

## 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.

### **Q: What types of jobs are appropriate for teleworking?**

**A:** Most "information-based" jobs are appropriate for teleworking. Teleworking is ideal for jobs that require reading, writing, research, working with data, and talking on the phone. Many jobs that may not seem appropriate at first may be modified so that the employees can telework, at least on a part-time basis. One of the secrets to designing a good teleworking program lies in the ability to organize specific jobs so they can be done without constant interaction or need for feedback.

### **Q: Which employees are ideal for teleworking?**

**A:** The ideal teleworker is well organized, able to work independently, and requires minimal supervision. Successful teleworkers have a high degree of job skill and knowledge and strong time management skills. Teleworkers don't mind working alone. Teleworking is not ideal or desirable for every employee.

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

**A:** Some supervisors of teleworkers have a problem with the concept of employees working from home. They fear that their employees may be distracted with household duties and/or dependent care, preventing them from accomplishing their work. Research has shown that it is the opposite; 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.

### **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.

### **Q: Who is the ideal supervisor for a teleworker?**

**A:** The ideal supervisor of teleworkers has a positive attitude towards teleworking and is willing to allow employees to telework. A teleworker supervisor manages by results and not by monitoring work hours. Telework supervisors delegate work easily, are well organized and trust their employees. Not every supervisor is comfortable with a style of management that is conducive to successful teleworking.

### **Q: How will managers know how to supervise teleworkers?**

**A:** Teleworking presents an opportunity for teleworker supervisors to become better managers. 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 have fewer distractions and interruptions, 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.

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## Frequently Asked Questions about Telework (Continued)

**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.

**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, due to their flexibility, teleworkers are better able to manage their work/family schedules.

**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.

**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](mailto:iCommute@sandag.org).