

Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures

21.15 Contacting staff during extended absence

Policy summary

This policy aims to assist senior management with contacting and providing support to employees on extended absences from the workplace.

It outlines the procedure for maintaining communication with staff members, and provides information on appropriate referral to services.

Communication with staff members during an extended absence is necessary to provide support and enable a smooth transition back to work when appropriate.

Management of Public Correctional Centres Service Specifications

Service specification	Professionalism and Accountability
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Scope

This section applies to all correctional centres and other facilities administered by or on behalf of CSNSW, all CSNSW employees, and where relevant to other personnel such as JH&FMHN, contractors and subcontractors.

For Security and Intelligence (S&I) employees, this policy must be read in conjunction with S&I LOPs.

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1 Contact with staff on extended absence

1.1 Extended work absences

A senior manager, or an authorised officer, must make regular contact with a staff member who is absent from duty for an extended period of time (ten business days or more for planned or unplanned reasons, such as suspension, a coronial inquest, injury or a health condition, including maternity leave).

The staff member's direct line manager is responsible for contacting the staff member, including a Functional Manager (FM), Manager of Security (MOS) or Governor. There may be circumstances where other senior managers will be responsible for contacting staff, for example, a Director or Assistant Commissioner. Another officer may be authorised if the senior manager is involved in the circumstances of the absence.

Contact must be fortnightly, unless:

- the absence is three months or longer, in which case an alternative rate may be agreed, or
- the staff member does not want to be contacted.

The senior manager should determine with the staff member what their preferred method of communication is, for example, emails, telephone calls, or letters.

All contact must be kept confidential and managed respectfully, and both successful and unsuccessful contact attempts must be recorded in a secure Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS) container. When communicating with the staff member, the senior manager should consult them on how they are and on any supports they have in place. Staff members should receive workplace updates from senior managers where considered beneficial and helpful for reducing stress upon return to work.

If the absence is due to suspension, investigation or coronial inquest, professional standards protocols must be followed and specific details relating to the investigation/inquest must not be discussed with the staff member.

If the senior manager does not have the staff member's personal contact details, they may be found on Ellipse or by contacting Human Resources (HR).

Senior managers are able to seek advice from:

- the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) - telephone on 1300 687 327
- their direct manager, and
- Human Resources by email to CSNSWHR.support@dcj.nsw.gov.au.

They should also be aware of their own experience and feelings, and seek support if needed.

The document, *Contacting staff during extended absence – Guidelines for senior staff* provides a script for initial contact that senior managers can use if desired, and a template for documenting contact or attempted contact (see *Contact with staff member on leave log*).

1.2 Referral options

Contact between a senior manager and staff member is not meant to be a form of counselling. If the senior manager is concerned about the staff member's welfare, they may advise the staff member regarding obtaining support and getting help from the following referrals:

For mental health concerns (verbal or behavioural signs of distress are noticeable or there are threats of self-harm or suicide ideation)

- Lifeline: 13 11 14
- their General Practitioner
- Mental Health line: 1800 011 511
- Emergency services (Contact '000')
- EAP: 1300 687 327.

For physical health concerns

- their General Practitioner
- a relevant service provider
- The Manager may agree to contact Injury Management Team and arrange an acceptable time for them to call.

For concerns around a lack of support

- offer for a Peer Support Officer (PSO) or trusted colleague to contact the staff member
- their General Practitioner for referral to local community supports.

For financial stress concerns

- National Debt Helpline: 1800 007 007
- [ASICs MoneySmart Financial Counselling](#).

If the senior manager has serious concerns for the wellbeing of the staff member they should contact their HR Advisor for assistance.

1.3 Procedure for staff contact

	Procedure	Responsibility
1.	Contact the staff member within one week of their absence from work to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• advise that you would like to maintain contact while they are away,• determine their preferred method of communication• arrange a time for the communication to take place, and• provide contact details.	Direct line manager

	Procedure	Responsibility
2.	If the initial contact attempt is unsuccessful, document the attempt in a secure EDRMS container and try again after two working days. After three unsuccessful attempts or within 10 days of the first attempt, advise direct manager and HR manager, and record the attempts in a secure EDRMS container.	Direct line manager
3.	If the initial contact attempt is successful: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> document communication in a secure EDRMS container, respecting the staff member's confidentiality, and agree to a time for follow up communication, or if the staff member does not want to be contacted again, record this in a secure EDRMS container. 	Direct line manager
4.	Document any follow up communication in a secure EDRMS container.	Direct line manager

2 Quick links

- [Related COPP](#)
- [Forms and annexures](#)
- [Related documents](#)

3 Definitions

Authorised officer	The officer authorised by the Governor to perform the functions set out in this part of the Custodial Operations Policy and Procedures Manual
EAP	Employee Assistance Program
EDRMS	Electronic Document and Records Management System
HR	Human Resources
FM	Functional Manager
MOS	Manager of Security
PSO	Peer Support Officer

4 Document information

Business centre: Custodial Operations

Approver: Kevin Corcoran

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EDRMS container: 19/9615

Version	Date	Reason for amendment
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1.0		Initial publication
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1.1	12/03/20	General formatting update and improvements
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