

Calling in 'Sick'

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Purpose of this Document

Create a simple, consistent call-in approach that supports employee well-being while maintaining reliable operations.

The Principle

Employees should not feel the need to justify their absence. When people feel trusted and supported, they are more likely to show up engaged and ready to work. A consistent, non-intrusive approach allows employees to take needed time—physical or mental—without *stigma*, while still maintaining clear expectations for reliability.

Sample Script

EMPLOYEE: "Hey, I won't be able to make it in today."

MANAGER: "Got it, thanks for letting me know. Are you okay?"

EMPLOYEE: "I'm not super, thanks for asking."

MANAGER: "Take the time you need. Do you expect to be back next shift?"

EMPLOYEE: "Yes/No/I'm not sure."

MANAGER: "Alright, we'll plan accordingly. Hope you feel better—see you when you're back."

That's it. No interrogation, no symptom checklist.

Why This Works

- It confirms the absence (operational clarity)
- It shows basic human concern (without prying)
- It gathers just enough info for scheduling
- It leaves dignity and trust intact

Guidelines for Managers

- Do not ask for symptoms or personal details (people are responsible for their own health)
- Accept the call-in at face value and move on (avoid creating pressure to "prove" illness)
- If details are volunteered, acknowledge briefly and don't dig further
- Address attendance patterns later, in private (focus on reliability, not reasons)
- Engage (in a later encounter) in a way that does 'quiet work.' For example:

"You've missed a few shifts lately—let me know if something is going on."

"Does your current schedule still fit your needs?"

"If you're not in a place to be effective today, take the time and come back ready."

If you start adding more questions, you're signaling doubt. And once people feel they need to defend an absence, you've already lost part of the "people want to work here" goal.