

Telecommuting Frequently Asked Questions

For Supervisors

Iowa State University recognizes that Professional and Scientific employees may work from different locations and a variety of hours depending on the nature of the work. ISU recognizes that in some instances employees may work on an infrequent basis from home or remotely to achieve work life balance and still satisfy the requirements of the position. In general, however, employee requests to work from home on a regular basis should be considered case-by-case depending on the business needs of the work unit.

Before a department supports a standing arrangement for an employee to work remotely, they should consider the following information and when possible should provide the employee with information in writing that outlines the expectations surrounding the employee's telecommuting relationship.

When considering a telecommuting arrangement for a P&S employee who is exempt from overtime, a manager should review the following:

- Does the nature of the work lend itself to working remotely? If so, for what percentage of time?
- What equipment is required to perform the job duties?
- What impact will it have on the customers and coworkers?
- Is the employee a strong performer?
- How often will the employee be required to report to campus?
- How will the employee's performance be measured, including productivity and accountability?
- Would you allow the agreement for others that are similarly situated?
- What arrangements if any will need to be made for travel expenses?
- Is there an increased potential for a Conflict of Interest?
- What are the campus office or space requirements?

An employee has asked me to telecommute, can I say no?

Yes, a supervisor should review the items above and consider if an agreement could be supported. Should a supervisor not be able to support a telecommuting agreement, he or she should share the reasons for the denial with the employee. You should be consistent in your decision if you have received similar requests in the past.

An employee that reports to me is regularly working from home without my authorization. What can I do?

A supervisor should discuss this issue with the employee and express the reasons why it cannot be supported moving forward. Failure for the employee to comply with the supervisors expectations may result in disciplinary action.

An employee that reports to me is asking to work remotely to complete a project, should I document the arrangement?

Yes, by creating telecommuting expectations it provides maximum flexibility for the employee and the employer should the telecommuting parameters no longer have positive outcomes. It is recommended that this arrangement be reviewed at least annually.

What expectations should I communicate to the employee if I am willing to consider a telecommuting arrangement?

First, communicate that the employee's appointment has not changed, just the work location. Other items to clarify include:

- Expectations of how the work will be performed and delivered.
- Work schedule and percentages of duties
- Requirement for the employee's participation or presence to the work site.
- Who is responsible for the equipment required to perform duties
- How travel expenses will be handled
- Safety of the employee's home work environment
- Distractions in the employee's home work environment
- Periodic review of the telecommuting arrangement
- Either the employee or the supervisor may modify or discontinue the telecommuting arrangement based on the needs of the department.
- Identify email and phone contact expectations
- Continued requirement to disclose a COI- consulting or a conflict of time commitment
- Telecommuting is not intended to be used in place of sick leave, Family and Medical Leave (FMLA), Worker's Compensation leave, or other types of leave.
- Employees who are unable to work due to illness must use sick leave and must report their absence to their supervisor.
- Employees who wish to be relieved of responsibility for work on a particular day or days must use vacation.
- Employees are responsible for the safety and security of all University property and proprietary information.

I have an employee that is currently working remotely and the situation is no longer reasonable to continue for the department. What can I do?

If you have set telecommuting expectations, please review those expectations. If those expectations were not documented in writing, consult with the Employee and Labor Relations Office.

The supervisor retains the right to direct the work of the unit and may modify or discontinue the telecommuting arrangement for legitimate business reasons. A minimum of 30 days notice should be given to the employee before requiring the employee to return to the work location permanently.

I want to arrange for an employee to work remotely. This employee is a top performer and I don't feel I need to set telecommuting expectations. Do I still need to create telecommuting expectations?

Yes, a supervisor should create telecommuting expectations. This will provide maximum flexibility for the employee and employer should the telecommuting parameters no longer have positive outcomes. It is recommended that this arrangement be reviewed at least annually.

I've had an employee working remotely for many years, should I change their Letter of Intent (LOI) to reflect this work arrangement.

No, there should not be modifications made to an LOI based on a telecommuting arrangement. The appointment has not changed, only the work location.

What if an employee asks me to work from home for medical reasons?

If an employee is asking for a work from home arrangement as a result of a medical condition, you should first reach out to Employee and Labor Relations (4-3753) to discuss the request as it may be necessary to consider it under the Disability Accommodation process. <https://www.hr.iastate.edu/node/522/attachment>