

Question:

An employee says they're sick, but I'm understaffed for the shift. Can I make them come in to work or discipline them if they do not?

Answer from Laura, SHRM-CP:



We would not recommend telling sick employees to come into work or disciplining them if they refuse. If an employee comes in sick, they could expose the rest of your workforce and your customers to the illness.

Requiring sick employees to work can also create feelings of resentment, damaging employee morale and increasing turnover.

Aside from the risks of spreading germs and angering employees, asking sick employees to work when they don't want to might also violate their rights. In states and localities with sick leave laws, employees with sick leave in the bank are generally entitled to use that time when they see fit, without jumping through hoops (e.g., seeking permission, getting doctor's notes, providing lots of notice, or finding their own replacement).