

Telecommuting Policy

PURPOSE:

In general, the University believes that patients, students and constituents can best be served when Washington University employees are physically at work at their regular worksite. As a result, the expectation is that staff work-time will generally be spent on campus, where access to others during core hours can be easily accomplished. However, there may be times when it is in the best interests of the department and the University to allow telecommuting. Any such arrangement must be transparent to customers and the department in terms of service and quality.

OVERVIEW:

Telecommuting is a work arrangement in which employees, for a period of their scheduled work hours, perform their regular job responsibilities away from their primary business location utilizing telecommunication and information technology as appropriate. Telecommuting is considered an *alternate* worksite to an employee's primary business location. Requests will not be approved that will result in establishing a "second job" with the University. With rare exception, these arrangements must be for regularly scheduled, sustained periods of time. They are not intended for temporary or intermittent assignments.

Such arrangements require careful consideration, and prior approval by the employee's manager, Human Resources and the department head and/or dean as appropriate. Either department management or the employee may rescind the Telecommuting Agreement consistent with the notice provisions of the Agreement.

The ability to telecommute is a privilege and not a right. Not all employees and not all jobs are suited to telecommuting. Typically, telecommuting relationships will not be established during an employee's orientation period or when an employee is experiencing performance problems or requires close supervision. This policy is not intended to establish the University as a multi-state employer, therefore, telecommuting arrangements will only be considered for those residing in the state of Missouri. Furthermore, distance from home to work may be a consideration in determining eligibility to telecommute. Telecommuting from another state for limited periods of time in cases of emergency, hardship or as identified above as exigent circumstances, must be approved by Human Resources in consultation with the Office of the General Counsel prior to implementation.

Department managers are responsible for determining the feasibility of any individual telecommuting arrangement based upon evaluation of the work to be accomplished, benefits to the department, interactions required between the telecommuting employee and other staff members or customers and demonstrated skills of the employee. Employees being considered for telecommuting must have a demonstrated record of at least acceptable performance. Telecommuting arrangements do not change salaries, benefits, job responsibilities, leave policies or other basic terms of employment. In those

rare instances in which a department is hiring a new employee into a Telecommuting status, the Telecommuting requirements must be spelled out as a condition of employment during recruitment for the position.

The University will determine when exigent circumstances, such as natural disaster, pandemic, etc., exist. During such conditions, temporary or intermittent assignments may be approved. The University will notify faculty and management that departments may enact temporary or intermittent assignments. When the exigent circumstances no longer represent a crisis situation, temporary or intermittent assignments must stop.

TELECOMMUTING GUIDELINES

1. A telecommuting agreement normally should be voluntary and mutually acceptable. However, there may be instances in which management determines that there is a business need to require an employee to telecommute.
2. On-going telecommuting arrangements require that a written proposal be submitted to Human Resources outlining:
 - a. The reason for the request;
 - b. Length of time the telecommuting arrangement will continue;
 - c. Number of hours per day / days per week the employee will be telecommuting – including when (what days/hours) the employee is accessible;
 - d. A description of the impact to customers in terms of service and quality of work;
 - e. An explanation of how necessary communication with management, the department and customers will be maintained;
 - f. List of general duties to be performed while telecommuting (Note: other duties or accountabilities may be added/deleted as necessary);
 - g. List of the necessary equipment and software as well as where/how/by whom it will be obtained and maintained; and
 - h. Any anticipated obstacles to success (if any)
3. The arrangement must be in the best interests of the department and the University. The nature of the employee's work must be considered in evaluating the appropriateness of a telecommuting arrangement, including factors such as:
 - Jobs that entail working alone or working with equipment, which can be kept at the alternate work site, are often suitable for telecommuting. Employees who telecommute must have a demonstrable history of independent work, be highly self-directed and motivated and not need substantial supervision.
 - Jobs that require physical presence to perform effectively are not suitable for telecommuting. Examples: supervisor, manager, receptionist, student advisor, custodian and maintenance worker.
 - Jobs that require a high degree of collaboration, iterative conversations to refine the product and/or group discussion to achieve goals are not suitable for telecommuting.

4. The focus in telecommuting arrangements must be on results. The manager must communicate in advance what assignments or tasks are appropriate to be performed at the telecommuting site and what assessment techniques will be used to measure success in meeting performance standards, such as completed reports. These can be measured in quantity, quality and time-to-complete. Measuring productivity and performance should not be different for on-site and off-site employees. A good system for measuring output should be equally effective for both employees on-site as well as those working at home.
5. Good telecommuting practices require that all forms of information (paper, electronic, conversations) be kept secure and confidential, including:
 - Installing Antivirus software, updating the software & virus definitions weekly and scanning for new viruses at least weekly
 - If connecting to the network via DSL, cable modem or non-University dial-in (e.g., SNET, AOL), using the University's VPN or Proxy servers
 - Using a personal firewall if using DSL or cable modem
 - Disabling or restrict file sharing
6. The telecommuting agreement (sample attached) must specify:
 - The number of hours-per-day and/or days-per-week that the employee will be telecommuting - including when (what days/hours) the employee will be accessible to coworkers and customers
 - An explanation of how necessary communication with management, the department and customers will be maintained
 - Methods of contact (such as dedicated phone line, voice mail, modem, fax, pager, etc.)
 - A list of duties to be performed while telecommuting
 - A list of the necessary equipment and who is responsible for: telephone costs (if any); supplies (paper, pens, etc.); computer set-up and maintenance, installation of and/or training on computer software; security of University equipment, materials, and supplies (including responsibility for loss): any additional applicable items. Normally, employee will use his/her own equipment. However, if the telecommuting arrangement is at the direction of the department, department funds must be used/approved by the Department Head for appropriate expenses.
 - Estimated duration of Telecommuting arrangement
 - The employee is responsible for maintaining the telecommuting site in a manner free from health or safety hazards that could endanger the employee, his/her family or others.
 - The employee is responsible for notifying the manager immediately about any safety or ergonomic concerns at the telecommuting site. Health or safety hazards at the telecommuting site may result in immediate suspension of the telecommuting arrangement.
 - If an injury to the employee does occur at the telecommuting work site, management reserves the right, in response to the injury or illness, to inspect the worksite and make appropriate recommendations.

- The employee agrees to take reasonable steps to protect any University property from theft, damage or misuses. This includes maintaining data security and record confidentiality to at least the same degree as when working at the regular University worksite. All Washington University HIPAA and other compliance policies and procedures, including those for handling the physical and electronic security of Protected Health Information (PHI), remain in effect as if the employee were working at the regular University worksite and will be provided to the employee. Employee must complete refresher HIPAA training before being approved to work from home with PHI.
- The employee may not duplicate University-owned documents and will comply with the licensing agreements for use of all software owned by the University. Depending on the circumstances, the employee may be responsible for any damage to or loss of University property.
- A Confidentiality Agreement must be signed by the employee at the initiation of the telecommuting assignment and annually in the employee's performance appraisal.
- If a non-exempt employee is engaged in a telecommuting assignment, he/she must comply with all record-keeping requirements and must accurately record and timely report all working time as a condition of continued participation in the telecommuting program. He/she must also take meal and rest periods with applicable legal requirements and University policies. An employee is not exempt from the meal period, rest period or record-keeping rules solely because he/she is permitted to work at home or at another off-site location. Non-exempt employees must receive prior approval from their supervisor before performing any overtime work during a telecommuting arrangement. Shift differential and on-call pay are not applicable while telecommuting.
- The employee will be covered by workers' compensation for job-related injuries that occur in the course and scope of employment while telecommuting. In cases where the home and the designated workplace are the same, workers' compensation will not apply to non-job related injuries that might occur in or outside the home. The employee must report job-related injuries to his or her supervisor as soon as possible and seek treatment from authorized medical care providers consistent with University policy.
- The employee must acknowledge in writing that the University Telecommuting Policy permits regular telecommuting only from locations in the State of Missouri.
- Management retains the right to modify the agreement on a temporary basis as a result of business necessity (for example, the employee may be required to come to campus on a particular day) or in response to an employee request. An employee must give at least two weeks notice to the University prior to terminating the telecommuting agreement; likewise, the University ordinarily will provide at least two weeks notice to the employee prior to terminating the telecommuting agreement, unless such notice is not feasible due to business necessity.
- The employee will be subject to all applicable University policies during the telecommuting arrangement.

7. In the event the University determines that exigent circumstances (e.g. natural disaster, pandemic, etc.) exist, temporary or intermittent assignments may be approved. The University will notify Faculty and Management that departments may enact temporary or intermittent assignments. When the exigent circumstances no longer represent a crisis situation, temporary or intermittent assignments must stop.
8. The telecommuting agreement must be signed by both the manager and the telecommuter, and requires prior approval of both Human Resources and the department head. A copy must be given to the employee; the original must be kept in the employee's file.
9. Questions should be directed to Human Resources.

RESPONSIBILITIES

EMPLOYEES

1. Complete the Telecommuting Assignment and Agreement as well as the Confidentiality Agreement, in concert with the manager;
2. Assess the telecommuting work space against appropriate safety and ergonomic guidelines;
3. Observe agreed-upon hours of work in accordance with established policies;
4. Comply with all record-keeping requirements and accurately record and timely report all working time;
5. Observe all University policies;
6. Use University equipment (if applicable) only for business purposes;
7. Ensure that work information in both hard copy and electronic form have been adequately secured and confidentiality maintained;
8. Ensure that dependent care for young children, elderly or loved ones with special needs is provided by someone other than the employee during the telecommuting schedule; and
9. Return University equipment (if applicable) upon request or when telecommuting is discontinued.

MANAGERS

1. Recommend for approval (if department initiated) or review and recommend approval/disapproval of employee's request to telecommute;
2. Ensure that telecommuting does not burden staff remaining in the office through equitable distribution of workload;
3. Develop and amend performance work plans as needed for work performed away from the regular University work site;
4. Assign appropriate work to be performed at the alternate work site and verify that the telecommuter has the information and equipment necessary to perform the work effectively and independently;
5. Ensure that work-related documents in both hard copy and electronic form have been adequately secured within the remote work site;
6. Periodically evaluate the efficacy of the telecommuting arrangement; and
7. Refer to Human Resources for evaluation.

HUMAN RESOURCES

1. Review and recommend approval/disapproval the telecommuting request; and
2. If approval is recommended, forward to the department head; if not recommending approval, return to manager with rationale and recommendations, and if necessary, discuss with the department head.

DEPARTMENT HEAD

1. Review and approve/disapprove the request as consistent with the needs of the department and the University.

PROCEDURE

1. Employee and Manager complete the Telecommuting Assignment and Agreement;
2. Manager approves and submits both forms to Human Resources;
3. HR reviews and recommends approval or disapproval of the Telecommuting Agreement. If approval is recommended, forwards to the department head for review; if not recommending approval, notifies the manager;
4. Department head (and/or Dean/Executive Vice Chancellor/Vice Chancellor) reviews and approves or disapproves and advises manager and HR; and
5. If approved, manager finalizes arrangements for employee to begin telecommuting.