



Telecommuting Policy and Procedure #1

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Practice Note

Telecommuting has become a widely accepted practice, and most organizations that do permit it develop metrics to track their return on investment. Telework is best suited for jobs that require independent work, little face-to-face interaction, concentration, a measurable work product and output-based (instead of time-based) monitoring, but it may be used in other jobs as well. See Do employees at your organization telecommute?, SHRM Poll

(www.shrm.org/Research/SurveyFindings/Articles/Pages/Doemployeesatyourorganizationtelecommute-SHRMPoll.aspx), HR Magazine: 'People People' Work at Home, Too (www.shrm.org/Publications/hrmagazine/EditorialContent/Pages/0908hutchinson.aspx), Supervising the Virtual Workplace (www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/technology/Articles/Pages/CMS_006497.aspx) and Well-Designed Telework Policies Help You Reap Benefits (www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/technology/Articles/Pages/CMS_006493.aspx). But teleworking can have several detrimental consequences. See Absence Makes the Team Uneasy; Survey Undermines Traditional Thinking About Teleworking (www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/technology/Articles/Pages/ThinkingAboutTeleworking.aspx). For additional information see the Workplace Flexibility: Telework and Telecommuting (www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/benefits/Articles/Pages/WL-Telework.aspx) topic in the Benefits Discipline (www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/benefits/Pages/default.aspx).

Objective

[Company Name] considers telecommuting to be a viable alternative work arrangement in cases where individual, job and supervisor characteristics are best suited to such an arrangement. Telecommuting allows employees to work at home, on the road or in a satellite location for all or part of their regular workweek. Telecommuting is a voluntary work alternative that may be appropriate for some employees and some jobs. It is not an entitlement, it is not a company-wide benefit, and it in no way changes the terms and conditions of employment with [Company Name].

Procedure

1. Either an employee or a supervisor can suggest telecommuting as a possible work arrangement.
2. Telecommuting can be informal, such as working from home for a short-term project or on the road during business travel, or formal, as described below. Other informal, short-term arrangements may be made for employees on family or medical leave, to the extent practical for the employee and the organization and with the consent of the employee's health care provider, if appropriate. All informal telecommuting arrangements are made on a case-by-case basis, focusing first on the business needs of the organization. Such informal arrangements are not the focus of this policy.
3. Individuals requesting formal telecommuting arrangements must have been employed with [Company Name] for a minimum of 12 months of continuous, regular employment and must have exhibited above-average performance, in accordance with the company's performance appraisal process.

4. Any telecommuting arrangement made will be on a trial basis for the first three months, and may be discontinued, at will, at any time at the request of either the telecommuter or the organization.
5. [Company Name] will determine, with information supplied by the employee and the supervisor, the appropriate equipment needs (including hardware, software, modems, phone and data lines, facsimile equipment or software, and photocopiers) for each telecommuting arrangement on a case-by-case basis. The human resource and information system departments will serve as resources in this matter. Equipment supplied by the organization will be maintained by the organization. Equipment supplied by the employee, if deemed appropriate by the organization, will be maintained by the employee. [Company Name] accepts no responsibility for damage or repairs to employee-owned equipment. [Company Name] reserves the right to make determinations as to appropriate equipment, subject to change at any time. Equipment supplied by the organization is to be used for business purposes only. The telecommuter should sign an inventory of all office property and agrees to take appropriate action to protect the items from damage or theft. Upon termination of employment all company property will be returned to the company, unless other arrangements have been made.
6. Consistent with the organization's expectations of information security for employees working at the office, telecommuting employees will be expected to ensure the protection of proprietary company and customer information accessible from their home office. Steps include use of locked file cabinets and desks, regular password maintenance, and any other steps appropriate for the job and the environment.
7. The employee will establish an appropriate work environment within his or her home for work purposes. [Company Name] will not be responsible for costs associated with initial setup of the employee's home office such as remodeling, furniture or lighting, nor for repairs or modifications to the home office space. Employees will be offered appropriate assistance in setting up a work station designed for safe, comfortable work.
8. After equipment has been delivered, a designated representative of [Company Name] will visit the employee's home worksite to inspect for possible work hazards and suggest modifications. Repeat inspections will occur on an as-needed basis. Injuries sustained by the employee while at his or her home work location and in conjunction with his or her regular work duties are normally covered by the company's workers' compensation policy. Telecommuting employees are responsible for notifying the employer of such injuries in accordance with company workers' compensation procedures. The employee is liable for any injuries sustained by visitors to his or her worksite.
9. [Company Name] will supply the employee with appropriate office supplies (pens, paper, etc.) for successful completion of job responsibilities. [Company Name] will also reimburse the employee for all other business-related expenses such as phone calls and shipping costs that are reasonably incurred in accordance with job responsibilities.
10. The employee and manager will agree on the number of days of telecommuting allowed each week, the work schedule the employee will customarily maintain, and the manner and frequency of communication. The employee agrees to be accessible by phone or modem within a reasonable time period during the agreed-on work schedule.
11. Telecommuting employees who are not exempt from the overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act will be required to record all hours worked in a manner designated by the organization. Telecommuting employees will be held to a higher standard of compliance than office-based employees due to the nature of the work arrangement. Hours worked in excess of those specified per day and per workweek, in accordance with state and federal requirements, will require the advance approval of the supervisor. Failure to comply with this requirement can result in the immediate cessation of the telecommuting agreement.
12. Before entering into any telecommuting agreement, the employee and manager, with the assistance of the human resource department, will evaluate the suitability of such an arrangement paying particular attention to the following areas:
 - a. Employee suitability. The employee and manager will assess the needs and work habits of the employee, compared to traits customarily recognized as appropriate for successful telecommuters.

- b. Job responsibilities. The employee and manager will discuss the job responsibilities and determine if the job is appropriate for a telecommuting arrangement.
 - c. Equipment needs, workspace design considerations and scheduling issues.
 - d. Tax and other legal implications for the business use of the employee's home based on Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and state and local government restrictions. Responsibility for fulfilling all obligations in this area rests solely with the employee.
1. If the employee and manager agree, and the human resource department concurs, a draft telecommuting agreement will be prepared and signed by all parties, and a three-month trial period will commence.
 2. Evaluation of telecommuter performance during the trial period will include daily interaction by phone and e-mail between the employee and the manager, and weekly face-to-face meetings to discuss work progress and problems. At the conclusion of the trial period the employee and manager will each complete an evaluation of the arrangement and make recommendations for continuance or modifications. Evaluation of telecommuter performance beyond the trial period will be consistent with that received by employees working at the office in both content and frequency but will focus on work output and completion of objectives rather than on time-based performance.
 3. An appropriate level of communication between the telecommuter and supervisor will be agreed to as part of the discussion process and will be more formal during the trial period. After conclusion of the trial period, the manager and telecommuter will communicate at a level consistent with employees working at the office or in a manner and frequency that seems appropriate for the job and the individuals involved.
 4. Telecommuting is *not* designed to be a replacement for appropriate child care. Although an individual employee's schedule may be modified to accommodate child care needs, the focus of the arrangement must remain on job performance and meeting business demands. Prospective telecommuters are encouraged to discuss expectations of telecommuting with family members prior to entering into a trial period.
 5. Employees entering into a telecommuting agreement may be required to forfeit use of a personal office or workstation in favor of a shared arrangement to maximize organization office space needs.
 6. In certain limited circumstances, [Company Name] may contract with an office space provider to meet the needs of employees who wish to telecommute but who do not have appropriate home office space, or for groups of employees whose proximity to the organization and to each other makes such an arrangement feasible.
 7. The availability of telecommuting as a flexible work arrangement for employees of [Company Name] can be discontinued at any time at the discretion of the employer. Every effort will be made to provide 30 days' notice of such a change to accommodate commuting, child care and other problems that may arise from such a change. There may be instances, however, when no notice is possible.

Express Requests

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