



Category:Wage & Hour

State:All States

Question: What can we do to prevent employees from clocking in early?

Answered by the HR Experts

Start by asking employees why they're clocking in early. That information will help you determine whether the issue could be solved with a simple conversation or whether there are other factors at play you may need to address.

If employees are simply unaware of your expectations, re-communicate your timekeeping policy and what the consequences will be if they fail to abide by it. That alone might do the trick.

If they're clocking in early because they're expected to be at their workstations ready to go at the start of their shift, you may need to adjust your policy to account for the work employees need to do to prepare their workspace. If you expect an employee to begin answering the phone at 8:00 a.m., but they need five minutes to get to their desk and boot up the system, those five minutes do need to be paid and shouldn't be considered an early clock in.

If your policy accounts for time that should be paid and employees continue to clock in early despite reminders, you can follow your disciplinary process as you would with other policy violations. We generally recommend a progressive disciplinary approach that starts with a warning and escalates from there. Consistent enforcement is also important. It helps prevent discrimination claims.

A final note: you must pay employees for any work they do, even if they clocked in and started work early in violation of your policies. Withholding pay they're owed is not an option. Clear communication and consistent discipline are your best bet.

This Q&A does not constitute legal advice and does not address state or local law.

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