2.1.21 Staff Telecommuting

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Like other organizations in Silicon Valley, Stanford thrives on collaboration; sharing information and ideas is the cornerstone of our work in academics, research, and patient care. In the workplace, telecommuting is available for eligible staff employees at the discretion of the department and supervisors. Though telecommuting might be a viable option for some employees, it is not a right; see eligibility criteria for details. Decisions about the suitability of telecommuting are made within the school or business unit where the employee works. When a telecommuting arrangement is agreed to, a formal Telecommuting Agreement [1] must be signed and then renewed annually, and the “SU Work-at-Home Office Safety Checklist [2]” must be completed to ensure the designated workspace meets safety criteria, including an ergonomic assessment.

Authority:
Approved by the Vice President of Human Resources

Applicability:
Applies to all regular employees as defined in Guide Memo 2.2.2 [3]: Definitions. It does not apply to:

- Casual or temporary employees
- Employees covered by collective bargaining agreements
- Faculty
- Employees at international locations

1. Policy Statement/Philosophy

Departments may consider telecommuting work arrangements that support eligible employees in performing their work at an alternative worksite when it is feasible and meets departmental goals. Telecommuting is available for eligible employees at the discretion of the department and supervisors. The specific procedures for evaluating/approving a telecommuting request are to be determined by the school or unit in a manner consistent with this policy. However, even where a telecommuting arrangement is approved, the employee must maintain a regular presence in the workplace and attend, in person, any meetings or functions.
Telecommuting is a voluntary option that may improve efficiency and productivity in some circumstances. However, while people may be more productive when they are alone, they are more collaborative and innovative when they are together. Like other organizations in Silicon Valley, Stanford thrives on collaboration; sharing information and ideas is the cornerstone of our work in academics, research, and patient care. Our culture values collaboration among members of the university community, particularly during core business hours. As a result of the emphasis placed on collaboration, the vast majority of work time is spent on campus where access to others is easily accomplished.

Though telecommuting might be a viable option for some employees, it is not a right. Many positions do not lend themselves to telecommuting. For non-exempt employees, given the nature of the work, telecommuting arrangements should only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Significant operations needs related to student services, patient care, laboratory/research support, supervision of employees and other work may require employees to be onsite. Decisions about the suitability of telecommuting are made within the school or business unit where the employee works.

2. Telecommuting Definitions

**Occasional Telecommuting**
Approved telecommuting on an infrequent, one-time, or irregular basis, occasional telecommuting requires supervisor approval, and does not require a telecommuting agreement.

**Regular Telecommuting**
Approved telecommuting (during normal work hours) on a regular basis, whether weekly, bi-monthly, or monthly. Regular telecommuting requires the approval of the supervisor, and HR Manager, as well as a signed telecommuting agreement. Additionally, regular telecommuting that exceeds two days per week requires the approval of the Dean, Vice Provost, or Vice President. Telecommuting agreements must be renewed annually.

3. Eligibility Criteria

The determination that a position may or may not be appropriate for a telecommuting arrangement is made on a case-by-case basis at the department level. Departments evaluate whether a position is suitable for telecommuting based on the nature of the work that is being performed.

Generally, requests to telecommute should be considered when:

- The employee (including those who supervise other employees) has demonstrated sustained high performance, and when the manager believes the employee can maintain the expected quantity and quality of work while telecommuting.
- The department can maintain quality of service for students, faculty, and other members of the university community.
- Telecommuting is appropriate considering the nature of the job.
Generally, requests to telecommute should not be considered when:

- The job requires the employee’s physical presence or telecommuting would harm the school or department’s efficiency.
- The employee’s current assignment requires frequent supervision, direction or input from others who are onsite or requires that the employee provide frequent supervision, direction or input from other employees who are onsite.
- The employee’s performance evaluations do not indicate sustained high performance or the ability to work independently.
- The employee’s observed productivity levels are problematic or tracking and confirming work hours is difficult (as in the case of non-exempt employees).
- The employee has received disciplinary action or has a demonstrated attendance problem.
- The employee has less than six months of service in the administrative unit or school.

**General Expectations**
Telecommuting is not intended to permit staff to have time to work at other jobs, provide dependent care during work hours, or run their own businesses. Employees who telecommute must comply with all Stanford policies and procedures, including safeguarding and securing any restricted or confidential information with which they work. Failure to fulfill normal work requirements, both qualitative and quantitative, on account of other employment or activities, may be cause for disciplinary action or termination of employment. Employees who telecommute are expected to have regularly scheduled work hours, to be fully accessible during those hours, and to attend group meetings and functions in person. Non-exempt employees who telecommute are required to report their work hours and take required rest breaks and meal periods.

Departments will determine, with information supplied by the employee and the supervisor, the appropriate equipment needs for each telecommuting arrangement on a case-by-case basis. The university will maintain equipment supplied to the employee. The employee, if deemed appropriate by the department, will maintain equipment supplied 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 university is to be used for business purposes only. The telecommuter should sign an inventory of all office property and agrees to take appropriate action to protect the items from damage or theft. Upon termination of employment, all university property will be returned to the university, unless other arrangements have been made.

**Duration of Telecommuting Arrangements**
Telecommuting arrangements end at the employee’s termination, including for employees who leave Stanford University for Stanford University Hospital or the Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital at Stanford.

A telecommuting arrangement may be revoked at any time if it is determined to be in the best interest of the department or university.

4. **Telecommuting Requirements for**
Alternative Worksites

A. Supervisor responsibilities:

1. Before telecommuting begins, ensure employees perform a workplace health and safety inspection of their designated workspace (refer to the “SU Work-at-Home Office Safety Checklist” [2]), including an ergonomic self-assessment of their computer workstation.

- Ensure employees perform periodic workplace health and safety inspections (as described above) after telecommuting begins (for office spaces, recommend on an annual basis).

2. Maintain inspection and corrections of deficiencies records for a minimum of one year.

3. Ensure any deficiencies identified from inspections are corrected in a timely manner.

B. Employee responsibilities:

1. Before telecommuting begins, and on a periodic basis thereafter, perform workplace health and safety inspections of the designated workplace (using the resources described above).

2. Provide completed inspection documents to their supervisor.

3. Correct any identified deficiencies in a timely manner.

4. Maintain the alternative workspace free from workplace health and safety hazards and inform their supervisor of any new workplace health and safety hazards needing correction.

5. Immediately report to his/her supervisor any work-related illness or injury suffered while telecommuting and complete required forms.

To ensure a safe workplace can be maintained, the telecommuting agreement should clarify safety-related equipment/furniture needs and maintenance (as applicable). For any workplace health and safety-related questions, contact the SU Department of Environmental Health and Safety at 723-0448.

5. Out-of-Area and International Telecommuting Considerations

Positions are typically based at a university location at or near the main Stanford campus. Generally, telecommuting should not be used as an alternative to assigning an employee to report to a university location at or near the core campus. However, two exceptions may arise:

a. **Employee requests for extended out-of-area or international location:** Employee requests to work in an out-of-area or international location for an extended period of time require the approval of Dean, Vice Provost, or Vice President of the school/unit and the school/unit’s Senior Human Resources Manager. The Global HR Office and Global Financial Services must be consulted regarding any international employee requests prior to any decision, as there may be international laws and requirements that must be considered. Work authorization and tax rules in other countries may make such arrangements cost-prohibitive regardless of the level of approval. Any agreement must contain information regarding the university’s right to end the agreement if
b. Employees hired in an out-of-area location: Employees who are hired into positions assigned to work at non-campus locations are not considered to be telecommuting, as they are not assigned to a specific campus location. Approval for an out-of-area assignment must be obtained from the Dean, Vice Provost, or Vice President of the school/unit and the school/unit’s Senior Human Resources Manager.

6. Telecommuting Agreement

An agreement between the telecommuting employee and the employee’s home department is required, and will be placed in the employee’s local personnel file. The telecommuting agreement may be modified or terminated any time, with appropriate notice. As circumstances, business needs, and job requirements evolve over time, adjustments and modifications may become necessary. At least two weeks notice should be provided whenever possible in advance of ending or changing the agreement. In all cases, telecommuting agreements must be renewed annually.

Guidelines on requesting a memo change can be found at https://adminguide.stanford.edu/change-request-guidelines


Links
[1] https://stanford.box.com/s/koan6677brf1e4hds7in9u1b19jklvag

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