



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT TELEWORKING

Listed below are several, frequently asked questions about teleworking. For additional information, contact the Libraries' Coordinator of Personnel Programs. (5-9048) or jl345@umail.umd.edu or jlove1@umd.edu

1. What is teleworking?

Teleworking is a program that provides employees the opportunity to work all or part of the workweek (generally on a regular basis) at remote worksites. Typically, the remote worksite is the employee's home, satellite office, or a Telework Center geographically convenient to the employee's home. Working at a remote worksite is called "teleworking" and such workers are called "teleworkers."

2. What types of jobs or tasks are suitable for teleworking?

Generally, any job that has portable tasks and can be performed away from the main worksite is suitable for teleworking. In addition, jobs which have set starting and stopping times that are easy to define, where face to face contact can be planned and scheduled are generally suitable. The teleworker and the supervisor can determine which specific tasks are suited teleworking.

3. What types of employees are suitable for teleworking?

Employees who have completed their probationary period of employment, require minimal supervision, are organized, possess a high level of skill and knowledge of their jobs, and who have family situations conducive to working at home, are suitable candidates for teleworking.

4. What are the criteria for participating in the project?

The job must be suitable for teleworking, the employee must be suitable for teleworking, the employee must want to telework, and the supervisor must be willing to allow the employee to telework.

5. How will a supervisor monitor the work of an employee who is at home or at a remote worksite?

With quantifiable tasks, quantity and quality should be measured as it is currently being done in the office. For non-quantifiable or project-oriented tasks, measurement normally would involve:

- ◆ establishing the nature and objective(s) of the task;
- ◆ setting a deadline or due date; and
- ◆ setting progress or status report/meeting dates.

The supervisor and the teleworker must complete the Teleworker Work Plan (Attachment 4) before the employee teleworks.

- 6. If selected for the program, will there be changes in the teleworker's pay, benefits, sick leave, or overtime?**
No. Salary benefits and job responsibilities will not change when participating in the program. Current agency procedures for annual, sick or other forms of leave, and working overtime will continue to apply.
- 7. Do teleworkers have to buy their own equipment (e.g., computer, modem, fax machine)?**
It is recommended that a Library staff member who plans to telework should have their own equipment and have knowledge of equipment specifications identified by Library ITD that are needed in order to access the Library system. Also, many jobs may be performed without the use of special equipment.
- 8. Should a specific schedule be set for off-site work?**
Generally, employees and supervisors should agree on a specific day(s) and times the employee will work off-site. However, the work to be completed should be the controlling factor and scheduling should be arranged accordingly.
- 9. Will teleworking eliminate the need for dependent care?**
No. Teleworking is not a substitute for child or elder care and employees should continue to make the same arrangements as if working at the main office.
- 10. Must teleworkers continue teleworking for the duration of the project?**
No. Either the teleworker or the teleworker's supervisor may terminate the teleworking arrangement at any time with reasonable notice or as agreed.
- 11. Will allowing some employees to telework have a negative impact on employees who remain at the office?**
The overall interests of the office must take precedence over working off-site. One person's teleworking should not be permitted to adversely affect the work of employees at the main office. The teleworking employee's co-workers should be coached and counseled prior to beginning the program so that potential resentment and envy is minimized.
- 12.. Is teleworking a good way to employ disabled persons?**
Yes. Many employees with disabling conditions or injuries are often able to work but experience difficulty commuting or working in a regular office setting. Permitting a disabled employee to telework can supplement current efforts to accommodate the employee and provide another method of ensuring that an employee is able to work effectively.

13. What are the benefits of teleworking?

There are many general benefits to teleworking, and there are benefits that will be specific to the Library and staff. Some examples might be:

1. Improvements in employee morale and effectiveness.
2. Reductions in transportation costs including car insurance, maintenance, and wear.
3. Retention of skilled Library staff and reduction in turnover due in part to increased job satisfaction.
4. Accommodation of employees with short or long term health problems or family responsibilities. However, employees should be reminded that teleworking is not a substitute for child or elder care.
5. Cost savings to the State in regard to sick leave absences, and energy conservation.
6. Reduction in automobile-created air pollution and traffic congestion.
7. Potential for increased productivity.
8. Improved work atmosphere due to fewer co-worker non-business interruptions.

14. Does an employee have a right to be a teleworker?

No. Teleworking participation is not a right. Library administration is responsible for deciding if the position is one that is appropriate for work at a remote job site and for examining both the content of the work and the performance of the employee. Because this is a management work option, there is no automatic right of an employee to continue participation in the event of a change of supervisor.

15. Can a supervisor participate in the telework program?

Yes.

16. Who is liable for work-related injuries and/or damages at the remote worksite?

As a general rule, the State is liable for work-related injuries incurred in the performance of official job duties. State employees suffering work-related injuries and/or damages at the remote worksite are covered under the State's Worker's Compensation Law.

17. What should a supervisor consider before agreeing to a teleworking arrangement?

The supervisor and worker should examine the job requirements and determine what tasks can be accomplished at a remote worksite. Additionally, the supervisor should determine

- if the employee has the skill and knowledge of the job to work at the remote site;
- if the employee needs work-related input or support that is only available at the main office;
- the availability of equipment, as well as related costs necessary face-to-face contact or other type of main office contact required by the job; and
- policies and procedures necessary to ensure the integrity and security of information.

18. How will work performance be monitored? Will teleworking lead to a decline in work performance?

Generally, teleworking performance should be monitored in the same way main worksite performance is monitored. Optimally, performance should be monitored on a results-oriented basis. The supervisor will have to carefully plan and identify the nature and objective of the task, perhaps by establishing deadlines or arranging for progress reports and meetings. Most studies of teleworkers have reported that teleworking job performance equals or exceeds pre-teleworking performance.

19. Should a specific schedule be set for work at the remote worksite?

Yes. All work schedules are discretionary and require management approval. A pre-set schedule of teleworking work hours should be established prior to the employee working at the remote worksite. Temporary teleworking assignments or changes in work schedule may be made at management's discretion to meet work needs or to accommodate the employee.

20. What if a supervisor or a teleworker believes the teleworking arrangement is not working?

Teleworking arrangements are not a right or condition of employment. Management may end an employee's participation in the teleworking program if the employee's performance declines or if the program is detrimental to an agency's needs. Also, the employee may end participation at anytime without cause.

21. Will the employee be reimbursed for utility expenses associated with a remote worksite?

No. The State assumes no responsibility for the teleworker's expenses related to heating, electricity, water, and space usage.

22. What equipment will the employee need at the remote worksite and who will provide it?

The needed equipment and who will provide it will vary by situation. Generally speaking, agencies are not required to provide equipment at remote worksites.

23. Are there restrictions on the use of State-owned equipment, software, or information at a remote worksite?

Yes. State-owned equipment can be used for official purposes only. Teleworkers must adhere to all rules, regulations, and procedures relating to security and confidentiality of work-related information and data. Agencies must maintain appropriate administrative, technical and physical safeguards to ensure the security and confidentiality of the records.

24. Who is responsible for maintaining and servicing State or privately-owned equipment used at the remote worksite?

Generally, the State will be responsible for the service and maintenance of State-owned equipment. Teleworkers using their own equipment are responsible for its service and maintenance.