

How to prevent employees from abusing PTO leave

A reader of our e-mail newsletter, **HR Weekly**, recently posed this question to the e-letter's Q&A Forum section: "We allow employees to take paid time off (PTO) in hourly increments, but they often use PTO when running late in the morning or for unexpected 'appointments.' How can we get a rein on our PTO leave?"

The following are some responses:

Require one week's notice

"We just changed our PTO policy. Employees are required to give a minimum of one week's notice for PTO. There are emergencies, but this will help curtail that." — *Rebecca, Arizona*

Restrict leave to full days

"We do not let employees take an hour of PTO. They either take the whole day or a half day as PTO. Leaving an hour early here and there is something that they work out with their managers." — *Charlotte*

Link with an absentee plan

"We have a PTO plan, but also an absenteeism plan. PTO must be scheduled in advance. If it's not, then each occurrence is counted either as tardy or, if the person is gone the full day, as an unscheduled absence. Employees are allowed a certain number of unscheduled absences until there are consequences or separation!" — *Sheila K.*

Apply progressive discipline

"Our handbook states that employees have to call in at least one hour before their regular shifts begin, and they are required to schedule time off. When they run out of PTO, the employees who abuse the policy are subject to progressive disciplinary procedures, up to and including termination." — *Phyllis, Texas*

Changing benefit year didn't help

"We changed our benefit year, which used to end on Dec. 31, to June 30 because we were experiencing too many absences around the winter holiday that hurt our productivity. But the same thing happened in June. We also have a 'use-it-or-lose-it' policy, and employees are able to carry over only a maximum of 40 hours." — *Liz, Virginia*

When are new hires eligible for PTO leave?

Immediately	37%
First of the month	6%

30 days after start date	10%
60 days after start date	14%
90 or more days after start date	33%

Source: Society for Human Resource Management, Benefits Survey (asked of employers that offer PTO).