FAQs – ABSENCE MANAGEMENT

Consider the following tips to manage your use of personal and family illness leave:

1. **What is absence management?**
   Absence management is about reducing employee absenteeism (usually due to illness or injury) through policies and procedures. Absence management involves tracking and managing employee absences to promote employee wellness, workplace safety, employee satisfaction, and the financial well-being of the organization.

2. **What causes absenteeism?**
   Personal illness; Family illness; Workplace stress (i.e., performance issues, conflict with coworkers, deadline avoidance, etc.); Extending a vacation or in lieu of using vacation time; and Job dissatisfaction.

3. **What is the impact of high absenteeism?**
   - Low morale by coworkers who must cover.
   - Negative impact on student achievement.
   - Slower rates of productivity.
   - Reduced feeling of teamwork.

4. **What does absence management seek to accomplish?**
   - Seeks to keep employees from entering an unpaid status and avoid adverse employment action.
   - Seeks to preserve personal illness leave for when it is needed most (i.e., terminal, and unforeseen illnesses).
   - Seeks to inform employees of other benefits and leave options to meet their needs; and
   - Seeks to keep employees in good standing for retirement.

5. **How does BCPS manage absences?**
   Every employee’s absence is monitored by their supervisor. Supervisors (or their designees) are required to perform timekeeping duties for payroll purposes. When an employee starts having a high rate of absenteeism, the supervisor is required to enter the employee into one of two absence monitoring programs, which requires that employees provide medical documentation to support the reasons for their absences. The Office of Employee Absence and Risk Management oversees the following absence monitoring programs:
   - **Integrated Disability Monitoring (IDM) program:** With the help of supervisors, the Office of Employee Absence and Risk Management monitors the personal illness absences for regular employees who are absent for 10 or more consecutive days.
Employee Attendance Monitoring Program (EAMP): The process of monitoring intermittent absences due to personal and or family illness for employees who are at risk of failing to meet BCPS’ established Employee Attendance Standard (EAS) of 96% attendance in a school/fiscal year. There are four phases to the EAMP.

6. How do I avoid having my absences monitored?
Although it may not always be avoidable, there are some key steps every employee can take to reduce their chances of having their absences monitored in IDM or EAMP. First, make sure you follow your worksite’s procedures for requesting time off work and calling off work in the event of unexpected absences. Second, use your personal and family illness leave when you truly need it for illness. Third, if you anticipate that you will need an extended absence from the workplace, contact the Office of Benefits Leaves and Retirement for information and applications for a leave of absence.

7. Why are personal and family illness absences monitored when BCPS gives employees personal illness leave?
Personal illness leave should be thought of as insurance, in which you have it when the time arises. Employees who exhaust all of their personal illness leave may find that they do not have a means to receive compensation when they are ill. Most of us do not like to think about illness, but employees who have safeguarded their personal illness leave have appreciated having an income during some of the most challenging times of their lives. Additionally, employees who enter an unpaid status without an approved leave of absence are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. As a result, using your personal illness leave time wisely and when it is truly needed is the best way to provide you (and your family) peace of mind.