



# ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE GENERAL ORDER ATTENDANCE CONTROL POLICY



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To: All Deputies & Office Personnel  
 From: Sheriff Carl E. DuBois  
 Subject: General Order - Attendance Control Policy

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidelines regarding the use and abuse of unscheduled leave. The practice of “calling in sick” in order to obtain a day off is disruptive to the operation of this Office and unfair to one’s fellow employees. This policy is designed to provide a vehicle to utilize in addressing problems of abuse in this area.

**I. POLICY:**

- A. The Orange County Sheriff’s Office policy for the control of the abuse of Sick and Personal leave through unscheduled leave is a four-step process of gradual response in cases where employees are abusing the approved leave system. Repeated unscheduled leave days from work are disruptive to the normal operations of the Office and tends to impact negatively on the morale of the remaining workforce. The policy functions on the basis of the number of days of unscheduled leave that an employee accrues within a twelve-month period.
- B. Unscheduled leave is defined as any occasion in which an employee fails to appear at work without prior approval. Prior approval is constituted by the submission and approval of a leave request at least one day in advance of the leave. Calling in prior to the beginning of a shift because of illness or personal reasons is an occasion of unscheduled leave. Consecutive days off for illness, without prior approval, will each be considered an occasion of unscheduled leave.
- C. It is important to remember in applying the four-step process that there are, at times, medical, family or personal problems, which may contribute to apparent patterns of time abuse. For this reason, supervisors must look at each case in context. An employee who has had a lengthy history of good attendance and suddenly starts missing work on an unscheduled basis may be in a personal crisis, which they may be hesitant to discuss. That type of employee would be looked at differently than one who had a history of calling in sick on weekends or in conjunction with regular days off. As such, the supervisor must exercise discretion at all times.

D. The following is an outline of the steps involved in the process:

1. STEP 1 – INFORMAL COUNSELING

His or her supervisor will informally counsel an employee, who has accumulated six unscheduled leave days in a twelve-month period. During this counseling

session the employee will be advised that a continuation of this pattern will be met with increasingly serious sanctions. The employee will be given an opportunity to explain any extenuating circumstances that may have led to the occasions of unscheduled leave. Should the supervisor determine that the employee is experiencing a significant personal or medical problem, they should offer advice as to assistance that may be available.

## 2. STEP II – FORMAL COUNSELING

When an employee has a seventh occasion of unscheduled leave within twelve months, after the Step I informal counseling, they will be subject to a Step II formal counseling conducted by a supervisor. At this counseling session the supervisor will review the employee's record of unscheduled leave, indicating patterns of leave revolving around weekends, holidays and/or regular pass days, if such patterns exist. The supervisor will also cite the date of Step I counseling. The employee will be given an opportunity to indicate any extenuating circumstances that may affect their situation. As in Step I counseling, the supervisor must consider the employee's overall attendance record and offer advice or assistance. Where there is reason to believe that the employee is involved in a personal or medical situation, which will be resolved in a reasonable amount of time, the supervisor should so indicate in a memorandum to the Sheriff. If there are no credible extenuating circumstances, the employee is to be given conduct counseling, advising them that a note from a physician, immediately upon return to work, must support any further unscheduled leave.

## 3. STEP III – FINAL WARNING

In cases where an employee who has had a Step II formal counseling has an additional unscheduled leave day within a twelve-month period and returns to work without a note from a physician, the employee will be given a final warning before disciplinary action is taken. A member of the Command Staff will deliver the final warning verbally and in writing. The employee will be advised at this step that should they have any further unscheduled leave, not supported by a physician's note, disciplinary action will be taken.

## 4. STEP IV – DISCIPLINARY ACTION

In any case where an employee who has received a Step III final warning and has an additional unscheduled leave day within a twelve-month period, and returns to work without supporting documentation from a physician, disciplinary action will be initiated by administration. The discipline will be administered in a manner that is proportional in the context of the employee's overall attendance record and work history.