

How to Welcome a Co-Worker Back

Why it matters

- A warm, work-focused welcome lowers stress and helps your colleague succeed.
- You may not know why someone was off (e.g., mental health, substance-use recovery, physical injury).
- That's okay—you don't need to know. Focus on how to help them do their job safely and comfortably.

Do

- Say "Welcome back—glad you're here."
- Offer practical help ("I can show you where the new supplies are.").
- Direct questions about duties/schedule to the supervisor.
- Give space: let your colleague set the pace on social chat.

Don't

- Don't ask why they were away or for medical details.
- Don't compare stories or offer unsolicited advice.
- Don't gossip or speculate.
- Don't pressure them to take on tasks outside the plan.

Core principles

1. **Safety first.** If something seems unsafe, speak to the supervisor (not the whole team).
2. **Respect privacy.** Discuss duties and schedules—not diagnoses.
3. **Be inclusive.** Treat the colleague as part of the team from day one.
4. **Keep it work-focused.** Support the plan the district has set.
5. **Model kindness.** Small gestures—check-in, offer help, use the member's name—go a long way.

Helpful phrases (ready to use)

- "Great to have you back—how can I help with today's setup?"
- "If you need anything, I'm nearby."
- "Questions about schedule or duties? Let's check with [Supervisor]."
- "I'm glad you're here—no need to share anything personal."

Remember: You don't need someone's story to be supportive. A respectful, work-focused welcome helps your colleague—and our students—thrive.