

Remote Work Guidance

June 2022

The School District of Philadelphia offers remote work options to eligible central office employees as a benefit for our employees. This document outlines the purpose, eligibility and process, and expectations for remote work.

Eligibility for Remote Work

Remote work offers flexibility and benefits to employees. However, the core of our collective work is to support schools who serve students in person. Additionally, regular in-person contact with our teams is vital to provide excellent service to schools and foster connections and opportunities for collaboration and relationship-building with staff, students, and families. The District's remote work options are designed to strike this balance. As such, central office employees are eligible to apply for a voluntary remote work agreement insofar as it is consistent with their job duties and doing so will not negatively impact departmental operations and delivery of our work in service of students.

That said, not all positions allow for remote work opportunities. Remote work is not applicable for employees who are assigned to school buildings. Additionally, remote work is not applicable for those who perform the following essential functions:

- Provide daily face-to-face interaction and customer-centric services to students, staff, families, and the general public;
- Provide essential services that support the continuity of operations (e.g. facilities staff) and/or who must be able to respond immediately to unforeseen situations/crises (e.g., safety staff);
- Perform duties that require the employee to have immediate access to documents, restricted data, or special equipment that is located only in the District workplace.

Finally, employees on any type of leave are not eligible for remote work until such leave has been completed.

An employee may request remote work under the following circumstances:

- the employee has a safe and dedicated work space to perform work remotely;
- the employee has a phone, printer/scanner (if necessary), and other necessary devices to perform work remotely;
- the employee has dependent care arrangements for the scheduled hours of the workday;
- remote work will not cause additional work for or otherwise negatively impact co-workers;
- the employee is able to be productive in a remote work environment and working remotely will not diminish the employee's job performance;
- remote work will not impact the quality of operations for the department or individual.

Please note that remote work as a reasonable accommodation for a qualified employee with a disability is not the subject of this Remote Work Guidance and should not be submitted through this process. Those

requests must be submitted following the District's employee accommodations process. (Please contact accommodations@philasd.org for more information.)

Remote Work Arrangement Options

For those employees who are eligible for remote work, the District offers two formal remote work agreement options. Employees should discuss the appropriate option with their manager before formally submitting a request, to ensure this option is available to them.

Formal Remote Work Arrangement #1: Remote Work on a Fixed Schedule (1-2 Days per week).

Employees must submit a request, including the schedule for their remote work days. If an employee wants to submit a request for a day(s) that would be flexible depending on the week, there should be a clear process for when the remote work day(s) will be taken that is planned with the manager ahead of time.

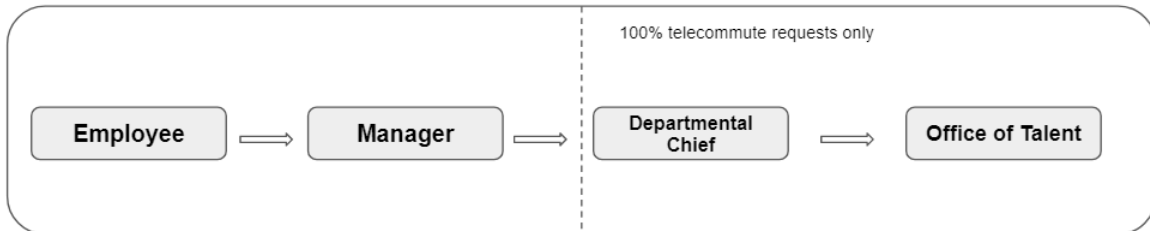
Formal Remote Work Arrangement #2: 100% Telework. This option to work exclusively remotely will be available only to a small number of employees whose jobs require no in-person responsibilities, whose work does not interact directly with schools, and whose work also does not require interaction with departments. All central office departments need to ensure a consistent physical presence of staff for service during regular operating hours, so the District does not anticipate that most departments will be able to grant a fully remote arrangement.

Please note that the remote work arrangements do not allow for or include remote work for half-days. For example, a staff member cannot have a formal remote work arrangement that allows them to work on site in the morning and then travel home to work remotely in the afternoon. Someone who is approved to work remotely would assume to work remotely for the full day.

General Managerial Flexibility: In addition to these two formal remote work arrangements, managers have flexibility and discretion to address individual needs that may occasionally arise in their department. What this looks like will vary by office. Managers can work with their individual employees/teams, as what is appropriate will differ by department. For example, field-based staff who work in schools may be able to provide professional development remotely on full professional development days, if they are expected to deliver the sessions online. Or, an employee who normally does not work from home might request to work remotely on one specific day because they have a plumber coming and they are still able to perform work duties from home that one day. Alternatively, an employee may ask their manager to change their schedule to start earlier and end earlier once a week so that they can attend a course they are taking. An employee may need to work from school sites on certain days, and have flexibility to finish the day there instead of being at 440. An exhaustive list of examples cannot be included here, so an employee should seek clarity from their manager around what flexibility they might need. Importantly, these one-off situations do not require a formal Remote Work Agreement.

Managers can seek guidance from their supervisor or inquire with the Office of Employee and Labor Relations (employeerelations@philasd.org) if they need guidance on how to respond to these requests for flexibility.

Process for Requesting Remote Work Arrangement



All remote work agreements should begin with a conversation between the employee and their manager to preliminarily review eligibility. Eligible employees must then submit a Remote Work Agreement form to their manager.

Managers will review each request. When determining approval of the request, managers should consider, among other factors, the impact on students and schools, the nature of the job/work, whether the employee can maintain the expected quality of service remotely, the employee's work style and ability to self motivate/schedule/regulate their work, and the operational needs of the department and the District.

For the one-to-two-days-per-week arrangement, managers may not be able to approve an employee's request for a specific day for remote work. For instance, if multiple employees in the department request that day out of the office, the manager may determine that granting all requests would result in a disruption to on site operations of the department. Additionally, if there is a certain day that requires all employees to be on site for departmental duties, a manager may not be able to approve that request. In these instances, the manager and employee should work together to find another day that would work for both the employee and the operational effectiveness of the department. Ultimately, the manager has the ability to deny a request for a specific day if it would impact the operational needs of the department.

If the request is for 100% telework, once the manager approves, the Remote Work Agreement must then be approved by the department Chief as well as the Office of Talent must also approve before it is implemented.

Once the form is fully approved, the manager should provide a copy of the completed form or the information contained therein to the Payroll secretary. A copy of the form will also be included in the employee's personnel file.

Review, Revision, and/or Rescission of Arrangement

Employees and managers may request to review, modify, or withdraw the remote work agreement with advance notification where possible. Remote work agreements can be reviewed, modified, or withdrawn at the discretion of the manager at any time, if for example, it is determined that the implementation does not allow for maximum effectiveness of an individual's performance or the department's operations. However, whenever possible, managers should communicate proactively and at least one week in advance before modifying or adjusting a remote work agreement.

If employees feel their remote work agreements have been denied or withdrawn unfairly, the employee may contact the Office of Employee and Labor Relations (employeerelations@philasd.org).

Remote Work Expectations

By signing the Remote Work Agreement, the employee agrees to comply with the following expectations as well as all District rules, policies, and procedures that apply while working on site at a District location. Additionally, employees must adhere to the expectations laid out herein.

Availability, Communication, and Responsiveness: Employees are expected to adhere to their typical job responsibilities and responsiveness requirements, remain fully accessible, attend virtual meetings/functions, and adhere to standard hours. Any changes to standard hours must be outlined in the Remote Work Agreement. Any appointments or time away from work while working remotely must be explicitly approved by the manager in advance. While engaging in remote work, an employee must devote full attention to their job duties, and not use remote work time as an opportunity to be available for personal or family matters.

Employees should remain readily accessible, check their email and office voicemail while working remotely, and ensure that their closest collaborators are aware of how to get in touch with them. Generally, because some typical modes of communication (face-to-face chats, lunch, informal conversations) are removed when working remotely, employees should plan to over-communicate while working remotely.

Employees should also be aware of their presence in meetings and background when working remotely. For example, we expect employees to maintain professionalism and dress in a manner consistent with how you would interact while on-site or supporting school from your office.

There may be times when meetings/functions do not offer a remote participation option and employees may be required to attend work in person, including on days when the employee was previously scheduled to work remotely. The employee is responsible for confirming with their manager if remote or physical presence is required in advance. An employee must be available to come into the office for meetings, project-based needs, or emergency on-site issues. There is no expectation to provide other "make up" remote work days for employees who have to report on a day typically designated for remote work. Furthermore, there is no expectation of "make up" remote work days when the remote work day falls on a holiday.

Timekeeping and Payroll Expectations

Standard District and departmental practices for timekeeping and leave time should be followed while working remotely. Namely:

- The employee's compensation and benefits will remain the same while participating in the remote work arrangement.
- Employees are still required to accurately report their work hours in alignment with the District's timekeeping system. While employees working on-site must clock in and out using the on-site Kronos machines, when an employee is approved to work remotely, they can clock in and out using the Kronos mobile app and/or desktop access in the [Employee Portal](#).
- Requests for using sick, vacation, personal, or other leaves must be requested and approved by the employee's manager in the same manner as when working in their typical work location. (Please note that remote work is not a replacement or alternative to taking sick leave or vacation. If you are too ill to work from home, please use your sick time for rest, recovery, and/or getting medical care.)
- Employees must ensure arrangements are made for child care during all work hours, understanding the remote work is not a substitute for dependent care. Remaining engaged in work activities is not consistent with simultaneously caring for dependents.
- If an employee is scheduled to work remotely on a day when their physical work location is closed unexpectedly (i.e. due to inclement weather/power outage), the employee is expected to work as normally scheduled. They may use available leave if they choose not to work on that day.
- Employees who encounter power, internet, or other technical difficulties are expected to make alternate arrangements or come on site to complete their work or request paid time off.
- Represented employees are required to adhere to contractual breaks while working remotely.
- All non-exempt employees must still obtain prior approval from their manager before working any overtime hours.

Please note that tax or other legal implications for the business use of the employee's home will be based on IRS, state, and local government regulations. Working remotely voluntarily does not mean that the City of Philadelphia wage tax will be withheld from your pay, but it may impact other taxes depending on your remote work location. Responsibility for fulfilling obligations in this area rests solely with the employee.

Equipment, Supplies, and the Physical Work Environment

During remote work, employees are responsible to ensure, at their own expense, that their remote work location is a safe, ergonomically appropriate environment conducive to productivity. The minimum requirements to ensure a productive work environment include:

- A District-issued laptop for all District work
- A dedicated workspace in their remote environment set up in an ergonomically friendly manner
- *(For remote work one to two days per week)* Physical work location in commuting distance of the office, in case you are required to report to the office.
- *(For 100% telework)* Physical work location in the United States. We will not support international remote work arrangements.

The employee will be fully responsible for:

- A reliable high-speed internet connection
- Reliable telephone service (landline and/or cellular)
- Ensuring telephone contact is possible during the day either by forwarding your office line to a personal number or providing your personal telephone number must to colleagues
- Specialized software or hardware (printers, peripherals)
- Office supplies, furniture, etc.

The District may provide the following for remote work environments:

- Computer laptop (employee's assigned laptop for use at 440 or remotely)
- Antivirus software (required)
- VPN connectivity, only if required, to access certain District internal systems:
 - Advantage Finance and HR
 - AppXtender
 - Crystal Reports

VPN connectivity will require the use of Duo, the District's Multi-Factor Authentication Service, as well as a personal mobile device

- Encryption software or an encrypted thumb drive for employees who are transporting confidential or sensitive data to/from the workplace.
- Support at the 440 Education Center, if needed, for service and maintenance of devices.
- Support for forwarding a staff member's direct extension to a personal telephone number.

All property, equipment, records and materials of the District provided to the employee for remote work shall remain the property of the District.

The School District will not provide:

- VPN access to internal information systems other than those listed above
- VPN access to Windows departmental shares or other computers that reside at 440
- Support for any device other than an employees' assigned SDP laptop (i.e. personally-owned computers, tablets, iPads)
- A personal mobile device, if the employee's role does not already include a District phone offering
- Google Voice using an employee's SDP Google account (Voice service is available through personal Gmail accounts but will not function using a District Google login)
- Compensation to create or enhance a home workspace

Employees can access IT Technical Support Monday - Friday from 7:30am to 5pm:

- Requests for remote work issues, problems, etc., must be reported through the Technology Help Desk at 215-400-5555 or helpdesk@philasd.org
- The District cannot provide support for home networking issues (Wifi connectivity, routers, ISP connections, etc.)

Employees are responsible for costs associated with remote office set up and use. The District will not provide equipment explicitly for the program or reimburse costs (internet/cellular service, supplies, utilities,

etc.) associated with participation. Additionally, the District is not liable for damages to an employee's personal or real property during the course of work at the employee's remote work location or while using District equipment in the employee's residence.

The employee should report work-related injuries sustained while working remotely to the supervisor at the earliest reasonable opportunity, in compliance with the District's policies, as well as OSHA and Worker's Compensation guidelines. The employee will be responsible for injuries or damage to third parties in the remote work location.

Security and Confidentiality

Employees are required to follow District Policy 815, Acceptable Use of Internet, Technology, and Network Resources Policy. Employees are responsible for all District data to be maintained in a secure manner.

When working remotely, employees must use a District-issued device to ensure security, centralized backup, and to receive support if the device is malfunctioning. If VPN access to District systems is required, only a District-issued device with District-approved VPN software can be used for such access. Additionally, employees must protect the District-issued devices to the best of their ability and notify their manager immediately if the device is lost or stolen.

In addition to device and internet security, employees working remotely are responsible for maintaining confidentiality of information shared in print or verbally. Documents containing confidential or identifying information should be stored in a secure place that only the employee has access to if they are brought to the remote work location. However, no District files should be permanently stored in home offices. When participating in virtual meetings or phone calls, employees are responsible for ensuring that the content of the conversation remains confidential.

Productivity and Work Output

As always, employees are responsible for reporting on their progress and goals to their managers, whether working remotely or on site, and managers are responsible for ensuring that time worked remotely results in a benefit to the District. To ensure productivity, remote work should be guided by a few key strategies:

Communicate Often. Physical distance tends to lead to less communication; however, proactive and frequent communications are a necessity, especially when working remotely. Whether it is about the status of a project that you are working on or what your availability is, communicating regularly with your manager and your team is critical.

Participate in Meetings Effectively.

- Turn your camera on, unless otherwise discussed directly with your manager, so that you are fully and actively participating in the meeting.
- Be aware of what is in the background while on a video conference. People can see more than just your face on video calls, so be aware of what is in the frame.

- As a matter of professionalism, while working remotely, taking meetings from your car or while in a public place such as a doctor's office are not appropriate.
- Mute your microphone when you're not speaking (and remember to un-mute when you start to speak).
- Ensure that no visually or audibly disruptive activities are occurring around you that reduce overall meeting or participant productivity.

Foster Relationships. Just because you are distant does not mean your relationships have to be distant. Finding different ways to stay connected with your colleagues who you don't physically interact with everyday is important so that communication can be effectively maintained. In particular, when new employees are joining a team, finding common time to welcome them, make introductions, and build relationships is more important than ever.

Consideration for Managers: Managers should consider how to maintain a collaborative team culture while remote work arrangements are in effect. Managers should consider the structure of team meetings, socialization and celebratory events, and how to integrate opportunities for informal support/feedback/development when managing a team with staff who are working remotely. Additionally, managers should consider when to introduce remote work for new employees; it is recommended that new employees do not commence remote work for one to two months from their start of employment. This time allows the employee to learn from those on site and get up to speed with our systems and work and also allows the manager time to learn more about the employee and the supports they will need to excel in their job.

Please note that the District may update the guidance or revoke remote work options in the future.