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Commuter Choice Maryland A Guide to Telework for Employers



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Purpose

This document is intended to help employers in the state of Maryland craft a telework policy that works for their employees and for their bottom line. In this document, you'll find a set of sample policies that you can choose from, a sample telework agreement, a brief discussion of technology considerations, and a list of co-working and teleworking spaces that your employees may choose to telework from located across the state. The information contained in this guide comes from many different sources, all of which are listed in the references section at the end of this document.

Why Telework

There are many reasons that businesses chose to implement teleworking policies. Not all of them are relevant to every business, but many businesses find that allowing their employees to telework is beneficial for both employees and the bottom line. Reasons that businesses implement teleworking policies include, but are not limited, to the following:

1. Increase productivity and job satisfaction among employees.
2. Improve the organization's ability to recruit and retain well-qualified employees.
3. Reduce costs associated with physical office space, including overhead costs, real estate leases, energy, and parking expenses.
4. Assist disabled workers and those returning to work after a job injury.
5. Enhance work-life balance for your workforce.
6. Allow workers to remain productive if the physical office is affected by an emergency or disaster.
7. Reduce absenteeism in the form of sick days, snow days, family leave, and personal appointments.
8. Help manage demand for parking.
9. Achieve company sustainability goals and increasing environmental quality through commute trip reduction goals.

What is Included in a Telework Policy?

There is no single telework policy that suits the needs of every business or every employee. However, most telework policies contain some or all of the following sections.

Purpose

This is generally a short section that explains why your organization is offering a telework option to employees. It may take the form of a vision statement.

Definition

Not all telework policies are created equal. Telework policies usually define what telework means to your company. Can employees telework full-time or only some of their working hours? Which of your employees are eligible for telework? Is telework a universal benefit or a privilege to be awarded at the discretion of management?

Application and Scope

Your organization probably already has policies that govern when employees are expected to be at work and when they may be excused from those obligations—for example, policies governing personal leave. To what extent does your telework policy supersede those existing policies? To what extent is your telework policy subordinate to them?

Eligibility Requirements and Considerations

In this section, you may go into more detail about which of your employees are eligible for telework, and under what circumstances. Are your part-time employees eligible, or only your full-time employees? Exempt employees, or non-exempt employees? You may wish to limit telework to employees who have been with your organization for a substantial period of time or award it as a perk for employees whose job performance exceeds expectations. You may also wish to limit telework based on the extent to which your employees interact with your customers, or to the extent that those interactions must occur face-to-face.

Application and Approval

How do your employees request part-time or full-time telework? How do managers and/or your company's Human Resources departments go about deciding whether to approve or deny that request? This policy should be as simple as possible while ensuring that your organization's interests are protected: a telework policy that is difficult to use provides few benefits to your organization.

Manager Responsibilities

What additional requirements, if any, will your company place on managers who supervise teleworking employees? Will your company provide additional training for managing remote employees? How will your company ensure that teleworking employees and on-site employees are treated fairly and equitably?

Training

Some organizations find it useful to provide training to employees who telework and their supervisors, to ensure they are familiar with organizational policies on telework and, if necessary, to provide guidance on how teleworking employees will be evaluated.

Duration

Some organizations prefer to determine the duration of telework arrangements on a case-by-case basis. These organizations will simply write the duration of the arrangement into the teleworking agreement. Other organizations prefer to standardize the duration of telework arrangements, though these are usually renewable.

Reviews and Evaluations

Many teleworking employees can be evaluated in the exact same manner as their performance was judged prior to the start of their telework agreement. However, some teleworking employees may need to have their evaluations changed, either in frequency or in methods. This section allows the employer to lay out any changes to employee evaluations for teleworking employees.

Communication and Accessibility

Your employees use a variety of tools to communicate with colleagues, supervisors, and clients. Usually, these tools can be easily used from outside the office. This section can be used to describe any changes to communications protocols for teleworking employees. It can also be used to describe how you will roll out new communications technologies to teleworking employees, including installation and training. Some policies require the manager and employee to jointly develop a communications strategy as part of a telework agreement.

Work Hours

This section may address issues including when employees are expected to be available for contact when they are expected to be in the office or teleworking, and how overtime and leave hours are affected by telework. Some organizations have standardized policies about these issues, while others prefer to use a more individualized approach.

Travel Expenses

If your teleworking employee has to travel to the main office or to a project site, who pays for their travel expenses?

Emergency Operations

This section describes how your teleworking employees should handle an emergency situation, either at your main office or their telework location. Emergencies covered often include, but are not limited to, power failures, road closures, illness, or injury.

Non-Employment Responsibilities

Many employees prefer telework for the flexibility it can provide in dealing with issues like dealing with a child or elder care or dealing with a personal medical issue. Organizations vary in the level of flexibility they provide to handle situations like these. Many leave it to the discretion of individual managers, though some prefer to have universal policies in place.

Performance Standards

Many employers are concerned about productivity declines as a result of employees choosing to telework. While telework generally does not lead to declines in productivity, many employers consider it important to reiterate that teleworking employees will be held to the same performance standards as their peers who work from an office.

Workspace and Equipment

Where will your teleworking employees be expected to physically locate themselves during the workday? What equipment and software do they need to ensure their continued productivity, safety, and the security of sensitive internal information? How will the company provide it for them? Organizations that try to address every single possible contingency often find themselves with inflexible policies that still do not address every issue, so try to stick to essential issues of safety, security, and liability when writing these policies.

Information Security

Every employer knows how vital it is to protect their data and internal information. While teleworking employees do not necessarily increase data vulnerability, they do add complexity to an organization's information security needs. It is worthwhile to consult your company's IT staff, or an IT consultant when crafting this part of your telework policy.

Modification or Termination

This section lays out the circumstances under which a telework agreement can be changed or ended.

Sample Telework Agreement

The Telework Agreement is a written agreement between the employee and the supervisor requiring them to adhere to applicable guidelines and policies. Organizations with a universal telework policy may not need a separate telework agreement, particularly if their telework responsibilities are clearly stated in an employee manual or other documentation which the employee has signed. The telework agreement is NOT an employment contract and may not be construed as such. Each employee and supervisor must sign the Telework Agreement.

A sample telework agreement is provided below as a resource. Each company should develop its own telework agreement format that includes the provisions that are specific to their telework policy.

Sample Telework Agreement



This TELEWORK AGREEMENT effective _____ is between _____
(referred to as "Employee") and **INSERT COMPANY NAME** (referred to as "Employee").

Term of Agreement

This agreement shall become effective as of the date written above, and shall remain in full force and effect, if employee teleworks, unless the agreement is terminated by the employer.

Employee's Alternate Work Site

Address: _____

Alternate Phone Number(s): _____

Fax Number (if applicable): _____

Work Schedule:

| Week Day | Office | Alt Worksite | Start | Finish |
|----------|--------|--------------|-------|--------|
| Mon | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Tue | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Wed | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Thu | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Fri | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Fixed (complete schedule below) or Flexible (submit schedule, in advance, each week)

The daily work schedule for the days when working at home is subject to negotiation with and approval by Employee's manager. The manager may require that Employee work certain "core hours" and be accessible by telephone during those hours.



Sample Telework Agreement, continued

Work Hours, Overtime, Vacation

Work hours are not expected to change during the program. In the event that overtime is anticipated, this must be discussed and approved in advance with the manager, just as any overtime scheduling would normally have to be approved.

Equipment

Employee agrees that use of equipment, software, data supplies, and other accessories are limited to authorized persons and for purposes related to the organization, including self-development, training, and tasks.

At its sole discretion, **(INSERT COMPANY NAME)** may choose to grant the Employee use of laptops and similar equipment but as a normal course of action, the Employee is expected to have personal equipment that makes Telecommuting possible.

Employee may use personal equipment for teleworking purposes. In such cases, Employee will be responsible for the maintenance and insurance required for the equipment.

(INSERT COMPANY NAME) does not assume liability for loss, damage or wear of Employee-owned equipment.

In event of equipment failure or malfunction, Employee agrees to notify supervisor immediately. Employee understands that any malfunction that is not repaired in a reasonable amount of time will temporarily suspend the telecommuting privilege.

Termination of Agreement

Employee's participation as a teleworker is entirely voluntary. Teleworking is available only to eligible employees, at Employer's sole discretion. Teleworking is not an employee benefit intended to be available to the entire organization. As such, no employee is entitled to, or guaranteed the opportunity to, telework. Either party may terminate Employee's participation in the program, with or without cause, upon reasonable notice, in writing, to the other party. Employer will not be held responsible for costs, damages or losses resulting from cessation of participation in the teleworking program. This Agreement is not a contract of employment and may not be construed as such.

Employee Acknowledgment

I understand teleworking is voluntary and that my supervisor or I may end this telework agreement at any time. I also understand that this agreement is not a contract for employment.

Furthermore, by signing this telework agreement I acknowledge I have read and will abide by the NSS Telework Policy, including the Telework Guidelines, Home Office Safety Guidelines, and the Home Office Self-Certification Safety Checklist.



Sample Telework Agreement, continued

Employee's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Supervisor's Review

____ I have reviewed the employee's Telework Agreement and Home Office Self-Certification Safety Checklist and approve this request.

____ I have reviewed the employee's Telework Agreement and Home Office Self-Certification Safety Checklist and I am unable to approve this request at this time for the following reason(s):

Supervisor's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please Return a Copy of this Form to the Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC).

Technology Considerations

In general, employees who telework are expected to be able to accomplish all the same tasks while working remotely that they would be able to accomplish in their office. This means outfitting their remote offices with equivalent technological equipment. This section covers some of the technological needs employers may need to consider when instituting a telework program.

Computers

Some companies allow workers to use their personal computers for work, though this brings its own set of concerns. How will you ensure that the computer is sufficiently powerful to do the tasks your employee needs to do? How will you ensure that the employee's family members don't use the computer in ways that jeopardize its functionality or your data security? For this reason, many companies provide laptops to their teleworking employees.

Software

Whatever computer your employee uses, it is important to be sure that they have access to the software they need to do their jobs. Issues that companies often encounter with teleworking employees include software licensing and version compatibility. The latter issue can be solved by providing the teleworker a dedicated work laptop, but it is advisable to consult an IT professional about the former.

Internet and Networking

Many companies have internal networks for data storage and transfer between employees. If your teleworking employee needs access to an internal network to do their job, their employer will have to ensure that they can connect to it securely from a remote location. In any case, the employee will almost certainly require a high-speed internet connection. How it will be provided, and who will pay for it, are decisions that have to be made prior to the start of any telework policy.

Telephones and Other Communications Technology

Most employees need a telephone to complete their assigned tasks. Will your company provide them a cell phone strictly for business use? Or will they be expected to use their home phone for that purpose? Some companies provide their employees with VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) connections that operate similarly to standard telephones. Also, if your company uses other internal or external communications technologies, such as Skype or Slack (just to name a couple examples), your teleworking employees will have to be set up with secure, easy access to these tools.

Peripherals and Other Equipment

Will your teleworking employees require printers, fax machines, copiers, paper shredders, or scanners? Will they require a desk or desk chair? For some employees, teleworking with just a laptop on their kitchen table will be sufficient. Others will require a much more substantial setup. It is important for businesses to evaluate their employee's technology needs before the start of any telework policy.

Co-Working Spaces

Some firms encourage or insist that teleworking employees make use of co-working spaces, which have become much more common in recent years. These flexible office spaces are more costly than simply working from home (typically charging a rate per desk per month, in addition to shorter and longer-term membership options), but provide their users with dedicated workspaces, high-speed internet, and, in many cases, many of the perks of office life. Employees may choose to use one of these instead of a home office because they find them more conducive to productivity, because they allow for a shorter commute, or because they are conveniently located to other family members for whom your employee is responsible. Co-working spaces are not right for every employee or every organization, but they have become an increasingly popular option in recent years. Co-working spaces are now available in most cities in Maryland, and some smaller towns, as well.

This list of co-working spaces is current as of November 2018 and may not be an exhaustive list of all available co-working spaces. Please visit CommuterChoiceMaryland.com for a current list of co-working spaces available across Maryland.

Allegany County

Acre Co-Working

48 N. Centre Street
Cumberland, MD 21502
(301) 697-6150
acrecoworking.com

Anne Arundel County

The Commons

201 West Street, Suite 201
Annapolis, MD 21401
(443) 223-8749
thecommonsannapolis.com

Launch Workplaces

3168 Braverton Street, Suite 200
Edgewater, MD 21037
(443) 201-1525
launchworkplaces.com

Baltimore City

Brewers Hill Hub

3700 O'Donnell Street, Suite 200
Baltimore, MD 21224
(410) 327-4040
brewershillhub.com

Co Lab Workspace

2209 Maryland Ave
Baltimore, MD 21218
(410) 696-3321 ext. 3
colabbaltimore.com

The Cube CoWork

6905 York Rd
Baltimore, MD 21212
(410) 616-9290
thecubecowork.com

Emerging Technology Centers

101 N Haven St #301
Baltimore, MD 21224
(443) 451-7000
etcbaltimore.com

Spark Baltimore

8 Market Pl #300
Baltimore, MD 21202
(443) 804-4927
spark-bmore.com

Baltimore County

Launch Workplaces

600 Washington Ave #100
Towson, MD 21204
(410) 983-9803
launchworkplaces.com

Charles County

CoWorx City

2670 Crain Hwy #203
Waldorf, MD 20601
(301) 383-7159
coworxcity.com

Dorchester County

hotDesks

104 Tech Park Dr
Cambridge, MD 21613
(410) 770-9330
hotdesks.org

Frederick County

Cowork Frederick

122 E Patrick St
Frederick, MD 21701
(301) 732-5165
coworkfrederick.com

Harford County

GroundFloor

2021G Pulaski Hwy
Havre De Grace, MD 21078
(410) 638-3059
groundfloorharford.com

Montgomery County

Creative Colony Spaces

8121 Georgia Ave Suite 600
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(240) 485-5844
creativecolonyspaces.com

I/O SPACES

8222 Georgia Ave
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 850-4664
iospaces.com

Launch Workplaces

9841 Washingtonian Blvd #200
Gaithersburg, MD 20878
(301) 232-3301
launchworkplaces.com

Launch Workplaces

1201 Seven Locks Rd #360
Rockville, MD 20854
(240) 200-5005
launchworkplaces.com

MakeOffices at Bethesda

7315 Wisconsin Ave #400west
Bethesda, MD 20814
(301) 349-1302
makeoffices.com

Takowork

7000 Carroll Ave
Takoma Park, MD 20912
(240) 863-3268
takowork.com

Prince George's County

CAMPspace

4214 Gallatin St
Hyattsville, MD 20781
(240) 667-2452
campworkspace.com

Clout Workspace

9221 Hampton Overlook
Capitol Heights, MD 20743
(301) 289-7447
getclout.co

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WeWork

7761 Diamondback Drive
College Park, MD 20742
(855) 593-9675
wework.com

Talbot County

hotDesks

21 N Hanson St
Easton, MD 21601
(410) 770-9330
hotdesks.org

Washington County

240 South Potomac Co-Working

240 S Potomac St
Hagerstown, MD 21740
(202) 642-3947
240southpotomac.com

Wicomico County

hotDesks

31901 Tri-County Way
Salisbury, MD 21804
(410) 770-9330
hotdesks.org

Worcester County

hotDesks

1732 Broad St
Pocomoke City, MD 21851
(410) 770-9330
hotdesks.org

Telework Checklist

Use this checklist to ensure that you have addressed the issues that may arise when you introduce a telework policy.

- Which employees are permitted to telework, and how often are they allowed to telework?
- How can employees request telework?
- How will your telework policies affect your existing paid leave policies?
- How will your remote employees be trained?
- How will your remote employees be supervised and evaluated?
- How will you ensure your remote employees can easily communicate with co-workers and clients?
- How will you ensure teleworking employees have access to the technology they need to do their jobs?
- Will your remote employees work at a co-working space, or will they work from their homes?
- Who will be responsible for paying for your remote employees travel to your office or to other worksites, if that travel is necessary?
- How will you ensure that proprietary resources remain secure as they are handled by remote employees?
- How will your telework policy affect your existing policies on emergency operations?
- How will you ensure that your remote employees have a workspace and equipment suitable for the needs of their position?

References and Additional Resources

Telework Toolkit: www.teleworktoolkit.com

Global Workplace Analytics: <https://globalworkplaceanalytics.com/resources>

Telework Guide: www.telework.gov

PayChex Guide to Telecommuting Best Practices: <https://www.paychex.com/articles/human-resources/making-the-case-for-telecommuting>

How can I learn more?



Web CommuterChoiceMaryland.com
Phone 410-865-1100
Hours Monday-Friday from 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM
Email CommuterChoice@mdot.maryland.gov



"The Maryland Department of Transportation is a customer-driven leader that delivers safe, sustainable, intelligent, and exceptional transportation solutions in order to connect our customers to life's opportunities."

