

## **TELEWORK GUIDELINES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

State of Vermont is strongly encouraging telework for its state workforce due to the COVID-19 pandemic. State Departments and Agencies should be exploring all possible options for teleworking for state employees applying this approach liberally including flexible hours. Appointing Authorities should use their discretion based on essential functions and capabilities of who is able to telework. These efforts are to be undertaken with the recognition of the current extenuating circumstances. Managers of employees who self-identify with high-risk conditions making them more susceptible to COVID-19, should work closely with employees to explore telework options.

### **Teleworking Basics for all Employees**

- All computer hardware, software, and cellphones used for official work purposes must be state issued and meet the standards and criteria as outlined in applicable department, agency, and ADS policies and guidelines. You should work with your supervisor and assigned ADS contacts to arrange for the acquisition and/or installation of needed hardware and software. Your home network needs to be secured (i.e. password protected). Office 365 requires multi-factor authentication (MFA) – when logging in from a new/different device, you get from a text message with an authentication code. Staff who are willing and able to telework, but do not have a state issued cellphone will need to use their personal cellphone to receive the authorization code.
- Ensure that you have the tools needed to perform your job remotely. These can include but are not limited to laptop; cellphone; external memory device; internet access; software programs enabling safe internet access (VPN, Citrix, Microsoft Teams, SharePoint).
- If you anticipate that you may not be able to return to your workplace for in excess of one to two weeks, prepare a box of files that you can take with you on short notice if they are essential to performing your duties. You must observe all rules and best practices (e.g. HIPAA, PII etc.) governing file and records retention and transportation thereof. Include supplies that you might need in the same box (pens, paper, stapler).
- Work with your supervisor now on identifying the essential duties associated with your job that can be performed remotely. If there are job duties that you will not be able to perform at home, come up with a list of ones that you can, including using the opportunity to do work that you have not had the opportunity/time to (projects, audits, electronic file organization, policies review, mandated or job specific online training etc.).
- Work with your supervisor on an alternate work schedule if that enables you to feasibly work from home within a certain time and home environment framework.

- Protect confidential data in the same manner as when onsite. Personal data of employees or individuals should be maintained in a secure area and protected from view of non-authorized persons.

### **Telework Basics for Supervisors**

- Work with staff members on ensuring that they have the necessary tools to perform their jobs remotely.
- Consider the usage of tools like Microsoft Team to schedule individual staff meetings and/or group staff meetings.
- If a staff member has an existing reasonable accommodation provided as part of an official reasonable accommodation request in effect at his/her workplace, consider if it can be provided at his/her home. If providing the accommodation isn't feasible at the employee's home, consult with your assigned HR staff for guidance.
- Maintain regular contact with staff members. Frequent communication is especially important when staff are dispersed. Frequent emails, updates, calls and virtual team meetings are expected as frequently as necessary under the circumstances.

### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

- **What is teleworking?**
  - Teleworking is an arrangement in which an employee works outside the office, but still fulfills essential work responsibilities. As it relates to measures taken in response to the COVID-19 virus, teleworking means working from home.
- **Who is eligible to telework?**
  - Teleworking from home may be a requirement for some State employees in response to the closure of select State workplaces associated with the COVID-19 virus. This arrangement may also be a requirement for employees who are able to work, but are in self-isolation status. All requests to telework must be approved by supervisors. Supervisors will inform an employee when he/she may be required to telework.
- **What if I am eligible to telework but I don't have the tools needed to do so remotely?**
  - Your department/agency can provide you with the tools/resources needed to perform your essential duties at home provided that what is needed is regarded as reasonable by your supervisor. If internet access is not possible based on where you live, and you must access the internet in order to perform your essential duties, you likely will not be authorized to telework.
- **Who is not eligible to telework?**
  - Teleworking is likely not an option for employees whose job duties cannot reasonably be performed from home or an alternate work site. Leadership within agencies/departments determine which positions/employees are eligible to telework.

Generally speaking, job duties that require daily in person direct interaction with members of the public/clients as a fundamental part of the job likely will not be able to telework. Jobs that provide direct services to vulnerable populations in a residential setting also likely will not be eligible for teleworking.

- **What happens if my worksite is closed, and I am not eligible/authorized to telework?**
  - If Management authorizes the complete closing of a State office for emergency reasons employees who leave the workplace or cannot work due to the closing receive their regular pay for the time out of the closed office.
- **If I am authorized to telework, am I required to work my standard hours when teleworking?**
  - No, but a work schedule must be worked out with your supervisor.
- **Am I required to complete a “Telework Agreement” if I am approved to telework?**
  - No, submission of a formal “Teleworking Agreement” is not required related to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the guidelines governing telework and use of State-owned equipment as outlined in DHR Personnel Policy 11.7 and those specific to an agency and/or department will be in full effect for employees when teleworking.
- **If I have only been authorized to telework if my worksite is closed, can I continue to telework once my worksite reopens?**
  - No, unless your supervisor has approved an extension of a teleworking arrangement, you must report to your worksite on the date/time communicated by your supervisor.