



Telecommuting: Best Practices for Managers

This guide is offered as a supplement to the Temporary Telecommuting Protocol and the Temporary Telecommuting Agreement. Temporary telecommuting or a flexible work schedule may be implemented in situations where “social distancing” is encouraged and where job duties support the practice.

Priorities and Essential Work

Evaluate department/team priorities, taking into consideration the impact on your customers and collaborators. Identify what work is essential and the feasibility of completing some, or all of that work remotely. You may need to be creative in your approach to maintaining a full workload for non-exempt employees if his/her duties are predominantly externally focused or student or customer oriented. Use this opportunity to tackle ‘back burner’ projects, outline an on-line professional development plan to strengthen job-related skills, and update or create desk manuals or job guides. Also explore whether the employee could temporarily assist other departments with remote completion of projects.

This presents a good time to complete or review the following required on-line training sessions available on Blackboard:

1. Prevent Sexual Violence Together
2. Prevent Discrimination and Harassment Together (Immediately follows the Prevent Sexual Violence Together course)
3. Information Security and Awareness

Even if employees have previously taken these trainings it’s good to re-familiarize everyone with these critical policies and issues.

Time and Performance

Managers are responsible for setting clear expectations for employees and teams by discussing how time and performance will be managed. Document daily work schedules and any flexibility that will be accommodated. Communicate regularly with employees regarding work priorities, deliverables and timelines. Follow up on verbal conversations with written summaries of what was discussed. Provide ample opportunity for employee questions or suggestions.



Communication and Collaboration

Managers should engage and communicate regularly with employees. Establish the channels by which communication will take place both one-on-one and among team members. With proper planning, communication issues associated with remote work can be minimized.

Discuss and document communication expectations. Some examples of communication expectations are:

- Notify supervisor and coworkers of any change in the telecommuting schedule
- Be available to the supervisor and coworkers by Teams, telephone and email during scheduled hours
- Return calls and emails in a timely manner
- Maintain daily communication with the supervisor
- Promptly notify the supervisor when unable to perform work assignments due to equipment failure or other unforeseen circumstances

Many tools are available to support remote teaming. Teams is an excellent remote collaboration resource allowing you to audio conference, share your screen, chat instantly, and share files. Consider adding the remote option to all meeting invitations proactively. Also, identify a secondary host who can start the meeting should the event host not be available. Use a webcam to increase interpersonal communication and to support those who use lip reading. Use mute to reduce background noise when you are not speaking. Where participation is essential, consider using the 'raise hand' or similar feature to help determine who will speak when.

Work Site

Make sure employees have the tools they need to perform. Ensure they have the correct network access, passcodes and instructions for remote work.

It is important to remember that alternative work-sites are an extension of the university workspace. The university liability for job-related accidents continues during the approved telecommuting schedule and in the employee's designated work location. In the case that an injury occurs during telecommuting work hours, the employee should immediately report the injury to his/her supervisor.

A non-exempt employee shall not work overtime without prior manager approval. Failure to obtain prior approval for overtime work may result in termination of the telecommuting arrangement and/or other appropriate disciplinary action.



Human Resources

The Drake University Telecommuting Policy states that remote work cannot be a substitute for ongoing child care needs. In light of COVID-19, remote work may occur while dependents are present if their school or child care is closed and alternative care is unavailable, under the following guidelines:

- Employees are expected to determine what they can reasonably accomplish while dependents are under their care (whether healthy or ill), and the amount of time they expect to be able to work.
- If a dependent is ill and requires ongoing attention, appropriate accrued leave can be used as needed. In addition, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Drake sick leave may be used to care for healthy children at home due to school or childcare closures, until further notice.