

Frequently Asked Questions about Telework

Q: What is teleworking?

A: Teleworking replaces travel to, from, and for work with telecommunications technologies. It refers to working at home or another location on a full- or part-time basis. Many employees telework only once or twice per week, while other employees telework full-time and occasionally go to the office.

Q: What type of equipment is needed for teleworking?

A: While teleworking can be done with as little technology as a phone, most often it involves some remote access, computer hardware and software, email, and other technologies. You may need additional coordination with your IT and HR departments to assess what technology and equipment is necessary to do your job.

Q: What are some of the issues that supervisors confront with teleworkers?

A: Some supervisors can run into conflicts like employees not responding in a timely manner, confusing communication, and a feeling that employees are distracted when they telework. These concerns often stem from preconceived notions about teleworking. Research has shown supervisors can expect more productivity and a higher quality of work from teleworkers because they are less stressed and distracted in their flexible work environment. For resources on how to manage remote employees, check out this [USGA webpage](#).

Q: How do I know if the teleworkers are really working?

A: The employee's completed work product is the indicator. Supervisors must focus on quantity, quality, and timeliness. They must manage by objectives or results, rather than by direct observation. Set clear goals that are well communicated throughout the team. For top tips to manage teleworkers, read this [Forbes article](#).

Q: How will managers know how to supervise teleworkers?

A: Teleworking presents an opportunity for teleworker supervisors to become better managers. A teleworker supervisor manages by results and not by monitoring work hours. By focusing on the employee's work product, supervisors will improve their organizational abilities and their own skill in managing by objectives.

Q: Will employees work less if they are at home working unsupervised?

A: No, survey results show marked improvements in productivity. Teleworker productivity increases because employees work at their peak times, and experience less stress due to the absence of the commute to and from work.

Q: Will loyalty to the employer be diminished?

A: No, loyalty is likely to improve as employees are happier with their working conditions. Employee morale also improves as a result of teleworking.

Q: How can social interaction be maintained to keep teleworkers from feeling isolated from their colleagues?

A: Many techniques are available to overcome the feeling of isolation. These include part-time teleworking, core days in the office, and frequent communication via telephone and voicemail. In addition, teleworkers should be included in all scheduled meetings and events. Teleworkers can socialize with the rest of the team digitally with video conferencing tools like Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Google Hangouts. Employees can use these tools for more than just meetings, including virtual coffee chats, book clubs, or cooking lessons to boost employee morale and foster company connectivity.

(Continued)

Frequently Asked Questions about Telework (Continued)

Q: Is teleworking a substitute for child or elder care?

A: No, a teleworker must focus on his/her job, not handle demanding dependent care situations. However, teleworkers should be flexible and be able to manage their work/family schedules, particularly when remote work is part of an emergency mandate. For some helpful hints, please visit this [Flex Job blog post](#).

Q: Can teleworking result in reduced use of sick leave?

A: Yes. An employee working in a traditional office may require half a day away from the office for a doctor or dentist appointment. A teleworker can take one or two hours and then return to work. In addition, an employee who does not feel well enough to drive, or whose child is sick, may be able to work limited hours at home by teleworking.

Q: Will the need for overtime decrease as a result of teleworking?

A: For non-exempt employees, the rules for overtime are the same as they are in the office. Please refer to your organization's Human Resources staff or handbook for

guidance. It is important that employees maintain a schedule similar to what they would have in the office. Set clear boundaries for work hours, breaks, and lunch time. Check out tips for staying productive [here](#).

Q: What are some of the issues that teleworkers should be aware of?

A: Teleworkers should designate a work area for teleworking in their homes. A separate room provides greater privacy but is not necessarily required. Teleworkers must gain the trust and support of their families, coworkers, clients, and managers. Teleworkers need to be aware of the tendency to work long hours and the need to take breaks.

Q: If I want to start a teleworking program or to improve an existing one, what is the first step I should take?

A: Call 511 and say "iCommute" or email iCommute@sandag.org. Check out additional iCommute telework resources [here](#).