

Telecommuting Guidelines

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TELECOMMUTING GUIDELINES

The University of Illinois considers telecommuting to be a viable alternative work arrangement in cases where individual, job and supervisor characteristics are suited to such an arrangement. Telecommuting allows an employee to work at home, or other approved remote location, for all or a 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 or a University-wide benefit; and it does not change the terms and conditions of employment with the University of Illinois.

Telecommuting can be informal, such as working from home for a short-term project or on the road during business travel, or a formal arrangement as described below. Informal, short-term arrangements may also be made for employees on family or medical leave to the extent practical for the employee and the organization. Such informal arrangements are not the focus of these guidelines.

The Decision to Telecommute

1. The decision to offer a telecommuting arrangement is dependent upon the judgment and discretion of the managing supervisor in consultation with Unit/College Human Resources. Either an employee or a managing supervisor can suggest telecommuting as a possible work arrangement. Before entering into any telecommuting arrangement, the employee and manager will evaluate the suitability of such an arrangement paying particular attention to the following areas:
 - 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. Successful telecommuting traits include the ability to work independently, organization and time management skills, self-motivation, and a results orientation.
 - Job Responsibilities - the employee and manager will discuss job responsibilities and determine if the job is appropriate for a telecommuting arrangement.
 - Equipment needs, workspace design considerations, and scheduling issues

Units/Colleges may require additional levels of approval process as the employer deems appropriate.

2. Individuals requesting formal telecommuting arrangements, or being considered for such arrangements, must have been employed with the

University of Illinois for a minimum of six (6) months of continuous, regular employment and must have exhibited above average performance, in accordance with the performance appraisal process. In special circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the six-month waiting period can be waived/modified by the hiring supervisor in consultation with Unit/College Human Resources.

3. If the employee and manager agree to a telecommuting arrangement, a telecommuting agreement will be prepared and signed by all parties and the arrangement will begin. The Labor and Employee Relations (LER) area of Illinois Human Resources should be consulted for any telecommuting agreement for employees who are not exempt from the overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act. It is not required to consult with LER for agreements with overtime eligible employees who have been working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Terms and Conditions of Telecommuting Arrangements

4. All telecommuting arrangements will be made for a set period of time as determined by the managing supervisor, subject to renewal at the end of the agreed upon time period. For initial agreements with new telecommuters, it is recommended that the initial time period be set to a period of three to six months in which time the benefits of telecommuting to both the employee and employer can be assessed prior to entering into a longer-term agreement. Additionally, arrangements started in response to COVID-19 should be reviewed once Illinois is in Phase 5 of the Restore Illinois plan to determine if remote work should continue in some fashion.
5. 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, e-mail, Skype, or other electronic medium during the agreed upon work schedule.
6. Communications between the telecommuter and supervisor will be more formal during the early stages of the telecommuting arrangement. After ascertaining that the arrangement is meeting intended objectives, the manager and telecommuter will communicate at a level consistent with employees working at the office or in a manner and frequency that is appropriate for the job and the individuals involved.
7. Employees entering into telecommuting arrangements must be available for and participate in meetings in accordance with the normal demands of the job. The supervisor will ensure that on-site staff include the telecommuter in meetings as appropriate, using teleconference or other electronic means. If necessitated for business purposes, telecommuting employees may be asked to

report to the University workplace to attend meetings.

8. Telecommuting employees remain obligated to comply with all University rules, policies, practices and procedures. Violation of such rules, practices and procedures may result in immediate termination of the arrangement and possible disciplinary action.
9. If the employee wants to take vacation or other time off for personal reasons during the remote work period, the employee must request permission to take time off from work. The employee should indicate, in the request, which leave benefit the employee will use to cover this time away from work (vacation, floating holiday, accrued compensatory time) and receive approval prior to taking the time off (i.e., the employee must follow his/her unit's normal process for requesting time off).

If the employee becomes ill while working remotely, or if an employee's family member (as defined in the appropriate sick leave policy) becomes ill, the employee can use sick leave or other appropriate leave time the employee is eligible to use. If the absence is greater than three days, units should follow the process for approving FMLA for qualifying employees.

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) includes certain provisions for FLSA-exempt employees that are different than the provisions for non-exempt employees, and as a result, some of the

above guidelines may not apply to an FLSA-exempt employee. If you have any questions about an FLSA-exempt employee, please contact Labor & Employee Relations.

10. **The availability of telecommuting is a flexible work arrangement for employees of the University of Illinois that can be discontinued at any time at the discretion of the employer.** Every effort will be made to provide ten (10) calendar days' notice of such a change to accommodate commuting and other problems that may arise from such a change. However, the employer reserves the right to terminate the arrangement without notice if circumstances require such action. An employee can also be temporarily assigned full-time to his/her on-site office location, if necessitated by business purposes.
11. Employees entering into a telecommuting agreement may be required to use shared workstations and/or office accommodations when working on-site.
12. Prior to renewal of any telecommuting arrangement, the employee and manager will each evaluate the arrangement and make recommendations for continuance. Renewal and/or modifications of the arrangement are subject to the judgment and discretion of the supervisor.

Performance Evaluation

13. Evaluation of telecommuter performance will be consistent with that received by employees working on-site at the office in both content and frequency but will focus on work output and completion of objectives not attendance-based performance. Evaluation methods will include frequent interaction by phone and/or e-mail between the employee and the manager, and regular meetings to assess work progress and discuss problem areas. Expected outputs will be documented at regular intervals to ensure that they are mutually understood by the employee and his or her supervisor.

Equipment and Supplies

14. The managing supervisor will determine, with information supplied by the employee and others involved, the appropriate equipment and communication services needs for each telecommuting arrangement on a case-by-case basis. Equipment supplied by the organization will be maintained by the organization. Equipment supplied by the employee will be maintained by the employee. The University accepts no responsibility for damage or repairs to employee-owned equipment.

Equipment supplied by the organization is to be used for business purposes only. The employee and employing department will document the University equipment to be used in the telecommuting arrangement as set forth in the Telecommuting Agreement. A copy of the appropriate form signed by both the employee and supervisor shall be retained in the department. The telecommuter agrees to take due care to protect the items from damage or theft. Upon termination of employment or of the telecommuting arrangement, all University property will be returned to the University.

15. The University will supply the employee with appropriate office supplies (pens, paper, etc.) for successful completion of job responsibilities.

Work Environment

16. Telecommuting is **not ordinarily** designed as an alternative for satisfying an employee's dependent care responsibilities. **However, during the COVID-19 pandemic or similar emergencies, approval of telecommuting agreements due to an employee's childcare obligations is appropriate due to the unprecedented lack of childcare options and various remote learning models school districts employ for school age children. Units are encouraged to approved telecommuting in these situations as long as the work can be completed remotely.** Prospective telecommuters are expected

to discuss expectations of telecommuting with family members prior to entering into an agreement, and to establish dependent care arrangements to facilitate work completion.

17. In the event the telecommuting arrangement involves use of the employee's home, the employee will establish an appropriate work environment within their home for work purposes. The University will not be responsible for costs associated with initial setup of the employee's home office such as remodeling or lighting, or the cost of utilities. The University reserves the right to inspect the employee's home worksite for conformance with minimal workplace requirements including possible work hazards and to suggest modifications.
18. Injuries sustained by the employee while at their home-based work location and in conjunction with their regular work duties are normally covered by the University's workers' compensation policy. Telecommuting employees are responsible for notifying the employer of such injuries in accordance with organization's worker's compensation procedures. The employee is liable for any injuries sustained by visitors to their work site. (See APPENDIX A.)
19. Consistent with the organization's expectations of information asset security for employees working at the office full-time, telecommuting employees will be expected to ensure the protection of University information accessible from their home office. Steps include, but are not limited to, use of locked file cabinets and desks, regular password maintenance, use of the campus Virtual Private Network (VPN; see <https://techservices.illinois.edu/services/virtual-private-networking-vpn/details>), and any other steps appropriate for the job and the environment.
20. Individual tax implications related to the home-based workspace shall be the responsibility of the telecommuting employee.

Restrictions

21. Telecommuting employees who are subject to (eligible for) the overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act will be required to record all hours worked in a manner designated by the organization. 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 cessation of the telecommuting agreement.

TELECOMMUTING AGREEMENT

I have read and understand the attached Telecommuting Guidelines, and agree to the duties, obligations, responsibilities, and conditions for telecommuters described in that document.

I agree that, among other things, I am responsible for establishing specific telecommuting work hours consistent with the quantity of normal work hours, furnishing and maintaining my work space in a safe manner, respecting established telecommuting protocols, and employing appropriate measures to protect University assets and information.

I understand that telecommuting is voluntary, and I may stop telecommuting at any time. I also understand that the University may at any time change any or all of the conditions under which I telecommute or terminate the telecommuting arrangement.

The specific nature of this telecommuting arrangement is detailed below.

Date: _____

Name of Department: _____

Name of Department Head: _____

Name of Supervisor: _____

Name of Employee: _____

Time Period for Arrangement: *Start Date* _____

End or Renewal Date: _____

Description of Remote Work Location:

Address and phone:

Description of workspace at remote location:

Telecommuting Schedule:

Telecommuting will occur on a weekly basis as follows:

Regular telecommuting work hours:
Communications and Feedback:

Description of communication protocols established for the arrangement:

Performance evaluation criteria:

Restrictions: FLSA restrictions that apply to the arrangement:

Note: Non-exempt University employees are subject to hourly time reporting and overtime requirements. Any telecommuting arrangement involving non-exempt staff must conform with these restrictions.

Other:

I agree to the terms of this agreement:

Employee _____

Supervisor _____

Department Head _____

College/Unit Human Resources _____

(This agreement includes three appendices, which are set forth on the next two pages.)

TELECOMMUTING AGREEMENT: APPENDIX A WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The University will provide benefits in accordance with the Illinois Workers' Compensation Act and the Illinois Occupational Disease Act.

Supervisors shall have the responsibility to inform all employees, including those who may participate in telecommuting arrangements, of their rights and responsibilities under coverage of the Illinois Workers' Compensation Act and the Illinois Occupational Disease Act. Such information shall include providing employees with specific instructions about what to do in case of an on the job accident or injury. The employee shall be informed of the requirement for prompt notification of accident or injury to the supervisor and of designated medical facilities where treatment is provided.

The injury on the job of a telecommuting employee is treated the same as an on the job injury to any other employee while in the course and scope of employment. If the employee is working at home or another approved off-site location, the term "course and scope of employment" is limited to the hours and location described in the telecommuting agreement. The employee's home work-location is an extension of his/her office or primary work site. Injuries occurring in the off-site location during agreed upon work hours are covered under workers' compensation, just as an injury would be if it occurred at the on-site work location.

In the event of an injury, the telecommuting employee must:

1. Immediately contact his/her supervisor to report the incident.
2. The employee should complete the University of Illinois Employee's Injury Report Form (link under item 'c' below) and return it to the immediate supervisor who will forward it to the University of Illinois Workers' Compensation and Claims Management Office at:
WorkComp@uillinois.edu.
3. The employee should promptly seek medical care and follow the campus-specific guidelines provided under the Workers' Compensation links below:
 - a) General Workers' Compensation information:
https://www.treasury.uillinois.edu/risk_management/workers_compensation
 - b) Workers' Compensation FAQs:
https://www.treasury.uillinois.edu/risk_management/faqs_risk/
 - c) Injury reporting forms:
https://www.treasury.uillinois.edu/risk_management/workers_compensation/reporting/

- d) Injury brochures: <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/iwcc/Documents/handbook.pdf>
- e) Workers' Compensation policy links:
<https://www.treasury.uillinois.edu/riskmanagement/tulip/>

Questions regarding work-related injuries should be directed to the University of Illinois Workers' Compensation and Claims Management Office at: WorkComp@uillinois.edu or [217-333-1080](tel:217-333-1080)

TELECOMMUTING AGREEMENT APPENDIX B: SAFETY

The participant will designate a certain part of the home as the area where work is to be performed. Based on descriptions of the work area, and possible on-site inspections, a determination should be made by the supervisor that the site is adequate, both in terms of utility and safety for performance of assigned work and installation and use of equipment. The participant, in initial discussions with the supervisor, should be made aware that:

1. Management may deny an employee the opportunity to participate or may rescind a telecommuting arrangement based on safety problems or lack of compliance with safety requirements in the home.
2. During the specified time periods of work, with appropriate notice, the University may make on-site visits to the off-site workplace to determine if the work site is safe and free from hazards, and to maintain, inspect or retrieve University owned equipment, software, and supplies.

TELECOMMUTING AGREEMENT: APPENDIX C

LIABILITY

The University will not be liable for damages to an employee's personal or real property during the course of performing his/her assigned duties and responsibilities in a telecommuting arrangement.

The telecommuting employee remains liable for injuries to third persons and/or members of the employee's family arising from the employee's premises.

**TELECOMMUTING AGREEMENT APPENDIX D:
OPTIONAL FEASIBILITY ASSESSMENT¹**

This document can be used to help the supervisor determine the feasibility of a particular position and/or employee to be engaged in a telecommuting agreement. The document will also assess the employee's and supervisor's work styles and determine if the styles would support a telecommuting arrangement.

Name of Telecommuter:

Position Title:

Name of Supervisor:

Department/Unit:

Job Assignments and Duties

List the key duties and percentage of time allocated to each duty.

- | | | |
|----|-------|---|
| 1. | _____ | % |
| 2. | _____ | % |
| 3. | _____ | % |
| 4. | _____ | % |
| 5. | _____ | % |

Supervisor's Assessment of Position Suitability for Remote Work

This section will help you determine if your employee's position's key duties lend themselves to telecommuting.

Do key duties require ongoing access to equipment, materials, and files that can only be accessed on Illinois property?

Yes No

Do key duties require extensive face-to-face contact with supervisors, other employees, students, clients, or the public on Illinois property?

Yes No

Do key duties require extensive time in-person meetings or performing work on Illinois property?

Yes No

Do security issues require key duties to be conducted on Illinois property?

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes to any of the above questions, telecommuting might not be appropriate.

How reliant is this position on computer technology to accomplish key duties? _____

What percentage of time is required on Illinois property? % _____

The following tasks are typical of employees who telecommute. Indicate the percentage of time spent on appropriate tasks each week for the specified position.

Task	% Time Per week	Task	% Time Per week
Writing/editing		Email	
Phone Calls		Research	
Data analysis		Travel/visits	
Administrative		Planning	
Other			

Can the time spent on the above type of tasks support telecommuting?

Yes No

If not, can you rearrange the position's duties (performed on the same day) to support telecommuting?

- Yes No

How frequently would you want the employee to telecommute?

- One day per week Two days per week Three days per week
 Once every two weeks Occasionally/special project
 Other: _____

Do you need to add additional duties to support telecommuting?

- Yes No

Supervisor's Assessment of Employee Suitability for Remote Work

This section will help you determine if the employee can work in a self-directed manner in managing his or her work and time.

Does the employee have a complete understanding of his or her job and performance expectations?

- Yes No

Does the employee regularly demonstrate that his or her approach to work is organized and dependable?

- Yes No

Is the employee highly productive?

- Yes No

Does the employee regularly meet deadlines?

- Yes No

Can the employee work independently and without constant supervision?

- Yes No

Can direction be provided by phone?

- Yes No

Does the employee need/desire to be around coworkers?

- Yes No

Are there any known potential distractions at home?

- Yes No

Can the employee work in an environment with little structure?

- Yes No

Does the employee have the technology, including computer, appropriate software, and remote access capability, to work from home?

- Yes No

Does the employee have a suitable workspace at home?

- Yes No

Can the employee's performance at home be measured?

- Yes No

Based on the above, does the collective weight of

Yes answers support the employee being a teleworker?

- Yes No
-

Supervisor's Assessment of His/Her Own Managerial/Supervisory Style

This section will help you determine if your managerial/supervisory style supports telecommuting.

Are you comfortable allowing employees to work largely autonomously?

- Yes No

Do you provide solutions when requested for assistance?

- Yes No

How frequently do you monitor the employee's work performance?

- Daily Weekly Other Intervals

Are you comfortable communicating via email or telephone, as opposed to face-to-face?

- Yes No

Are you able to establish clear objectives?

- Yes No

Can you accurately measure the employee's performance and outcomes?

- Yes No

Can you accurately measure the employee's time worked?

- Yes No

Do you have a backup to monitor work in your absence (short and long term)?

- Yes No

Do you trust that the employee will be productive notwithstanding lack of direct supervision?

- Yes No

Based on the above, does the collective weight of 'Yes' answers support the employee being a teleworker??

- Yes No

Decision

Summarize your answers from the above assessment sections.

The position's key duties support telecommuting.

- Yes No

The employee meets the criteria to be a telecommuter.

- Yes No

My management/supervision style supports telecommuting.

- Yes No

My department supports telecommuting.

- Yes No

I should approve my employee's request to telecommute.

- Yes No

Proposed work schedule:

Comments:

¹This form is adapted from Rutgers University,
<https://uhr.rutgers.edu/worklife-balance/telecommuting#Telecommuting-Arrangement>