

Objective:

Partial telecommuting allows employees to work remotely for part of their workweek. Westfield State University considers telecommuting to be a viable, flexible work option when both the employee and the job are suited to such an arrangement. Partial telecommuting may be appropriate for some employees' jobs but not for others. Partial telecommuting is not an entitlement, it is not a university-wide benefit, and it in no way changes the terms and conditions of employment with the University. Partial telecommuting is defined as 1 -2 days per work week. We have also added guidelines that state 75% of your employees should be on campus on any given day of the week. This may be a challenge in smaller departments.

Procedures:

Any partial telecommuting arrangement made will be on a trial basis for the first three months and may be discontinued at will and at any time at the request of either the telecommuter or the university. Every effort will be made to provide 30 days' notice of such change to accommodate commuting, child care and other issues that may arise from the termination of a telecommuting arrangement. There may be instances, however, when a shorter notice of one week is possible.

Eligibility:

Individuals requesting partial telecommuting arrangements must be employed with the University for a minimum of 6 months of continuous, regular employment and must have a satisfactory performance record.

Before entering into any partial telecommuting agreement, the employee and manager, with the assistance of the human resource department, will evaluate the suitability of such an arrangement, reviewing the following areas:

- Employee suitability. The employee and manager will assess the needs and work habits of the employee, compared to traits customarily recognized as appropriate for successful partial telecommuters. Reliability and work performance should be considered.
- Job responsibilities. The employee and manager will discuss the job responsibilities and determine if the job is appropriate for a telecommuting arrangement.
- Equipment needs, workspace design considerations and scheduling issues. The employee and manager will review the physical workspace needs and the appropriate location for the telework. Employees should have reliable computer and internet access in their remote location.
- Agreement. Employees should complete the Employee Hybrid Questionnaire and Managers should sign the agreement before submitting the form to hr@westfield.ma.edu.

If the employee and Manager agree, and the human resource department concurs, a copy of the Employee Hybrid Questionnaire will be signed by all parties, returned to the manager, and a three-month trial period will commence.

Evaluation:

Evaluation of partial telecommuter performance during the program will include regular interaction by phone and e-mail between the employee and the manager, and weekly face-to-face meetings to discuss work progress and problems. At the end of the program, the employee and manager will each complete an evaluation of the arrangement and make recommendations for continuance or modifications. Evaluation of partial telecommuter performance should focus on work output and completion of objectives. The HR department will review the evaluations to determine if the program should be extended.

Communication

The manager and partial telecommuter will communicate at a level consistent with employees working at the office or in a manner and frequency that is appropriate for the job and the individuals involved.

Essential Personnel (Essential employees may not be eligible for partial telecommuting arrangements):

Essential employees are expected to report to work in the event of a University closure or other extraordinary/inclement weather circumstances, even if on their normal day to work remotely. In extreme circumstances, essential employees may have legitimate reasons for being unable to report to work. These employees should first contact their appropriate department head or manager to address their individual needs.

Critical Employees (Critical employees may not be eligible for partial telecommuting arrangements):

Critical employees are expected to continue to report to work as deemed necessary by their department heads and/or the area vice president to ensure critical operations are continued. If a critical employee cannot come to work he/she should contact the appropriate department head or manager to address concerns.

If the campus is closed and the critical employee does not need to come to campus then the partial telecommuting employee will not be required to work remotely on this day, if this falls on a day that he/she is scheduled to work remotely.

Equipment/Home Office

On a case-by-case basis, the University will determine, with information supplied by the employee and the manager, the appropriate equipment needs (including hardware, software, modems, phone and data lines and other office equipment) for each partial telecommuting arrangement. The information system department will serve as a resource in this matter. Equipment supplied by the organization will be maintained by the organization. Equipment supplied by the employee, if deemed appropriate by the organization, will be maintained by the employee. The University accepts no responsibility for damage or repairs to employee-owned equipment. The University reserves the right to make determinations as to appropriate equipment, subject to change at any time. Equipment supplied by the organization is to be used for business purposes only.

The partial telecommuter must sign an inventory of all University property received and agree to take appropriate action to protect the items from damage or theft. Upon termination of employment or end of partial telecommuting assignment, all company property will be returned to the company.

The employee will establish an appropriate work environment within his or her home for work purposes. Westfield State will not be responsible for costs associated with the setup of the employee's home office, such as remodeling, internet access, furniture or lighting, nor for repairs or modifications to the home office space.

Employees are expected to maintain their home workspace in a safe manner, free from safety hazards. Injuries sustained by the employee in a home office location and in conjunction with his or her regular work duties are normally covered by the company's workers' compensation policy. Partial telecommuting employees are responsible for notifying the employer of such injuries as soon as practicable. The employee is liable for any injuries sustained by visitors to his or her home worksite.

Security:

Consistent with the organization's expectations of information security for employees working at the office, partial telecommuting employees will be expected to ensure the protection of proprietary company and student/employee information accessible from their home office. Steps include the use of locked file cabinets and desks, regular password maintenance, and any other measures appropriate for the job and the environment. All benefitted employees, including partial telecommuting employees, are required to participate in *Information Technology Security Awareness Training* as provided by the Information Technology Department.

Expectations for Partial Telecommuting Employees:

Partial telecommuting is not designed to be a replacement for appropriate child care. Although an individual employee's schedule may be modified to accommodate child care needs, the focus of the arrangement must remain on job performance and meeting business demands. Prospective partial telecommuters are encouraged to discuss expectations of telecommuting with family members prior to entering a trial period.

Time Worked:

Telecommuting employees who are not exempt from the overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act will be required to accurately record all hours worked using SSTA time-keeping system. Hours worked in excess of those scheduled per day and per workweek require the advance approval of the partial telecommuter's manager. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in the immediate termination of the telecommuting agreement.

Ad Hoc Arrangements:

Temporary telecommuting arrangements may be approved for circumstances such as inclement weather, special projects or business travel. These arrangements are approved on an as-needed basis only, with no expectation of ongoing continuance.

Other informal, short-term arrangements may be made for employees on family or medical leave to the extent practical for the employee and the organization and with the consent of the employee's health care provider, if appropriate.

All informal telecommuting arrangements are made on a case-by-case basis, focusing first on the business needs of the organization. For these types of arrangements, no additional documentation is needed.

Revised: 2/1/2022

Reviewed: 10/15/2024