

Good morning,

My name is Deb Ploof and I have worked for Sodexo Dining Services at the University of Vermont for 18 years, 16 years as a supervisor. I am in charge of the daily operations of the Cyber Café in the Bailey Howe Library.

A couple of years ago a sick policy was implemented, which is based on a point system. With this point system an employee accrues points for being late, leaving early or missing work, even when sick. An employee can accrue up to 7 points in a rolling 12 month period. The points are defined as follows:

1 point for 1 day of absence. If an employee is absent for two consecutive days it remains 1 point.

If an employee is out 1 day, feels better on the second day and works then misses the 3rd. day, they receive 2 points.

If a person works 1/2 of their shift, then leaves it's 1/2 point, if they work more than half their shift or 3/4 they receive no points.

Once an employee accrues 3 points, they are given a written warning/coaching which states that any further occurrences can lead to suspension and/or termination. At 7 points they are put on suspension pending an investigation.

This system has created a stressful atmosphere and leaving the employees fearful of losing their jobs due to illness.

My daughter has been employed for the dining services for 7 years. She had accrued 6 1/2 points due mostly to daycare calling her out of work because her son was sick. In Feb. she was diagnosed with a tubal pregnancy and was told to rest for a couple of weeks to see if the baby would come down on his own, but she refused to miss work because she was afraid she would lose her job. She worked in constant pain, her supervisors and manager knew what was going on with her, but made no attempt to make any accommodations to make it easier for her. When she woke up after 2 weeks and could hardly walk or move, I had her sent to the hospital. When the doctor told her she needed emergency surgery, she got very irate and refused to have the surgery. I had to call her manager and have them promise not to give her another point or terminate her before she would agree. No one should ever have to feel that way.

There are 2 women who work with me that are in their early and late 60's. These women are never late, leave early, but yet missed 4 days in 2 semesters and were written up. These women were very upset, angry and one wrote an apology letter to management which states the following.

To whom it may concern,

I will not sign your write up as I was sick on Wednesday Oct. 2, 2013 and worked my shift. Got home at 4pm, by 6pm I was throwing up and terrible cramps. Shortly after was having diarrhea for the whole night until 5am, time to get up for work on Thursday Oct. 3 2013. Sorry for getting sick on a work day. In the future I will try to be sick only on week-ends, not to inconvenience my job. ALL though I work in the public daily, I would think you would not want me around students with that condition..but I guess I was wrong. In the future I will come in no matter what.

A 63 year old man who thought he had the flu, went into work. He is a cashier who ended up throwing up in the garbage can, at his desk, cleaned his self up in the restroom and went back to work for the rest of his shift. Once we were on break and he went to the doctor he was diagnosed with pneumonia.

Another women , 70 received a point for being in the hospital with pneumonia.

A women who has worked here for 20-25 years, never missed, has over 200 hrs broke her hand and went to work the following day because she didn't want to receive a point.

We work in a community of 8-10,000 students having contact with approximately 2,000 people daily. By going to work sick we risk making our customers sick creating health hazards to other employees and the public.

Our employees go to work sick for 2 reasons..the point system and not being able to afford to take a day off. They have to decide between staying home, taking care of their self's or going to work and being able to pay a bill or buy those groceries. No one should have to be in that position. It should be a right not a privilege for every working Vermonter to stay home when they sick without repercussions or stress about paying bills should they have to stay home.

The "sick pay" bill may effect how employers may do business but the peace of mind and the health benefits to employers, employees and the public certainly do out weigh the negative aspects. Thank you for all of your time and efforts in this matter.

Sincerely,

Deb Ploof