



BOARD REPORT

REPORT No.: 2022-08

MEETING DATE: FEBRUARY 17, 2022

SUBJECT: RIGHT TO DISCONNECT FROM WORK POLICY AND PROCEDURE

RECOMMENDATION

THAT with respect to Report No. 2022-08 (CAO Division), we, The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board approve the Right to Disconnect from Work Policy as presented;

AND THAT we authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to make amendments to the Policy with respect to housekeeping items, as may be required from time to time.

REPORT SUMMARY

To present The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) with information related to the implementation of a Right to Disconnect from Work Policy.

BACKGROUND

Bill 27, Working for Workers Act, 2021 received Royal Assent on December 2, 2021. The Bill requires organizations with 25 or more employees to create and implement a written policy on disconnecting from work by June 2, 2022. “Disconnecting from work” means not engaging in work-related communications including emails, telephone calls, video calls or text messages after regularly scheduled hours.

COMMENTS

The Right to Disconnect from Work Policy has been established to support employee wellness, minimize excessive sources of stress, and ensure that employees have the right to disconnect from their work outside their regularly scheduled hours.

The right to disconnect consists of three key principles:

1. The right to not regularly work outside normal working hours.
2. The right to not be penalized for not checking and replying to work-related communications outside normal working hours.
3. Respecting other's right to disconnect. This means not regularly calling or e-mailing colleagues outside normal work hours.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPACT

There are no direct correlations with the current strategic plan.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS



There are no immediate financial implications associated with the approval of the Right to Disconnect from Work Policy.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the Right to Disconnect from Work Policy should be approved as presented.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

- Attachment #1 [Right to Disconnect from Work Policy](#)
- #2 [Right to Disconnect from Work Procedure \(for reference only\)](#)

PREPARED BY:	Roxanne Brunelle Crupi, Manager, Human Ressources
SIGNATURE	
APPROVED BY	William Bradica, Chief Administrative Officer
SIGNATURE	
SUBMITTED BY:	William Bradica, Chief Administrative Officer

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board

TBDSSAB #

POLICY

CATEGORY/SECTION

HUMAN RESOURCES - EMPLOYMENT

SUBJECT

RIGHT TO DISCONNECT FROM WORK

AUTHORITY

Working for Workers Act, 2021

INTENT OF POLICY

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administrative Board (TBDSSAB) is committed to supporting employee wellness, minimizing excessive sources of stress, and ensuring that employees have the right to disconnect from their work outside their regularly scheduled hours.

POLICY

TBDSSAB understands that due to work-related pressures, the current landscape of work, or an employee's work environment or location, employees may feel obligated or choose to continue to perform their job duties outside their normal working hours. Work-related pressure and the inability to disconnect from the job can lead to stress and deterioration of mental health and overall well-being. This policy has been established to ensure that employees have the right to disconnect from their work outside their regularly scheduled hours.

The right to disconnect from work consists of the following key principles:

1. The right to not regularly work outside normal working hours.
2. The right to not be penalized for not checking and replying to work-related communications outside normal working hours.
3. Respecting other's right to disconnect. This means not regularly calling or emailing colleagues outside normal work hours.

STANDARDS OF APPLICATION

This policy applies to all employees, students, and volunteers of TBDSSAB.

This policy does not apply to staff scheduled to be on-call as per the On-Call Rotation policy.

While management's normal work week is (35) hours per week, it is understood that management may, as part of the regular terms and conditions of employment, from time to time be required to work up to 44 hours per week in accordance with the Management Leave Procedure.

BOARD APPROVAL DATE:

REVISION DATE(S):

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TBDSSAB #

CATEGORY/SECTION

HUMAN RESOURCES - EMPLOYMENT

SUBJECT

RIGHT TO DISCONNECT FROM WORK

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All employees, students and volunteers are required to comply with this policy.

Management will provide directives and updates to their staff as appropriate.

RELATED POLICIES

Hours of Work and Overtime

On-Call Rotation

RELATED PROCEDURES

Right to Disconnect from Work

Hours of Work and Overtime

Management Leave

BOARD APPROVAL DATE:

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**THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD**

PROCEDURE	PROCEDURE NAME	RIGHT TO DISCONNECT FROM WORK
	PROCEDURE NUMBER	
	PROCEDURE SECTION	HUMAN RESOURCES - EMPLOYMENT
	POLICY REFERENCE	RIGHT TO DISCONNECT FROM WORK
	REVISION DATE	
	SUPERSEDES	NEW
	IMPLEMENTATION DATE	

PROCEDURE STATEMENT:

The Right to Disconnect from Work Procedure is intended to ensure that staff understand their right to disconnect from their work outside their regularly scheduled hours and to outline staff expectations.

PROCEDURE

An employee's time outside working hours is meant for employees to recharge and spend time as they wish and should not be used to complete work-related tasks; however, there may be a lack of separation between home and work that makes it difficult for employees to truly disconnect. As work is more accessible, employees may end up continuing to work even after their workday is done. Using personal time to work can make an employee feel as though they are "always on" or obligated to continue working or respond to communication.

Employees who do not fully disconnect from their work at the end of the day may experience stress and other mental health issues. Stress and poor mental health are associated with many of the leading causes of disease and disability, can lead to burnout, negatively affect performance, mood, attendance, and personal and professional relationships.

Employee health and well-being are priorities while working and away from work. TBDSSAB is committed to increasing overall employee health and wellness and providing employees with a better work-life balance.

The Right to Disconnect

Employees have the right to disconnect from their job and any work-related tasks or communication outside of working hours without fear of reprisal.

Employees are encouraged to set clear boundaries between work and their personal lives.

The right to disconnect means that employees:

- Can and should stop performing their job duties and work-related tasks when they are not expected to work.
- Are not required to take work home with them to complete outside of regular working hours.
- Are not expected or required to respond to work-related communication outside their regular working hours, while on break, or during any paid or unpaid time off.
- Should take and use all their scheduled breaks and time off entitlements for non-work-related activities.
- Will not face repercussion or be penalized for not communicating or continuing to work outside of their regular working hours.

Employees must also be respectful of others' right to disconnect and should not expect their co-workers to respond, communicate, or complete work when not working.

Workload and Productivity

TBDSSAB understands that employees may want or need to work outside their normal hours to meet a time-sensitive deadline, to attend to an urgent matter, or due to unforeseen circumstances; however, employees should not regularly or frequently work outside their scheduled hours to complete or catch up on work.

Employees who cannot manage their workload during their regularly scheduled hours should meet with their direct supervisor to evaluate the current workload, priorities, and deadlines.

Management will work with employees to come up with a solution to ensure:

- The current workload does not result in the requirements for the employee working excess hours.
- Normal job duties can be completed during working hours.
- Employees can remain productive and meet organizational goals and objectives.

Working additional hours does not always equate to higher productivity. Employees can maximize their productivity during their workday by using time management tactics, such as:

- Blocking off periods in their schedule and calendar to complete specific tasks or address communication.

- Working with their direct supervisor to organize work in order of priority or importance.
- Breaking down projects and tasks into manageable pieces.
- Minimizing interruptions by setting their online status to “busy” or “do not disturb;”
- Trying to have at least one dedicated workday per week without meetings (where possible).
- Setting goals to work continuously for a specified period before taking a break or responding to communication.

Communication

Employees may feel obligated to send or respond to messages when not working. TBDSSAB may on occasion send general communication to employees when they are not working, such as after hours, on an employee’s day off or scheduled vacation, but will do their best to ensure that they are not sending communication that requires an immediate response from employees. Employees are not expected to respond to any TBDSSAB communication when not at work, with the exception of unforeseen circumstances, such as an emergency.

Employees must also respect others and avoid direct communication such as sending e-mails, messages (through their phone or other communication and messaging apps) or calling other employees or people we serve outside their regularly scheduled working hours, during breaks, or during an employee’s time off, such as their regular day off or vacation time.

TBDSSAB understands that it may be necessary to send communication to a group of employees, such as an entire department, or forward important information to an employee who is not working. If employees do send communications to others who are not at work, they should not expect a response until the other employee returns. If the matter is urgent or an emergency and requires an immediate response, employees must reach out to their direct supervisor.

Employees who do not reply to work-related communications outside normal working hours will not face negative effects on their employment.

Set communication boundaries by:

- Setting clear expectations for e-mail response time.
 - Logging off for the day or setting your online status to “away,” “out of office,” “do not disturb,” or “offline” when not working.
 - Scheduling any breaks or time off in your calendar.
 - Avoiding using work e-mail for unrelated communication, such as newsletters, coupons, or personal correspondence.
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If employees send communication outside working hours, others are more likely to feel obligated to respond or assume the employee sending the communication will be available during those hours. If it is necessary to compose messages or communication outside regular working hours, use a scheduling tool to send the e-mail at a specified time during work hours, such as the start of the next workday.

Breaks and Time Off

Breaks are provided in accordance with employment standards and are intended to provide employees with time to recharge and enable them to resume their regular work productively. Employees should take any scheduled or TBDSSAB-provided breaks during their shift. Employees should take time away from their work and refrain from responding or sending communication during breaks.

TBDSSAB understands the importance for its employees to have personal time off. Employees are required to use their accrued paid vacation time in full every year for rest, relaxation, and personal pursuits. Employees are expected to complete any time-sensitive projects and meet any deadlines before going on vacation. If work can be attended to when the employee returns, they can resume their duties where they left off before taking vacation. Management will work with employees to delegate job-specific duties that must be completed while the employee is on vacation to maintain workflow and productivity. Employees should not be reluctant to take vacation due to workload, unless there are limitations or restrictions because of a due date, project priority, scheduling conflict, or unforeseen circumstance that prevent an employee from taking a vacation at a specific time requested.

Leave of Absences

Staff on an approved leave of absence including but not limited to Short Term Disability (STD), Long Term Disability (LTD), Workplace and Safety Insurance Board (WSIB), Maternity/Parental Leave are prohibited from performing work including responding or sending communication.

Overtime

Overtime may be requested or required in certain situations to ensure work is completed. All overtime must be authorized by the Department Manager prior to working of such overtime. Failure to obtain proper authorization will result in corrective action including discipline.

Mental Health Support

TBDSSAB recognizes that the workplace plays a significant role in managing and supporting mental health and understands that deterioration of mental health and wellness can be triggered by excess pressures at work or at home and result in lowered work performance and harm to one's physical and mental condition.

TBDSSAB will support mental health by:

- Minimizing work-related sources of stress.
- Addressing internal factors that contribute to burnout.
- Regularly assessing workload, productivity, and expectations.
- Promoting work-life balance.
- Helping employees recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health issues.
- Having an open-door policy for communication and ensure employees are comfortable talking to their direct supervisor about mental health concerns.
- Treating mental health with the same level of importance as physical health and safety.
- Providing employees with the assistance and access to resources they need to support their mental health (including but not limited to employee assistance programs, accommodations).

AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY:

All employees, students and volunteers are required to comply with this policy.

Management is responsible for ensuring compliance with this procedure within their team/department/division.

EMPLOYEE TRAINING

Management will provide specific program/department-related directives and updates to their staff, as appropriate.