



RUTGERS POLICY

Section: 60.4.11

Section Title: Managerial, Professional, Supervisory, Confidential, and Administrative Staff

Policy Name: Telecommuting Policy

Formerly Book: N/A

Approval Authority: Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration

Responsible Executive: Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration

Responsible Office: University Human Resources

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1. **Policy Statement**

Telecommuting is a privilege that may be granted under appropriate circumstances to individuals who are deemed suited for such an arrangement, including the suitability of their positions. To that end and to accomplish the articulated reasons for this policy, department heads or their designees have the authority to establish telecommuting arrangements.

2. **Reason for Policy**

Telecommuting can facilitate accomplishing several objectives: achieving greater administrative efficiency; addressing current environmental concerns such as traffic congestion, air pollution, and transportation costs; improving employee productivity and performance; enhancing employees' work-life balance; supporting business continuity plans; and sustaining the hiring and retention of a highly qualified workforce.

3. **Who Should Read This Policy**

- Deans, directors, and department heads
- Eligible exempt managerial, professional, supervisory, and confidential staff employees

4. **Related Documents**

- Rutgers Policy 60.3.14, Overtime and Alternative Work Arrangements for Regularly Appointed Staff
- Telecommuting website (<http://uhr.rutgers.edu/wl/Telecommuting.htm>)
 - Guidelines on Telecommuting
 - Telecommuting Agreement
 - Telecommuting Proposal
 - Telecommuting Feasibility Worksheet
 - Safety Checklist

5. **Contacts**
UHR Consultants 732-932-3020
Office of Labor Relations 732-932-3020, ext. 4040
Newark Human Resources 973-353-5500
Camden Human Resources 856-225-6475

6. **The Policy**

60.4.11 TELECOMMUTING POLICY

I. Definitions

- A. Alternate Work Location: a location other than the official university place of business from which an employee telecommutes.
- B. Department Head: the person with the ultimate approval authority in the unit, or his or her designee.
- C. Exempt: not subject to the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act.
- D. Telecommuting: a work arrangement in which an employee performs his or her regular job duties in an alternate location to the official university place of business.
- E. Work Location: any on- or off-campus property that is owned, occupied, leased, or used by Rutgers University at which the employee is regularly assigned to attend work. This includes all research sites and all leased indoor and outdoor spaces or spaces occupied with a user permit, license, or contract for the conduct of university business.

II. Who May Telecommute

Exempt Managerial, Professional, Supervisory, and Confidential staff employees who have completed their probationary periods are eligible to be considered for telecommuting.

III. Aspects and Terms of Telecommuting

A. In General

Not all eligible employees will be suitable for telecommuting. Suitability for telecommuting is based upon the individual employee as well as the employee's position. Refer to the criteria set forth in the Guidelines on Telecommuting when determining if a particular employee in a particular position is suitable for telecommuting.

Telecommuting can be done on a regular basis, an occasional basis, or an emergency basis only.

Regular: a recurring arrangement generally consisting of the same day or days each week when an employee works at the alternate location. Regular telecommuting arrangements can be for a finite or indefinite period of time.

Occasional (Non-Emergency): a sporadic occurrence from time to time, generally on an as-needed basis.

Emergency: telecommuting that is precipitated by a crisis or other emergency that significantly disrupts a facility or facilities or the physical operation of a department. When needed to achieve business continuity and to maintain critical functions, operations, and services, telecommuting arrangements may be established until normal operations can be restored at the regular work location.

In all cases, telecommuting arrangements are revocable and can be discontinued at any time when it is in the judgment of the department that it is in the best interest of the university to do so. Departments should give 30 days' notice of discontinuance unless extenuating circumstances make such notice impracticable.

Telecommuting does not change an employee's terms and conditions of employment, including required compliance with or the application of university policies. Additionally, an employee's compensation and/or benefits do not change as a result of a telecommuting arrangement.

Telecommuting is not intended to permit employees to have time to work at other jobs or attend to other personal business, nor is it intended as a substitute for dependent care. If persons in need of primary care are regularly present in the alternate work location while the employee is telecommuting, the employee must demonstrate that another individual is present to provide the care.

Telecommuting is not intended to circumvent any leave that an employee has requested and is entitled to pursuant to state and/or federal law, university policy, or prevailing collective negotiations agreements.

B. Work Site

The alternate location from which an employee telecommutes should be a predetermined site, such as a home office, and should have a fixed work area that will provide the employee with adequate access to the tools necessary for telecommuting, such as a telephone, computer, internet connection, etc.

A supervisor or other appropriate university official may arrange to visit the alternate work location when appropriate, to evaluate it for appropriateness prior to approving the telecommuting agreement or when worksite-related concerns arise during the telecommuting arrangement. Additionally, the university retains the right to make prearranged on-site inspections of the remote work site during scheduled work hours.

Telecommuters should not hold business visits or in-person meetings with professional colleagues, customers, or the public at alternate work sites; exceptions to this provision must be approved in advance by the department.

Telecommuting does not convert the alternate work location into a university place of business.

C. Costs and Expenses

All costs, whether relating to the initial set-up or the maintenance of a telecommuting arrangement, will be borne by the employee. The university does not assume responsibility for operating costs, home maintenance, or other costs incurred by employees in the use of their homes or other alternative work locations.

The university will not reimburse employees for out-of-pocket expenses for materials and supplies that are normally available at their regular work location.

Equipment

Except as set forth below, employees must provide their own computer, telephone, telephone service, internet connection, and any other equipment necessary to facilitate the telecommuting arrangement, unless otherwise expressly agreed to and approved. The university does not assume responsibility for the cost of employee-provided equipment or its repair or service.

Departments are not prohibited from using university funds for reasonable expenses that are necessary to facilitate the telecommuting arrangement, if there is a legitimate business need and adequate funding exists. Such expenses must be consistent with existing university policies regarding purchasing and business expenditures.

When available, departments are permitted to issue university-owned equipment to an employee for use in telecommuting; however, the equipment is to be used only by the telecommuting employee to perform authorized university business. When university-owned equipment is issued to an employee for telecommuting, the employee is responsible for protecting it from theft, damage, and unauthorized use. University-issued equipment used in the normal course of employment will continue to be supported by the department.

D. Accountability and Availability

In general, telecommuting should not change the regular days and hours that an employee is expected to be working; however, if a telecommuting employee will be performing work outside of the employee's normal work days and hours, those work days and/or hours must be set forth in the Telecommuting Agreement. If it is found that an employee is not performing work during the telecommuting hours, the Telecommuting Agreement can be revoked, and the employee may be subject to discipline as appropriate.

A telecommuting employee shall be as available for communication and contact during the scheduled telecommuting time as he or she would be if working at the regularly-assigned work location. Where practical, supervisors should outline minimum expectations for how often the telecommuting employee should check email and voicemail.

A telecommuting employee shall report to the regularly-assigned work location on nontelecommuting days. In addition, supervisors may require that on a regular telecommuting day an employee must report to the regularly-assigned work location or elsewhere as needed for work-related meetings or other events. In that event, the supervisor should give the employee as much notice as is practicable.

E. Assessment

Certain adaptations may be necessary in how supervisors communicate expectations and assignments, and provide ongoing assessment and feedback, due to the fact that the telecommuting employee is not always physically present in the regular work location. The supervisor and the telecommuting employee should agree upon a workable means for delivering such information, such as regular meetings or status emails. Likewise, supervisors should also review and/or revise the criteria that will be utilized for annual performance appraisals where applicable. Such criteria should be clearly defined and measurable in terms of quantity, quality, or time to complete.

F. Process

A department can offer a telecommuting arrangement to a suitable employee or an employee may initiate a request to telecommute. In either case, the department should enter into a Telecommuting Agreement (<http://uhr.rutgers.edu/documents/TelecommutingAgreement.doc>), only if it is determined that the employee and the employee's position are suitable for telecommuting.

A Telecommuting Agreement may be discontinued at any time by either the employee or the department upon notice. Departments should give 30 days' notice of discontinuance unless extenuating circumstances make such notice impracticable. The employee should give as much notice as is reasonably necessary to facilitate resumed reporting to the work location.

G. Risk Management

Workers compensation covers job-related injuries that occur in the course and scope of employment. For further information, contact the Office of Risk Management and Insurance.

H. Security and Technology

Telecommuting employees must adhere to the established standards and protocol relating to information protection, security, and technology. Failure to adhere to the standards and protocol may result in revocation of the Telecommuting Agreement and appropriate disciplinary action.