



HHS Telework Plan

HHS Authorization of Telework

As provided by Texas Government Code, Chapter 658, the Executive Commissioner, as administrative head for the Health and Human Services (HHS) agencies, has authorized limited telework to (1) address a lack of available HHS office space, and (2) provide reasonable flexibility that enhances HHS's ability to achieve its mission.

Note: HHS includes the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and the Department of State Health Services (DSHS). HHS sets forth this plan to ensure proper and consistent consideration, authorization and use of telework for its employees.

Approving Telework

[Texas Government Code, Section 658.010\(a\)](#) defines telework as a work arrangement that allows an employee of a state agency to conduct on a regular basis all or some agency business at a place other than the employee's regular or assigned temporary place of employment during all or a portion of the employee's established work hours. Non-scheduled or ad hoc at-home work arrangements are not considered telework. Mobile work, a mandatory work arrangement which requires frequent or constant travel to client locations to perform assigned duties, is also not considered telework.

When leadership has determined that telework may be needed for an employee due to a lack of available office space or to provide reasonable flexibility that will enhance HHS's ability to achieve its mission, leadership must consider whether the employee's job can be performed in a telework setting. Employees may telework only for those jobs that can be performed at a remote site without diminishing the quality of work or disrupting the productivity of the office. Employees must meet all eligibility requirements outlined in the HHS Human Resources (HR) Policy Manual and HR Guidance Handbook. Considerations should include:

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- minimum technological requirements to perform the job duties and the impact on the agency of meeting the requirements at an alternate work site;
 - confidentiality of information that would be taken from the regular site and the ability to maintain confidentiality at the alternate work site;
 - ability of the employee and supervisor to establish work expectations and a means to measure employee productivity in relation to such expectations;
 - amount of time the position's job duties requires the employee to be physically at the regular office site; and
 - advantages, as well as disadvantages, to the agency and its clients/stakeholders of having the employee in that position work at an alternate site, including the impact on other staff in the work unit who do not telework.

Before approving telework, leadership must identify whether a position is suitable for telework and evaluate whether the employee and their specific job duties meet the criteria for telework. Leadership considers criteria and other work-related considerations applicable to the specific job.

To participate in the telework program, an employee must:

- consistently demonstrate satisfactory performance;
- have the ability to work with minimal supervision and complete assignments independently; and
- demonstrate the ability to establish work priorities and manage time effectively.

Once leadership has determined that an employee meets the criteria for telework, prior to telework beginning, both the employee and the employee's supervisor must review and sign the HHS Telework Expectations Agreement to acknowledge responsibilities, performance expectations, and acceptance of the telework policy and limitations for participation in telework at HHS. The Telework Agreement is processed through the Centralized Accounting and Payroll/Personnel System (CAPPS) Telework Registry. The agreement:

- states the terms and conditions of telework;

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- explains that management may revoke a telework agreement at any time and without prior notice;
 - clarifies that telework may not be offered as a condition of employment;
 - requires a telework agreement be renewed at least annually;
 - requires an employee to report to their regular or assigned temporary place of employment or another work location on their authorized telework day(s) to attend in-person meetings, or other engagements as determined by management; and
 - prohibits an employee from conducting in-person HHS business at the employee's personal residence.

The CAPPS Telework Registry automates the approval of telework requests and captures important information for documenting the telework program. Supervisors review and approve telework requests in accordance with HHS policies and procedures. Non-compliance with HHS policies and procedures may result in corrective or disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

Establishing Performance Criteria for Telework

When considering whether an employee's position is eligible for telework, management must establish performance criteria to ensure satisfactory performance from the teleworking employee. Teleworking employees are expected to perform all regular job duties as if they were present in their assigned business office and adhere to the same production and performance standards as non-teleworking employees.

The performance criteria should include the employee's ability to attend necessary meetings (in-person or remotely), create, sign, and route documents and forms, meet deadlines, etc. Management should establish communication protocols and best practices for handling meetings, office closures, power or internet outages, and other basic operational duties. While production standards differ from job to job, employees should be made aware of the specific expectations for their position prior to beginning telework. These standards must be the same as the standards used for non-teleworking employees performing the same job duties.

In order to telework, employees must maintain satisfactory performance, meeting all performance and production criteria.

Monitoring Performance of Teleworking Employees

To ensure that teleworking employees are maintaining satisfactory performance and meeting all performance and production criteria, supervisors must regularly monitor an employee's performance.

HR policy requires supervisors to administer an annual performance evaluation to each HHS employee under their direct supervision, regardless of telework status. These annual evaluations help ensure the employee is meeting HHS performance criteria and satisfactorily performing the essential functions of the job. The annual performance evaluation is documented and maintained. An employee must consistently meet performance criteria and essential job functions, as outlined in their performance evaluation, to maintain a telework status.

Supervisors have the discretion to administer performance evaluations more frequently to document actions such as changes in essential job functions, changes in supervision, or supporting management decisions.

Supervisors should develop additional methods of monitoring and documenting employee performance between annual reviews. This can be done through the use of Employee Development Notes (EDNs), collaboration tools (such as Teams), structured feedback check-in meetings, client/customer complaints, and tracking project completion rates and deadline adherence.

An employee who consistently fails to satisfactorily perform his or her job duties or comply with the supervisor's established criteria is subject to corrective and/or disciplinary action. Failure to consistently maintain satisfactory performance will result in the supervisor revoking the employee's telework agreement. Telework may only be re-established once the employee demonstrates the ability to maintain satisfactory performance.

General Rules and Guidelines for Telework

Telework may not be offered as a condition of employment. Employees may be required to report to their regular or assigned temporary place of employment or

other work location on a scheduled telework day for meetings, special events, or other engagements as determined by management when in-person interaction is necessary.

Teleworking employees must comply with the terms and conditions outlined in the Telework Expectations Agreement, which includes following HHS information security controls and telework safety guidelines. Employees and supervisors must complete the applicable telework training, within an established timeframe to telework.

Employees are responsible for maintaining secure workspaces, protecting agency information, and preventing unauthorized disclosure to people or processes. When using HHS information resources, employees have no expectation of privacy.

Employees must:

- Maintain possession of their state issued laptop to prevent loss or theft.
- Only use authorized equipment in authorized locations.
- Adhere to HHS information security/cybersecurity requirements.
- Never disclose confidential or sensitive data to unauthorized personnel, including friends and family.
- Ensure confidential paper documents are properly secured and disposed of in accordance with agency policies and procedures.
- Never use personal printers to print any HHS documents.
- Use a headset or avoid using speaker phones to ensure privacy when around others.
- Use a screen protector so sensitive information cannot be seen by others.
- Report lost or stolen state-owned equipment immediately.

In addition, HHS Information Security/Cybersecurity policies are in place that explain that state-owned equipment can be used for official purposes only and address consequences for non-compliance with safety, physical, and information security controls. Teleworkers must comply with all rules, regulations, and

procedures relating to security and confidentiality of work-related information and data.

Teleworking employees are expected to have a designated workspace in the home, such as a home office, and are expected to keep that space free of safety hazards. Employees are personally responsible for the safety of their remote workspace. Employees must adhere to HHS Telework Safety Guidelines, and employees are expected to utilize other resources such as safety checklists, electronic incident reporting processing, and other documents to promote a safe and healthy workplace for teleworkers.

Employees are held to the same standards when doing the same jobs, whether they work in the office or remotely. HR corrective and disciplinary actions policies and procedures do not differentiate between teleworkers and non-teleworkers. HHS employees are expected to follow all applicable HHS policies, including but not limited to, the standards of conduct and work rules identified the HR Policy Manual.

Supervisors are responsible for effectively developing and managing their employees' conduct and taking corrective action against employees, regardless of telework status, who are unable or unwilling to improve unacceptable conduct. Certain employee conduct is serious enough to warrant immediate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from employment, without requiring counseling or other corrective action. Depending on the severity of the offense, referral to state or federal law enforcement agencies may be appropriate.