (5) consecutive days.
- While in ASWP, documentation may be requested for shorter absences.
- Any documentation provided must confirm assessment occurred during absence.

4.4 Disability vs. General Illness:

- A documented disability does not exempt an employee from the ASWP for unrelated absences.
- Only absences directly linked to the disability may be excluded or adjusted.
- NCCSA may request medical verification to appropriately code absence days.

4.5 Sufficient Medical Documentation Must include:

- Confirmation the employee is medically unable to work *or* able to work with restrictions (no diagnosis required).
- Clear description of functional restrictions and/or limitations.
- Expected duration of absence or limitations
- Estimated timeline for return to work (including any anticipated graduated return).

OR

- Functional Abilities Form (FAF).

4.6 Cost of Documentation

ETFO Teachers

- After five (5) consecutive days of absence, a medical note is required and shall be obtained at the employee's expense, subject to the provisions of the Collective Agreement.
- During the ASWP, where the Employer requests medical documentation beyond the standard five (5) day requirement, reimbursement shall be provided in accordance with the Collective Agreement.
- Any independent medical examination required by the Employer shall be at the School's expense.

Support Staff

- After five (5) consecutive working days of absence, a medical certificate is required and shall be obtained at the employee's expense.
- Where the Principal/HR requires a medical certificate for an absence of less than five (5) consecutive working days, the cost of the certificate shall be borne by the School.
- Functional Abilities Forms (FAFs) requested as part of the Attendance Support & Wellness Program shall be the responsibility of the employee.
- Any independent medical examination required by the Employer (conducted by a medical practitioner selected by the Employer) shall be at the School's expense.

5. THE THREE-STEP SUPPORT MODEL

5.1 The ASWP includes:

- Early Awareness Level
- Step 1: Formal Review - Entrance to the Program
- Step 2: Coaching – Attendance Improvement Plan
- Step 3: Comprehensive Support & Employment Review
- Last Chance Agreement

5.2 Each formal step lasts three (3) working months.

5.3 Thresholds for part-time staff are pro-rated based on FTE.

5.4 The ASWP only counts during active working months (September - June).

5.5 The program pauses during July and August.

5.6 The ASWP process may be initiated if an employee exceeds the absence threshold within any rolling ten (10) month period.

5.7 Attendance data is reviewed continuously and does not reset annually with the school year.

5.8 ASWP Model

Early Awareness Meeting

Threshold: 80% of total Sick Days Used

Purpose: Supportive, neutral “heads up.”

Process: Casual conversation, email, or EasyConnect notification.

Action: Employee reviews coding of sick leave in EasyConnect.

STEP 1 – Formal Review and Entrance into the ASWP Program

Threshold: 100% of total Sick Days Used

Purpose: Neutral inquiry-based conversation.

Process: In-person meeting.

Actions: Discussion of attendance barriers and determination of ASWP entry. Formal Notification Letter issued if employee enters ASWP. Employee provided with a list of health resources. Goals set on a case-by-case basis.

Representation: Union representatives encouraged if applicable.

Timeline: Three working months. Failure to meet goals → Step 2.

STEP 2 – Coaching (Attendance Improvement Plan)

Purpose: Goals from Step 1 not met.

Process: In-person meeting.

Actions: Goal failure will be reviewed and there will be a development of an Attendance Improvement Plan (AIP) on a case-by-case basis. Employees to be reminded of health resources. Possible referral to LTD Early Intervention.

Representation: Bargaining Unit notified and representation encouraged if applicable.

Timeline: Three working months. Failure to meet AIP → Step 3.

STEP 3 – Comprehensive Support & Employment Review

Purpose: Goals from the AIP plan in step 2 not met and chronic absenteeism remains.

Process: In-person meeting.

Actions: AIP failure will be reviewed. Case review by Principal and HR (and potentially Board). Ongoing employability assessed. Further goals and expectations are articulated.

Representation: Bargaining Unit notified and union representative required if applicable.

Timeline: Three working months. Failure to meet goals→ Last Chance Agreement.

STEP 4 - Last Chance Agreement (LCA)

Purpose: Ongoing failure to meet all goals. Serves as final notice. Failure may result in termination based on frustration of contract (non-disciplinary).

Process: Formal document drafted by legal and signed by Employee, Principal/HR, and Union - if applicable. Board Approval required.

Actions: Specifies attendance targets that must be met.

Representation: Bargaining Unit notified and union representative required if applicable.

Timeline: 5-10 working months.

6. MONITORING, EXIT & RENTRY

6.1 Monitoring Period:

- Where an employee has met the attendance goals established at a coaching level (Step 1, Step 2, or Step 3), the employee shall enter a monitoring period of ten (10) active working months.
- During the monitoring period, attendance shall continue to be reviewed on a rolling basis in accordance with the ASWP thresholds.

6.2 Exit:

- An employee shall be deemed to have successfully exited the ASWP where they do not exceed the Step 1 threshold (100% of allocated sick days used within a rolling ten (10) active working month period) during the monitoring period.
- Where more than ten (10) active working months have elapsed since the employee's successful exit from the ASWP, any subsequent attendance concern shall be treated as a new case beginning at the Early Awareness level.

6.3 Re-Entry:

- Where an employee exceeds the Step 1 threshold (100% of allocated sick days used within a rolling ten (10) active working month period) during the monitoring period, the employee shall re-enter the ASWP at the Step following the one last completed.

6.4 Management Discretion:

Principal/HR may pause or remove employee from ASWP for:

- One-time catastrophic event
 - Confirmed chronic disability under accommodation
-

7. CONFIDENTIALITY & REPRESENTATION

7.1 Privacy protected in accordance with PPM 171.

7.2 Medical information stored separately from personnel file.

7.3 Discussions focus on functional limitations, not diagnoses.

7.4 Representation rights are mandatory at Step 3. Employees may choose to have representation at Step 1 or beyond if applicable.

8. PROGRAM REVIEW

The NCCSA shall review the efficacy of this procedure ideally every year but at a minimum of every 3 years.

9. HEALTH RESOURCES

9.1 Employee Assistance Program (EAP) – Green Shield

1-877-234 -5327

24 HOURS A DAY ANYWHERE IN NORTH AMERICA

Green Shield CODE: NCCSA425

- Short term solution focused Counselling
- Health and Wellness Coaching
- HumanaLife™ – Online Wellness Portal
- Career Coaching and Counselling
- Legal Advice
- Financial Coaching
- Caregiving and Eldercare Support

- Critical Stress Management
- Wellness Webinars and Presentations
- Smoking Cessation Support
- Healthcare System Navigation Support
- iCBT
- Mindfulness Coaching

9.2 OTIP LTD Early Intervention & CarePath

Early Intervention program OTIP's

Early Intervention program is a union/association supported service that provides confidential and valuable assistance to members during the early stages of a medically-related work absence. They provide resources and education specific to your medical condition with a focus on recovery and a timely return to work.

Step one: NCCSA can send a notice of absence to OTIP when an employee is absent for 15 or more consecutive days of absence for ETFO and 20 or more consecutive days of absence for Support Staff.

Step two: The employee will then receive an email or phone call from an Early Intervention Coordinator at OTIP to discuss the Early Intervention program.

Step three: You will be referred to an Early Intervention Rehabilitation Consultant through OTIP who will work closely with you to provide an individualized action plan.

The program is voluntary. If you do not require their support or services, simply reply to the initial email sent from an Early Intervention Coordinator at OTIP to let them know.

Carepath Cancer Program

Facing a cancer diagnosis can be overwhelming, confusing, and stressful. The Carepath Cancer Program is available to support employees and their families during this time.

The program is led by Oncology Nurse Case Managers who serve as partners and advocates for members and their families. Upon contacting Carepath, employees are paired with a dedicated Nurse Case Manager who provides support throughout treatment and recovery.

Nurse Case Managers help employees and their families navigate the healthcare system, understand treatment options, and make informed decisions about their care.

Employees are encouraged to contact Carepath directly to access this confidential support service.

For more information, please contact Carepath at: 1-800-290-5106 | otip.carepath.ca

9.3 OTIP Mental Health Support Services

Starling Minds

Organization	Contact Information	Description of Service
Starling Minds	More information about the Starling Minds program can be found at otipraeo.starlingminds.com Questions about the program can be directed to members@starlingminds.com	Starling Minds is a self-guided digital program that is available 24/7, private, and tailored to you. Access tools to help better manage your mental health including daily checkups, guided training sessions, and a supportive community. Based on Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, it can be used with medication or in-person therapy. Starling Minds can help you assess your mental health, build your mental fitness, and transform your substance use. If needed, here are your access codes: • OTIP members/customers: member • Eligible family members: familymember

Mental Health Organizations and Services

Organization	Contact Information	Description of Service
CAMH	camh.ca	This resource offers FAQs, helpful information on managing stress and anxiety, suggestions for quarantine and isolation and information on the stigma and prejudice that can be associated with COVID-19.
CMHA	cmha.ca	The Canadian Mental Health Association has several online resources to address anxiety and support mental health concerns.

Bounce Back Ontario	bouncebackontario.ca	This free, skill-building program is designed to help adults and youth manage low mood, mild to moderate depression and anxiety, stress and worry. Bounce Back Ontario offers online videos and over-the-phone coaching, providing tools to support you on your path to mental wellness.
Homewood Health	homewoodhealth.com/health-centre	Homewood Health provides a range of mental health services to Canadians and has one of the largest mental health and addiction treatment facilities in the country.
PSAC	psacunion.ca	The Public Service Alliance of Canada offers mental health resources for people struggling with their mental health.
Government of Canada - Mental health support	canada.ca/en/public-health/services/mental-health-services/mental-health-get-help.html	Free counselling, tools and support for all Canadians. Get connected to mental health and substance use support, resources and counselling with a mental health professional.

Mindfulness and Meditation Resources

Organization	Contact Information	Description of Service
Mindful	mindful.org	From live guided meditations, to a quick course on how to ground yourself, Mindful offers virtual resources to help instill calmness during uncertain times.
University of Toronto	https://www.coursera.org/learn/manage-health-covid-19	The University of Toronto is offering a free course titled Mind Control: Managing Your Mental Health During COVID-19. This course will help you understand the anxiety reaction as it relates to aspects of our current life and will provide strategies for managing and turning off the anxiety response for short periods of time.

Mindfulness Studies	mindfulnessstudies.com	The Centre for Mindfulness Studies offers several pay-what-you-can online programs to help you learn about mindfulness in an uncertain world.
Headspace	headspace.com	Headspace is a meditation app that aims to help people lower their stress, focus more, and sleep better. Whether you're a beginner, or an experienced meditator, Headspace has a variety of programming and resources.
Calm	calm.com	This popular sleep, meditation and relaxation app offers resources to help calm and relax you.

Mental Health/Crisis Line Telephone Services

Organization	Contact Information	Description of Service
Kids Help Phone (24 Hours)	1-800-668-6868 kidshelpphone.ca	Canada's only national support service that runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Kids Help Phone offers professional online and telephone counselling, information and volunteer-led, text-based support in English and French across Canada. <i>Kids Help Phone has expanded its mandate to include former youth in care of any age.</i>
First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line (24Hours)	1-855-242-3310 www.hopeforwellness.ca	Immediate, culturally competent telephone counselling, 24 hours a day, seven days a week and is available in English, French and upon request in Cree, Ojibway, and Inuktitut.
Health811	1-866-797-0007 health811.ontario.ca	This free, confidential telephone service connects you to health advice or general health information from a Registered Nurse.
211 Ontario	Dial 211 211ontario.ca	Call 211 to find a wide range of mental health supports available across Ontario.

Alberta Health Service – Text4Hope Program	Text COVID19HOPE to 393939 albertahealthservices.ca	This free program sends out daily messages to subscribers with advice and encouragement helpful in developing healthy personal coping skills and resiliency. There is no cost to this service, community members simply need to subscribe to the program.
Assaulted Women's Helpline	1-866-863-0511 (Toll Free) 1-866-863-7868 (TTY) 416-863-0511 (Toronto) awhl.org	This 24-hour telephone and TTY crisis line is available to all woman who have experienced abuse including. Services include counselling, emotional support, information and referrals.
Good2Talk	1-866-925-5454 good2talk.ca	Good2talk provides free, confidential support services for post-secondary students in in Ontario.
Naseeha Youth Helpline	1-866-627-3342 naseeha.org	Naseeha Youth Helpline is a confidential helpline for young Muslims, offering immediate, anonymous and confidential support over the phone.
Trans Lifeline	1-877-330-6366 translifeline.org	This is a peer support service run by trans people, for trans and questioning callers. It connects trans people to the community and offers support and resources that are needed to survive and thrive.
LGBT Youth Line	1-800-268-9688 Text 647-694-4275 Chat youthline.ca	This confidential and non-judgmental peer support operates telephone, text and chat services for lesbian, gay bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirited, queer and questioning young people.

Helping young children

Organization	Resource	Description of Service
PBS Kids	How to Talk to Your Kids About Coronavirus	PBS offers this kid-friendly way to discuss Coronavirus and its impact on our daily lives.
CDC	Before, During, and After An Emergency	The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention provides tips on helping your

		children during times of high stress or emergencies.
Mindheart	Covibook: Supporting and reassuring children around the world	This downloadable PDF is available in 25 languages and allows young children to learn about the virus in a reassuring way.

Youth Resources

Organization	Resource	Description of Service
Kids Help Phone	Resources around me	This Kids Help Phone tool allows you to find youth-based resources specific to your geographic location.
Kids Help Phone	How can I cope with my feelings about the future?	Kids Help Phone offers advice about processing feelings that is written in a way that youth can relate to and will understand.
CMHA	Tips on how to manage your mental health	Canadian Mental Health Association offers tips for youth to manage their mental health.

10 CROSS REFERENCE

10.1 Legislation

Ontario Human Rights Code

10.2 Ministry Policy & Program Memoranda

Policy/Program Memorandum No. 171-Attendance Support Programs (ASP)

10.3 Board Policies, Procedures & Protocols

Accessibility Standards: Employee Accommodations & Employee Return to Work.

Confidentiality of Employee Medical Records

Health and Safety

Progressive Discipline

ETFO Collective Agreement

Support Staff Agreement

10.4 Revision History

April 2026