

Request for medical/sick note: Letter to employer

Note: The below content can be cut and pasted, and modified to suit the individual physician.

Dear Employer,

One of your employees visited me to obtain a medical or sick note to satisfy your company's absenteeism policy. Employers with a sick note policy for missed time put an added burden on the health-care system.

People seeking sick notes – who otherwise wouldn't see a doctor – end up in physicians' offices, walk-in clinics and emergency department waiting rooms. There, they may spread germs to pregnant women, frail elderly people, cancer patients and babies – all of whom are vulnerable to communicable diseases.

In most cases, the best remedy for a patient with an isolated illness (such as a gastrointestinal virus, influenza or a common cold) is to stay home, rest and drink fluids. Visiting a doctor's office or an emergency room for a medical note does not support their recovery. Sometimes, employees seek a sick note after they have recovered from their illness, so I have to issue a note based on trust.

Employees seeking sick notes reduce access for those patients who really need to see me, and increase the three to four hours per day of paperwork that I do already. Both have a direct impact on patient care. In addition, providing medical notes is a non-insured service, not funded by Medical Services Insurance. I find it difficult to charge my patients for a requirement demanded by their employer.

If you continue to require a physician to authorize your employees' absenteeism, your employees must submit a written request from your organization for the medical note. Upon providing the service I will invoice your company \$_____ per medical note. This is standard practice to fulfill non-medically necessary services for third-party organizations.

As Canadians we are lucky to have our health-care system, but citizens' inability to access the system's services in a timely fashion is a growing problem. Health-care providers, business operators, governments and individuals must work together to ensure its sustainability.

I hope you will consider changing your current absenteeism policy to help reduce the unnecessary burden on our health-care system and improve access for all Nova Scotians.

Sincerely,

PHYSICIAN SIGNATURE