

# Changes are coming in BC: How to Manage Sick Leave in BC When You Can't Ask for a Sick Note

As BC's Employment Standards evolve, employers are facing a growing challenge: how do you manage employee sick leave *fairly* when you're no longer allowed to ask for a doctor's note for short term sick leave?

On April 15, 2025, the BC government introduced the Employment Standards Amendment Act, 2025, which will **eliminate sick notes for short-term illnesses**. The changes to the act will clarify that employers can't request, and employees are not required to provide, an sick note written by a physician, nurse practitioner or registered nurse as evidence that the employee's short-term absence from work was related to illness or injury. Regulations will set out how many days are considered a short-term absence, and how often an employee may be absent before their employer can request a formal sick note. The amendment and **regulations are expected to take effect before the Fall 2025** onset of respiratory illness season.

Currently, BC employees are entitled to 5 **paid** and 3 **unpaid** sick days annually under the Employment Standards Act (ESA). While employers can offer more, they can't offer less, and with proposed changes potentially restricting when and how you can request medical documentation, it's time to rethink your strategy.

Here's how employers can manage sick leave *respectfully, legally, and effectively* — even without medical proof.

## **Firstly: Update Your Attendance Policy to Reflect the Law**

If your current policy still refers to requiring a sick note, it's time for a refresh. Make sure your policy includes:

The 5 paid + 3 unpaid ESA minimums

A clause that medical documentation will not be requested unless legally permitted

A process for monitoring patterns of absenteeism

A fair, documented Attendance Support process for chronic reliability issues

## **Then:**

### **Train Managers to Focus on Patterns, Not Diagnoses**

Managers need guidance on how to approach recurring absences in a way that respects privacy and complies with the law.

Instead of digging into *why* someone was sick, managers should focus on the **impact**:

*"You're entitled to your sick leave, and we support that. We've also noticed frequent absences that are starting to affect scheduling. Let's talk about what support you may need or how we can improve reliability."*

This approach keeps the conversation performance-focused while still being compassionate.

### **Understand Performance Management for Chronic Reliability Issues**

If it becomes disruptive:

Document the pattern

Coach the employee on how their absences impact the business

If it doesn't improve, you can move toward formal performance management **without citing**

**“sickness” as the cause**

## **Implement a Sick Leave Self-Attestation Form**

If you can't ask for a doctor's note, you can still have a process for employees to confirm their time off in writing. A self-attestation form is a simple way to:

Track dates and usage of sick leave

Clarify whether the absence was paid or unpaid

Establish a consistent process for all employees

This form should avoid requesting any medical details and focus purely on tracking and accountability.

## **Why This Matters**

Without proper tools and communication protocols, sick leave can quickly become a grey area — one that opens up risk for both non-compliance and employee dissatisfaction.

By building structured, transparent, and *human* processes, you send the message: *“We trust you, we support you — and we also need a level of reliability to keep things running.”*

Need help putting this into action? Reach out to BLANKSLATE and let's talk about our **Sick Leave Management Kit**, including:

A ready-to-use Sick Day Self-Attestation Form

A Manager Conversation Guide

A Sample Attendance Policy aligned with new ESA expectations

Contact [BLANKSLATE Partners](#) for custom HR policy templates and compliance support tailored for BC employers. Or sign up for [HannahHR](#)

