

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Telework and Remote Work

The purpose of this document is to accompany DR 4080-811-002, *Telework and Remote Work Programs*, to provide answers to the most frequently asked questions related to telework and remote work. This document should also be used in connection with USDA Future of Work [Frequently Asked Questions](#), which includes many related issues and provides the most up to date information regarding the planning process for re-entry and post-reentry personnel policies and work environment.

For additional information, refer to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) [2021 Guide to Telework and Remote Work in the Federal Government](#); OPM memorandum [CPM 2021-17](#); and OPM, Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and General Services Administration (GSA) joint Memorandum [M-21-25](#).

Please contact your servicing Human Resources Office with any questions.

Remote Work

1. What is remote work?

Remote work is an arrangement under which an employee is scheduled to perform work within or outside the local commuting area of an agency worksite and is not expected to report to an agency worksite on a regular and recurring basis. The employee provides their own workspace to accomplish their day-to-day work and the work location is usually the employee's residence. The size of the workspace must be adequate to allow for effective and efficient work and provide reliable telephonic and internet connectivity as well as access to all the necessary agency systems and tools needed to accomplish the work. A remote worksite must also conform to safety requirements and must acknowledge adherence to all safety protocols.

Example. An employee's agency worksite is Washington, DC, and they are approved to work remotely out of their home in Baltimore, MD. The employee's official duty station is now Baltimore (not Washington, DC), they work from their home, and they do not report to the agency worksite on a regular and recurring basis. *The big difference between a remote worker and teleworker is the remote worker works from their home 100% of the time and their official duty station is their home vs. a teleworker would be required to report to the agency worksite at least 2 times per pay period and their official duty station is the agency worksite.*

2. How is remote work different from telework?

Telework refers to a work flexibility arrangement, approved in advance by a supervisor, that allows an employee to work from an approved alternative worksite other than the employee's official duty location for an approved number of days each pay period. Remote work is a permanent duty station designation (usually the employee's residence) and annotated on form SF-50, Notification of Personnel Action.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Telework and Remote Work

3. Can remote workers still be required to report to the office?

Yes. If a remote worker is approved to work remotely, they are not required to report to the office on a regular and recurring basis during each pay period. However, agencies can require employees to report to the office on an occasional basis as needed to carry out the functions of their jobs. Agencies will need to take into consideration travel costs when the remote worker's position of record is located outside of the local commuting area of the agency worksite (see *Travel* section for additional information).

Official Worksite

An employee's official worksite will depend if they are a teleworker or a remote worker. The employing office determines the official duty station.

- A teleworker's official duty station will be the agency home office.
- A remote worker's official duty station will be their home (or other approved alternate location).

The official worksite for locality pay purposes is the location where the employee regularly performs their duties ([5 CFR 531.605](#)). The official worksite is documented in block 39 on the employee's SF-50, Notification of Personnel Action. Employees are compensated based on the location of their official worksite. For additional information, see [5 CFR Part 531 Subpart F](#) and OPM Factsheet, [Official Worksite for Location-Based Pay Purposes](#).

Telework

4. What is the official worksite for teleworkers?

The official worksite for a telework employee is the location of the regular worksite for the employee's position (i.e., the place where the employee would normally work absent a telework agreement which is usually the agency worksite) as long as the employee physically reports at least twice each biweekly pay period on a regular and recurring basis to that agency worksite. The employee must report for a full workday, 2 times per pay period.

Example: An employee's worksite is Washington, DC, and they telework from their home in Richmond, VA, 4 times per week. As long as the employee reports to their Washington, DC worksite at least 2 times per pay period, they may remain on the higher Washington, DC locality pay table. If the employee continues to work out of their home in Richmond, VA and does not report to their Washington, DC worksite at least 2 times per pay period, then they are no longer eligible for the higher Washington, DC locality pay and their official worksite must change to Richmond, VA. Moreover, the employee should be redesignated a remote worker and not a teleworker.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Telework and Remote Work

5. Can an exception be made to reporting to the worksite 2 times per pay period?

Yes, but under very limited and temporary circumstances. A supervisor may make an exception to the twice per pay period requirement in certain temporary situations, but only if the employee is expected to return to their worksite in the near future. The following are appropriate temporary circumstances where a change in duty station is not required (see [5 CFR 531.605\(d\)\(2\)](#)):

- The employee is in temporary duty travel status away from the official worksite.
- The employee is temporarily detailed to work at a location other than a location covered by their telework agreement.
- The employee is recovering from an injury or medical condition.
- The employee is affected by an emergency which temporarily prevents them from commuting to their official worksite.
- The employee has an extended approved absence from work (e.g., on paid leave).

Agencies that authorized a temporary exception for reporting to the worksite because of the COVID pandemic may withdraw that authorization once the need for the temporary exception has expired. Agencies should strive to treat similarly situated employees the same way.

Example. An employee's official worksite is Washington, DC but during the pandemic, the employee was authorized to temporarily move to Houston, TX. The duty station does not change because the employee was approved a temporary exception. The employee is expected to return to their official worksite in Washington, DC by the date listed on their reentry notice, unless the temporary exception still applies. If the employee is authorized to work remotely, then their duty station changes to Houston, TX.

6. Can employees telework from a different USDA location?

Yes. An employee's duty station may also be a location other than the agency office to which the employee would normally be assigned, with supervisory approval, such as an agency's regional office or other local office space made available under an agreement with another agency. In that situation, the teleworker can fulfill the reporting requirement by reporting to the agreed upon alternative office at least 2 times per pay period and the alternative office becomes their official duty station.

Example. An employee's office is located in Kansas City, but they have an agreement with their supervisor to work out of a satellite office in Springfield, MO. The employee works 10 days per pay period; teleworks 6 days from their home; reports to the satellite office in Springfield 2 days per pay period; and Springfield, MO is their official duty station.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Telework and Remote Work

7. What if the employee's work location varies?

If the employee's work involves recurring travel or their work location varies on a recurring basis, the employee does not need to report to the agency worksite 2 times per pay period as long as they regularly perform work within the locality pay area for that worksite (the geographic area that is covered by that locality pay table). If the employee does not regularly perform work within the same geographic area covered by the locality pay table, then the official worksite must change to where the employee regularly performs their duties. Unless the employee satisfies one of the appropriate temporary circumstances where a change in duty station is not required (see [5 CFR 531.605\(d\)\(2\)](#)).

Example. A meat inspector's work involves recurring travel and they regularly perform work throughout the state of North Dakota. The state of North Dakota is covered by the Rest of U.S. locality pay table. The employee regularly performs work within the same geographic area covered by the locality pay table, therefore, the duty station remains unchanged.

8. Can a supervisor require a teleworker to report to the agency worksite more than 2 times per pay period?

Teleworkers may telework up to 8 days per pay period based on the duties of the position and the amount of onsite activities that must be performed. The supervisor may require the employee to report to the office more frequently based on the needs of the agency. Employees performing similar functions must be treated fairly and equitably.

Example (1). Employees attending a trainee program are needed to report to the agency worksite 3 days per week to learn critical programs that are only available onsite.

Example (2). A supervisor and their staff report to the agency worksite each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday to facilitate in-person meetings, needs of collaboration, training, etc., that is needed to deliver on the mission of the agency.

9. During COVID-19 maximum telework, an employee relocated without management approval outside of their official duty station commuting area. The employee has been given proper notice to return to the office. What are the employee's alternatives to relocating back into the commuting area?

If an employee moved from their assigned duty station to a different geographic area outside of their official duty station commuting area without official authorization, they will be required to report to their assigned duty station by the date on their notice, or per the terms of a collective bargaining agreement, if applicable. The employee may also request to work remotely to maintain the new duty station based on the reasons for the relocation. This should be reviewed and determined on a case-by-case basis.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Telework and Remote Work

10. What is meant by USDA official duty station?

In DR-4080-811-002, *Telework and Remote Work Programs*, the term “USDA official duty station” means an employing agency official worksite where an employee would normally perform their official duties, were it not for an approved telework agreement, as indicated by the corresponding SF-50.

Remote Work

11. What is the official worksite for remote workers?

The official worksite for a remote worker who is not scheduled to report at least twice each biweekly pay period on a regular and recurring basis to the agency worksite will be their home (or other approved alternative location where they are authorized to work and regularly perform their duties that is not their agency office or facility).

12. If an employee elects to work remotely, will their pay change?

If an employee is authorized to work remotely, they receive the locality rate associated with the location of the remote worksite, which could be the same locality rate as the agency worksite, a higher pay locality rate, or a lower pay locality rate. Employees must be aware that their official duty station and rate of pay may change if they become a remote worker.

13. If an employee is authorized to work remotely from one location, can they work remotely from a different location?

An employee’s pay is based on the location of their official duty station. For a remote worker, their locality pay will be based on the city and state of their home (or other approved alternative location where they are authorized to work and regularly perform their duties).

If an employee was authorized to work remotely from one location and wanted to work remotely from a different location, the employee would need to discuss the request with their supervisor, submit a written request with the proposed new duty station and effective date, and obtain approval from their supervisor. Absent urgent circumstances, employee requests to change their remote work location or remote work arrangement is limited to once every 6 months.

If an employee is authorized to work remotely from a different geographic area, then the supervisor must submit an SF-52, Request for Personnel Action, to change the official worksite to where the employee regularly performs their duties.

Whether to grant remote worker status is within the agency’s discretion. Agencies are generally not required to cover relocation expenses for employee-driven requests for remote work. An employee-requested relocation to a remote work location is for the employee’s own convenience and benefit and an agency may not pay relocation expenses to a new remote work location. (See Federal Travel Regulations [41 CFR Part 302](#))

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Telework and Remote Work

Example (1). An employee is a GS-09 step 3 (\$65,086) working remotely out of their home in Los Angeles and is paid from the LA locality pay table. The employee wants to move to Birmingham, AL to be closer to their family and work remotely from there. The employee is approved to work remotely in Birmingham, AL and the supervisor must submit an SF-52 to change their official worksite from Los Angeles, CA to Birmingham, AL. The employee is no longer eligible for the higher LA locality pay and is now paid from the locality pay table that applies to Birmingham, AL. The employee's converted rate is \$57,148.

2021	Gr	STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP 6	STEP 7	STEP 8	STEP 9	STEP 10
LA	09	61,019	63,052	65,086	67,120	69,154	71,188	73,221	75,255	77,289	79,323
BH	09	53,576	55,362	57,148	58,933	60,719	62,505	64,291	66,076	67,862	69,648

Example (2). An employee is a GS-11 step 5 (\$78,775) working remotely out of their home in Minneapolis, MN and is paid from the Minneapolis-St. Paul (MSP) locality pay table. The employee has a winter home in Phoenix, AZ and would like to work remotely from their home in Phoenix during the winter months. The employee requests to spend 6 months working remotely from their home in Minneapolis (Jun-Nov) and requests to spend 6 months working from their home in Phoenix (Dec-May). The request is approved, and the employee is paid from the Minneapolis locality pay table from Jun. to Nov. (\$78,775) and paid from the Phoenix locality pay table from Dec. to May (\$75,906). The supervisor must submit an SF-52 and the servicing Human Resources Office must process an SF-50 each time the duty station changes.

2021	Gr	STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP 6	STEP 7	STEP 8	STEP 9	STEP 10
MSP	11	69,505	71,823	74,140	76,458	78,775	81,093	83,410	85,727	88,045	90,362
PX	11	66,974	69,207	71,440	73,673	75,906	78,139	80,372	82,605	84,838	87,071

Example (3). An employee is a GS-9 step 3 (\$60,824) working remotely out of their home in Portland, OR. The remote worker is also approved to telework. The employee teleworks 8 days each pay period from her mother's home in Boise, ID so that her mom can watch her children while she works. As long as the employee reports to their Portland, OR worksite at least 2 times per pay period, they may remain on the higher Portland locality pay table and an SF-52 is not required to change the official duty station. However, if the employee continues to work out of their mom's home in Boise and does not report to their Portland worksite at least 2 times per pay period, then an SF-52 is required to change their official duty station to Boise.

2021	Gr	STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP 6	STEP 7	STEP 8	STEP 9	STEP 10
POR	9	57,023	58,924	60,824	62,725	64,626	66,526	68,427	70,328	72,228	74,129
RUS	9	53,433	55,214	56,995	58,776	60,557	62,338	64,119	65,900	67,681	69,462

Example (4). An employee is a GS-7 step 2 (\$55,063) working remotely out of their home in San Francisco, CA. The remote worker is also approved to telework. The employee is authorized to temporarily work from their parent's home in Tampa, FL while recovering from an injury. The employee is not required to report to their worksite in San Francisco

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Telework and Remote Work

twice per pay period and an SF-52 is not required to change the official duty station because a temporary exception under [5 CFR 531.605\(d\)\(2\)](#) was authorized. Although an SF-50 is not required, the accommodation should be clearly documented.

2021	Gr	STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP 6	STEP 7	STEP 8	STEP 9	STEP 10
SF	7	53,286	55,063	56,839	58,616	60,392	62,169	63,945	65,722	67,498	69,274

Example (5). An employee is a GS-13 step 1 (\$103,690) working remotely out of their home in Washington, DC. The employee purchased an RV and wants to work remotely out of their RV, traveling to a different National Park each month. The request is denied because employee requests to change their remote work location is limited to once every 6 months. The employee may request leave (annual, credit, comp, or LWOP) to travel but they may not work remotely out of their RV and continually change duty stations.

2021	Gr	STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP 6	STEP 7	STEP 8	STEP 9	STEP 10
DCB	13	103,690	107,146	110,603	114,059	117,516	120,972	124,428	127,885	131,341	134,798

14. How do I determine which geographic areas are covered by a locality pay table?

Determining the correct pay table can be complex. Contact your servicing Human Resources Office for assistance. Generally speaking, you will need to find the set of pay tables that apply to your position and then find the locality area. If your position is covered by a special rate table, look at both the GS pay tables and the special rate tables and use whichever table is higher.

- 1) **Step 1:** Determine which set of pay tables apply to your position:
 - a. [General Schedule](#). *Most employees will fall under these tables.*
 - b. [Special Rate Tables](#). Use if you occupy a position covered by a special rate table (e.g., GS-2210).
 - c. [Law Enforcement Officer](#). Use if you occupy a law enforcement officer position.
 - d. [Federal Wage Schedules](#). Use if you occupy a WG, WL, or WS position. Follow the instructions on the webpage to determine which table to use.
- 2) **Step 2:** Locality pay tables are usually defined by counties. Once you have the county name, then look under OPM's [Locality Pay Area Definitions](#) website to see if the county falls under one of the counties that are covered by a locality rate. In 2021, there are 54 General Schedule (GS) locality pay tables (53 specific areas plus the Rest of U.S. (RUS) table). If the county does not show up under the locality pay area definition, then it will fall under the RUS locality pay table.

Example. A GS-0810-9 step 3, General Engineer, living in Peachtree City, GA, wants to find the pay table that applies to their position.

- Peachtree City is in Fayette County, GA.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Telework and Remote Work

- Fayette County falls under the “Atlanta-Athens-Clarke County-Sandy Springs, GA-AL” locality pay table.
- Both the GS pay table and special rate pay table apply to a GS-0810-9 position in Fayette County, GA.
 - The rate on the GS Atlanta locality pay table for a GS-9 step 3 is \$60,048
 - The rate on Special Rate Table 0414 for a GS-9 step 3 is \$62,979.
 - The rate for a GS-9 step 3 on the special rate table is higher so the special rate table is used.

2021	Gr	STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP 6	STEP 7	STEP 8	STEP 9	STEP 10
ATL	9	56,295	58,171	60,048	61,924	63,801	65,677	67,553	69,430	71,306	73,182
0414	9	59,907	61,443	62,979	64,515	66,051	67,587	69,123	70,659	72,195	73,731

15. How does the agency process the personnel action?

When an employee’s official worksite is changed, the supervisor must initiate an SF-52 Request for Personnel Action, and then an SF-50, Notification of Personnel Action, must be processed by the servicing Human Resources Office.

- **Change in Duty Station but No Impact to Pay.** If an employee’s worksite is moved to a new geographic location but there are no other changes then the personnel action is processed as the following (*see the Guide to Processing Personnel Actions(GPPA) Chapter 23 - Change In Duty Station for additional information*):

NOA	Auth Code	Authority	Remark
792 – Chg in Duty Station	UNM	Agency directive or administrative order authorizing the change	Enter the employee's new duty station and code in blocks 39 and 38 of the Standard Form 52. No remarks are required.

- **Change in Duty Station and Change in Locality Pay.** If an employee’s worksite is moved to a new geographic location that causes the locality pay to change but there is no change in the position, the personnel action is processed as the following (*see GPPA, Chapter 17 - Pay and Step Changes for additional information*):

NOA	Auth Code	Authority	Remark
894 – Gen Adj	VGR	5 U.S.C. § 5304	Include a remark to capture the change in duty station and locality pay area

- **Reassignment.** Reassignment is the change of an employee from one position to another without promotion or change to lower grade, level or band. Reassignment includes (*see GPPA, Chapter 14 - Promotions, Changes to Lower Grade, Reassignments, Position Changes and Details for additional information*):

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Telework and Remote Work

- (1) Movement to a position in a new occupational series, or to another position in the same series;
- (2) Assignment to a position that has been redescribed due to the introduction of a new or revised classification or job grading standard;
- (3) Assignment to a position that has been redescribed as a result of position review; and
- (4) Movement to a different position at the same grade but with a change in salary that is the result of different local prevailing wage rates or a different locality payment.

16. Does an agency have to provide office space for a remote worker?

No. Remote workers generally should not have an assigned or dedicated workspace at the agency worksite. Employees voluntarily elect if they want to work remotely and supervisors should not involuntarily place an employee in a remote work arrangement. For new employees, it could be a condition of employment, meaning that the employee has accepted the remote work arrangement as part of the position.

17. Is a shared desk space required for those that are in the office less than 2 days a week? Does a shared desk policy apply to members of the Senior Executive Service (SES)?

Agencies have control over the management of their workforce and any space allocations such as hoteling space.

18. What is the manager's flexibility to change employee's designation based on business need?

Agencies have discretion to determine eligibility status as conditions, mission requirements and tasks change. It is understood that eligibility will change over time.

19. Can a remote worker choose to stop working remotely and then start reporting to an agency facility?

Some positions are required to be remote (e.g., a candidate accepted a position where working remotely is a condition of employment). Other positions may be eligible for remote work. If an employee requested and was approved to work remotely but later decided it was not a good fit and would like to return to working at the agency worksite, they would need to submit a written request and obtain approval from their supervisor. A request to change a remote work arrangement is limited to once every 6 months (absent urgent circumstances, e.g., exigent work situation or personal hardship). Supervisors must render a written decision within two pay periods. When reviewing employee requests, supervisors should consider the duties of the position, the ability to carry out the mission, costs/budget, whether there are space limitations within the agency's worksite, and the nature of the employee's exigent circumstances. Exigent circumstances may include, but are not limited to:

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Telework and Remote Work

- A specific long-term medical situation where services or care are more accessible in a specific location;
- Special education needs for children;
- Significant and recurring harassment or discrimination against the employee or their family at work or in the community; or
- Specific situations related to family member status, such as divorce, reconciliation, sibling care issues, spousal placement (dual career), etc.

Example: An employee accepts a position to work remotely out of their apartment in New York City. Several months later, the employee no longer wants to work out of their apartment and would prefer to work out of an office. The agency is not required to rent office space in New York City.

20. Can I be reimbursed for internet?

Teleworkers and remote workers are expected to provide internet service and other general utility costs at their own expense unless otherwise negotiated within a collective bargaining agreement.

21. There may be changes to the remote/telework survey since the survey was completed. Is there flexibility to change certain positions to remote eligible that were previously designated as telework or office only?

Regarding the annual OPM Survey, changing certain positions to remote eligible that were previously designated as telework or office only is a business decision at the discretion of the agency on a case-by-case basis based upon a business case analysis.

Travel

22. Is travel paid if an employee is required to report to the office?

Remote workers are not required to report to the office on a regular and recurring basis during each pay period, but agencies may require remote workers to report to the office on an occasional basis as needed to carry out the functions of their jobs. Agencies considering remote work arrangements that occur outside the local commuting area should consider how often the employee needs to physically visit the agency worksite. If the remote worker's position of record is located outside of the local commuting area of the agency worksite, then the employee is entitled to travel reimbursement each time the employee is required to travel to the office in person. Reimbursements for travel expenses are made in accordance with the Federal Travel Regulations. Temporary Duty Travel (TDY) and relocation reimbursement are applied based upon the location of the employee's permanent worksite, which is documented on the employee's SF-50, Notification of Personnel Action. If the employee travels outside their official station as defined in the Federal Travel Regulations, Section [300-](#)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Telework and Remote Work

[3.1](#), travel and/or relocation regulations will apply. Agencies should evaluate the travel costs associated with this requirement before approving any remote agreements.

A teleworker or remote worker who is directed to travel to a temporary worksite during their regularly scheduled basic tour of duty would have the travel hours credited as hours of work.

Example (1). A remote worker’s official duty station is their home. The employee was directed by their supervisor to report to the agency worksite on Monday to attend training from 8am to 5pm. The agency worksite is within the local commuting area of the employee’s official duty station (the local commuting area for that agency is 50 miles and the agency worksite is 48 miles from the employee’s home). The employee must leave their home by 6:30am to arrive at the agency worksite by 8am.

Time	Transaction Code	Hours	Remarks
6:30am-8am	N/A	1.5	The employee is not paid for their commute to work because that is normal home to work travel. (See 5 CFR 551.422 and 5 CFR 550.112 for travel that is hours of work)
8am-5pm	01-Regular Base Pay	8	Attended meeting all day at agency.
5pm-6:30pm	N/A	1.5	Home to work travel is not paid.
	Total Work Hours	8 hours	

Example (2). An employee lives in York, PA and their agency worksite is in Washington, DC (95 miles away). The employee used to telework and their official duty station was Washington, DC, as indicated on their SF-50. The employee has been approved to work remotely from their home and their official worksite has been changed to York, PA (an SF-50 is required each time an official duty station changes). The employee was directed by their supervisor to report to the agency worksite on Friday to attend a meeting from 8am to 4:30pm. Even though the employee used to commute daily to the agency worksite, now that their official worksite is their home in York, PA and they are a remote worker, the employee receives travel reimbursement when they are required to travel to the agency worksite in person because their position of record is located outside of the local commuting area of the agency worksite. See the Federal Travel Regulations for additional information.

Time	Transaction Code	Hours	Remarks
6am – 8am	32- Comp Time/Travel Worked (Paycheck8 PC-78/TC-32)	2	Took 2 hours to travel from the employee’s official worksite (home) to the temporary worksite (agency).
8am-4:30pm	01-Regular Base Pay	8	Attended meeting all day at agency.
4:30pm-6:30pm	32- Comp Time/Travel Worked (Paycheck8 PC-78/TC-32)	2	2-hour drive back to their home (official worksite).
	Total	12 hours	

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Telework and Remote Work

Example (3). An employee’s official worksite is Washington, DC, as indicated on their SF-50. The employee has been under maximum telework during the COVID pandemic and has been teleworking from Boston. The employee has been directed to report to the agency worksite in Washington, DC to attend a meeting. Since the employee’s official duty station is Washington, DC and they have been granted a temporary emergency exception to temporarily telework from Boston, the employee would bear the costs of traveling to the official worksite in Washington, DC.

Example (4). On Tuesday, a remote worker is working out of their home and began work at 7am. At 10am their supervisor calls and directs them to report to the agency worksite because of a critical work situation. The employee leaves their home at 10:15am and drives from their home to the agency worksite. It takes 45 minutes to drive to the agency worksite.

Time	Transaction Code	Hours	Remarks
7am – 3:30pm	01-Regular Base Pay	8	The employee continues to be on duty time when they are required to report to the office during normal working hours.
	Total	8 hours	

Dependent Care

23. Can an employee telework while their children are at home or while taking care of an ill or dependent-care family member?

Yes. Employees may continue to telework or remote work even when they may also have dependent care responsibilities. Employees should not be engaging in dependent care activities when performing official duties and time taking care of dependents is not paid time.

Agencies will continue to provide work flexibilities to support employees, including those with dependent care responsibilities. While telework and remote work should not be approved solely due to dependent care responsibilities, telework and remote work requests may not be denied based on the presence of dependents. Both the supervisor and the employee play important roles in ensuring dependent care responsibilities do not negatively impact work performance.

Supervisors should support those under telework or remote work agreements who are striving to balance work and dependent care responsibilities. Employees under telework and remote work agreements play the most critical role in helping to ensure that work and dependent care responsibilities are successfully managed.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Telework and Remote Work

Time & Attendance

24. Can employees still work a maxiflex work schedule if they telework?

Yes. If an employee is working in the office, teleworking, or working remotely, they may still be able to work a variety of Alternative Work Schedules (flexible work schedules or compressed schedule), in coordination and approval granted through their supervisor within agency-specific guidelines and in compliance with applicable bargaining agreements.

25. What are the core hours for telework or remote workers?

Core hours are the same regardless if the employee reports to the office, teleworks, or is a remote worker. Core hours are the designated periods of the day when all employees must be working. Refer to your agency policy or appropriate collective bargaining agreement to determine what your agency core hours are.

Agencies may designate the number of core hours each week to meet their mission needs and are not required to have core hours on every workday. As a minimum requirement, a flexible work schedule must have at least 2 core hours on each of 2 workdays within a biweekly pay period ([5 U.S.C. 6122\(a\)\(1\)](#)). An employee must account for missed core hours (if permitted) with leave, credit hours, or compensatory time off or; with supervisory approval, work the core hours at another time (within the same workday) or on another day within the pay period. See OPM fact sheet, [The Use of Flexible Work Schedules in Response to COVID-19](#).

26. What are an employee's core hours if they are a remote worker and are in a different time zone than their supervisor or unit?

A remote worker's core hours are based on the time zone where the employee primarily performs their work (e.g., their personal residence, approved telework location or both).

Example. An employee's office is located in Washington, DC (ET) and the core hours are Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The employee is approved to work remotely from their home in Alaska. The employee's core hours are Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (AKT).

27. How are timesheets coded for telework and remote work?

- Scheduled Telework. Regularly scheduled telework is coded as:
 - **WebTA:** 01-Reg Time-Telework
 - **Paycheck8:** DC-11 + TC-01
- Situational Telework. Ad-hoc telework is coded as:
 - **WebTA:** 01- Reg Time-Telework-Other
 - **Paycheck8:** DC-17 + TC-01

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Telework and Remote Work

- Remote Work. Remote workers code their timesheet as normal and generally will not need to use telework transaction codes (e.g., use 01-Regular Base Pay, etc., rather than telework codes), unless approved to telework from an alternate location.

28. Can an employee receive premium pay if they are on maxiflex and telework?

Overtime for employees on a flexible work schedule are all hours of work in excess of 8 hours in a day or 40 hours in a week that are officially ordered in advance by management ([5 U.S.C. 6121\(6\)](#)). If an employee is on a maxiflex work schedule, they do not earn overtime pay for choosing to work their regular 80-hour biweekly work schedule outside of normal working hours. Also, they do not earn night pay for choosing to work at night (6 p.m. to 6 a.m.) when they could have completed their 8-hour daily basic work requirement during daytime hours (6 a.m. to 6 p.m.).

29. Can credit hours be earned while teleworking?

Yes. Employees may earn credit hours while teleworking or working remotely in accordance with agency policies and collective bargaining agreements.

Forms

30. Do employees have to complete a new telework form when they return to the office?

- Teleworkers are required to have a completed AD-3018 on file. If a mission area has other tracking mechanisms in place, employees must still sign an agreement that covers, at a minimum, what is found in the AD-3018. If there is a change to the telework arrangement (e.g., changing the number of days teleworking per week), then the supervisor and employee must update the AD-3018 to reflect the change.
- Supervisors are required to notify new employees of their eligibility to telework by initiating a Telework Agreement within 90 calendar days of the entrance on duty date and require a completed agreement or opt-out statement from eligible employees.
- Agencies may choose not to require employees to update telework agreements to reflect an increase in telework days until their implementation of the new Departmental Regulation, unless doing so is contrary to a negotiated agreement.

Telework Overseas

31. Can an employee telework or work remotely outside of the United States?

USDA employees teleworking or remote working outside the United States must be in compliance with the Department of State's Executive Secretary Memorandum, *Requirements*

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Telework and Remote Work

for Executive Branch Employees Teleworking in Foreign Locations. See [3 FAM 2370 Domestic Employee Teleworking Overseas \(DETO\)](#) and [Telework.gov](#).

Training

32. Do employees have to complete required training?

Yes. Prior to beginning a telework agreement, employees and supervisors must complete required training. If newly hired into the agency, employees who will telework must complete the required training within 30 calendar days of their appointment. The required training is available in AgLearn. There currently is not a remote work training requirement in the Departmental Regulation, although agencies may decide to require training on working remotely for employees and/or supervisors.

33. How do employees complete in-person training or certification (e.g., First Aid, CPR, AED, etc.)?

Employees are still eligible to travel, as needed, for supervisory-approved training and certification. Employees must follow agency specific direction and work with their supervisor, as needed.

34. What types of resources are available?

Several resources are available in AgLearn to help employees and supervisors during the reentry process as well as managing a hybrid and remote workforce:

- [Remote Work Foundations](#)
- [Staying Organized While Working Remotely or On-Site](#)
- [Tips for Working Remotely](#)
- [Level Up Your Remote Team Experience](#)
- [Managing Skills for Remote Leaders](#)
- [Managing Remote Teams: Setting Expectations, Behaviors, and Habits](#)
- [Leading Remote Projects and Virtual Teams](#)
- [Leveraging Virtual and Hybrid Teams for Improved Effectiveness](#)
- [Building Your Visibility Online as a Remote Leader](#)
- [How to Create and Run a Brilliant Remote Workshop](#)
- [Facilitating Sustainable Change](#)
- [Organizations Change So Get Ready](#)
- [Communicating in Times of Change](#)
- [How to Be an Adaptable Employee during Change and Uncertainty](#)
- [Managing Stress](#)
- [Managing Stress for Positive Change](#)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Telework and Remote Work

Vacancy Announcements

35. How will a vacancy announcement indicate if a position is eligible for remote work?

USDA job announcements must state whether the position is eligible for a remote work arrangement, and whether a remote work arrangement is required for the position. Candidates accepting a position where a remote work arrangement is required must accept the arrangement as a condition of employment.

Example. A hiring manager recruits for a GS-0301-11, Program Specialist position and an evaluation of the position by the hiring manager has determined the work of the position can be performed remotely. The position is advertised as a remote work position with a duty station negotiable upon selection. If the duty station is identified as other than a Federal facility, the duty station will be the location where the primary work will be performed, which can be the residence of the employee. The duty station is annotated in box 39 on form SF-50, Notification of Personnel Action, as required for locality pay requirements.

Safety

Depending on the requirements of the agency, the remote policy may require the employee to complete a safety checklist self-certifying the home office (or other work environment) is free from hazards. This may be especially critical in a remote work arrangement where the employee never or rarely reports to an agency worksite. If this is a requirement, the intent of the safety checklist must only be for program purposes, such as acquainting the employee with workplace safety.

36. How can I ensure I am complying with applicable safety requirements if I am a remote worker?

DR 4080-811-002, *Telework and Remote Work*, encourages employees to be proactive in ensuring their duty station workspace is clear of all hazards and to practice safe work habits; however, the DR cannot prescribe a checklist suitable for all employees under all working conditions. As outlined in the new OPM [2021 Guide to Telework and Remote Work in the Federal Government](#), USDA advises that safety should be discussed between the teleworker/remote worker and agency, and have the discretion to create adequate safety checklists that closely align with their workforce and mission requirements.

Reasonable Accommodation

37. Can an employee request a reasonable accommodation?

If the employee believes they have a qualifying disability that limits their ability to perform the essential functions of their position, a reasonable accommodation may be requested. Supervisors and managers should visit [USDA's Reasonable Accommodation webpage](#) and

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Telework and Remote Work

consult their servicing Reasonable Accommodation Coordinator for guidance on agency responsibility pertaining to the reasonable accommodation process.

38. What types of Reasonable Accommodation Equipment could be provided?

Agencies may provide/procure either new or excess equipment for alternative worksites as long as it is clear that the equipment continues to belong to the Government and there is an audit trail indicating the location of the equipment. (See Federal Register [Vol. 71, No. 52](#), Guidelines for Alternative Workplace Arrangements, March 17, 2006).

There are 3 Large Categories of reasonable accommodations:

1. **Assistive Technology.** To help employees use accessible information technology like screen enlargement or voice recognition software, or a large screen monitor.
2. **Furniture and Workplace Accommodations.** Like task lighting, noise cancelling headphones, or special ergonomic chairs with for example a tailbone cutout in the seat foam.
3. **Services.** Like interpreters for persons with hearing impairments or who are Deaf, readers for persons with visual impairments or who are blind, and Personal Assistance Services that provide help with activities of daily living.

Terminating Agreements

39. Can a supervisor suspend or terminate a telework agreement for performance or conduct issues?

Employees who have been teleworking during the pandemic will continue to be eligible for telework, at least on a situational basis, unless one of the limitations under [5 U.S.C. 6502\(a\)\(2\)](#) applies or the agency has determined that telework has diminished employee performance or agency operations. ([5 U.S.C. 6502\(b\)\(1\)](#))

Decisions to change an employee's telework arrangement should be based on an agency's determination that the arrangement no longer advances the efficient and effective delivery of the agency's mission. Agencies may revoke a telework or remote work arrangement based on an employee's performance if the employee's remote status is contributing to performance problems that could otherwise be effectively addressed if the worker were not remote.

Agencies may also decline to approve telework for employees with a documented history of misconduct connected to telework (e.g., misreporting work hours), as provided in [5 U.S.C. 6502\(b\)\(3\)](#).

40. If my performance falls below an acceptable level of competence, can I still telework?

No. You are ineligible for telework if you are placed on a Demonstration Opportunity or have received a less than fully successful performance rating within the past 12 months. You

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Telework and Remote Work

may remain ineligible for up to 12 months from the date of the documented performance rating or start of the Demonstration Opportunity, at the discretion of your supervisor.

41. Can a remote work agreement be rescinded?

Performance issues of remote workers will be addressed in accordance with USDA and agency policies and regulations. Absent exigent circumstances, supervisors are expected to allow the employee to continue as a remote worker employee while addressing performance or conduct issues in accordance with Departmental and agency policy.

42. What if an employee has performance or conduct issues while in a remote work arrangement?

Poor performance or engaging in misconduct may result in suspension or termination of a remote work agreement, or management may choose to address these issues with the employee from their remote worksite location in addition to taking other appropriate action. Performance issues of remote employees will be addressed in accordance with USDA policies, regulations, and applicable CBA provisions. Absent exigent circumstances, supervisors are expected to allow the employee to continue as a remote employee while addressing performance or conduct issues.

43. How do Supervisors Rate Performance?

Supervisors:

- Rate performance using the measurable objectives in the Performance Plan.
- Hold teleworkers and non-teleworkers to the same performance standards.
- Assess the teleworking employee's performance based on the results they achieve and expectations in their Performance Plan.
- Do not add extra requirements for teleworkers, such as requiring them to document their work when working at home.

44. If an application to work remotely was denied, is there a grievance process available to follow?

If an employee disagrees with a decision to deny, cancel, or terminate a telework or remote work agreement they must follow their collective bargaining agreement (for bargaining unit employees) or their agency's administrative grievance process (for non-bargaining unit employees). If bargaining unit employees are precluded from addressing their claims under the terms of their collective bargaining agreement, they may pursue their claims under the terms of the agency's administrative grievance process.