

City of Memphis

Telecommuting Guidance Frequently Asked Questions

For Division Leadership and Management

Please note – this document will be updated periodically as new information and guidance emerges.

Updated March 12, 2020

Q. What happens when employee’s child’s school or care giver location is closed?

A: In the event a public or private school is closed by order of a public official for health-related reasons, an employee may telecommute if his or her position is determined to be business critical by his/her Division Director and the employee has limited child care options. The Division Director may require documentation that the employee has a child enrolled in a school that has announced a closing.

If an employee’s position does not meet the criteria for telecommuting, an employee may use accrued and/or donated leaves in the following order for salary continuity until schools are reopened or childcare can be established, whichever comes first:

1. Sick leave
2. Vacation leave
3. Donated leave (for current sick leave bank participants)
4. Borrowed sick leave (up to 80 hours for 8-hour employees, and 96 hours to 144 hours for 24-hour employees)

Q: What is telecommuting?

A: Telecommuting is a work arrangement that allows the employee to fulfill his/her primary job responsibility at a location other than his/her work site, such as at home.

Q: Who approves telecommuting arrangements?

A: The Division Director selects which employees are eligible for telecommuting arrangements based on business-critical operation continuity.

Q: What types of positions are considered for telecommuting opportunities?

A: Job characteristics of a position suited for telecommuting typically require minimum supervision or face-to-face contact and is business critical as determined by the Division Director.

Q: How should it work?

A: Telecommuting staff should maintain daily contact by telephone and email with his/her department. Whenever possible, weekly face-to-face check-ins should be arranged to discuss work progress.

Q: If I am on FMLA, may I work from home to extend my available leave time?

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A: No. Employees who are on FMLA and unable to report to work may not perform work at home in order to extend his/her available leave time. Remember, employees who have been approved for FMLA leave will not be available for work until he/she is released by the treating physician or in the case of caring for an ill family member, until the approved leave time has been met and is no longer needed.

Q: If my treating physician determines that I should temporarily work from home and not come in to the office, will this be an approved telecommuting arrangement?

A: No. However, temporary alternatives for work arrangements will be evaluated based on the division needs on a case-by-case basis under our ADA parameters.

Q: Who is responsible for establishing my home as an alternative work site?

A: Telecommuters who work from home are responsible for having a designated work area. Telecommuters who require home adjustments are responsible for any costs related to remodeling and the initial setup of that designated workspace.

Q: Can I deduct my home office as a business expense on my taxes?

A: If you are considering tax implications if working from home, it is recommended that you consult with a tax expert.

Q: Who pays for the equipment in my home?

A: City of Memphis will not provide telecommuting equipment unless it is justified based on the needs of the department. The decision as to type, nature, function and/or quality of electronic hardware, modems, system access, data and phone lines rest entirely with the supervisor in coordination with the Division Director and IS.

Q: Is City of Memphis responsible for my personal equipment when I use it for work purposes?

A: No. Employees using personal equipment are responsible for any loss, damage or wear to that equipment.

Q: What happens if I am a telecommuter and am too ill to work at home?

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A: Telecommuters should follow their department call-in procedures and utilize paid time off when reporting time not worked.

Q: What should employees do if they have a work-related accident, injury, or illness which occurs at a telecommuting work-site?

A: A telecommuter who suffers a work-related accident, injury or illness should make a report immediately to the employee's supervisor so that a first report of injury can be reported and an investigation into the incident can begin.

Q: Do City of Memphis policies apply to telecommuters working at remote sites?

A: Yes. City of Memphis policies and procedures apply to all alternative work arrangements.

Q: If I work from home and am required to come to my primary work for a meeting, can I count that as business travel?

A: No. Establishing a remote work location in a telecommuters' home does not make the telecommuter's regular commute to the primary work location a business trip.

Q: As a non-exempt staff member who has been approved to work at a remote location, will I need to get approval from my supervisor to work beyond 40 hours a week?

A: Yes. Nonexempt employees will usually work a 40-hour workweek to ensure the successful completion of the job. However, any overtime work must be pre-authorized by the Division Director and reported as hours worked.

Q: Once a job has been approved as viable as an alternative work arrangement, is it always approved?

A: No. These arrangements do not change the basic terms and conditions of the staff member's employment, nor are they guaranteed to any employee for any specific time. These arrangements are evaluated by the department and goal expectations are set and monitored. These expectations must be reached regardless of your work location.

Q: Under what conditions will an alternative work arrangement be discontinued?

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A: If at any time alternative work arrangements do not meet the needs of the institution they can be discontinued at the discretion of the Division Director.