

Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel Teleworking Policy

Effective: September 2, 2003, Revised March 31, 2008

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish standard conditions and responsibilities for the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) teleworking program. The teleworking program is intended to enable OCC directors to consider allowing employees, with or without the use of telecommunications and computer technology, to perform assigned duties at locations other than their regular work location. An alternate workplace would generally be in an employee's home, but could also be elsewhere if acceptable to the director. Teleworking is not a universal employee benefit - it is a management option.

CLASSIFICATIONS/POSITIONS

The following classifications or positions may be eligible to participate in OCC's teleworking program if there is a demonstrated need or benefit to the OCC: Administrative staff and other staff including but not limited to outreach and education staff, attorneys, legal interns, analysts, department directors, Consumers' Counsel and Deputy Consumers' Counsel.

CONDITIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Conditions of Teleworking

- 1.1 A Teleworking Agreement will make an employee eligible to participate in the teleworking program upon being signed by the potential teleworker, his/her director, and the Consumers' Counsel or designee. An employee who signs a Teleworking Agreement cannot engage in telework, however, without a separate and specific authorization from the employee's director.
- 1.2 A teleworker's salary, benefits, job duties, obligations and other terms and conditions of employment shall not change because of the teleworking arrangement.
- 1.3 Performance evaluation requirements will not change. The director's method of monitoring and evaluating performance will reflect a focus on results rather than process or direct supervision.
- 1.4 A teleworker will be responsible for documenting work accomplished during the teleworking.
- 1.5 Time spent traveling to or from the office is not reimbursable and is not considered time worked.
- 1.6 The standards regarding the duty of OCC employees to maintain confidentiality of information and security of documents while working at the office must be maintained while teleworking.

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- 1.7 Expectations as to compliance with all existing OCC policies and procedures are unaffected by any teleworking agreement.
- 1.8 Management retains the right to terminate any individual teleworking agreement, and/or to change or eliminate the teleworking program.
- 1.9 Employees needing to work overtime or other time in excess of an eight-hour day on office projects may do so from their home or elsewhere with the approval of their director.

2. Work Schedule

- 2.1 The director will establish scheduled work hours and any changes must be approved in advance.
- 2.2 Approval from the director must be obtained prior to working or teleworking overtime or other time in excess of an eight-hour day.

3. Workspace

- 3.1 The employee is responsible for establishing and maintaining a designated workspace at the alternate work site. The same safety, ergonomic, and cleanliness standards applicable at the regular work site must be maintained at the alternate site.
- 3.2 The OCC retains the right to make on-site inspections of the work area, at a mutually agreed upon time, to inspect equipment and observe working conditions.

4. Communication

- 4.1 Teleworkers must be accessible, via telephone or cell phone and via office e-mail, to their supervisor, co-workers, external stakeholders and contacts, and customers/clients during the agreed upon work hours.
- 4.2 The teleworker's office phone will be forwarded to the alternate work site as necessary.
- 4.3 Phones used by the teleworker for receiving calls will be answered in a business-like manner during work hours and the outgoing message on an answering machine or voicemail service will convey a professional office-like image.
- 4.4 Clients and external stakeholders and contacts will never be given the teleworker's home phone number for purposes of teleworking.

5. Workstation Equipment, Software, and Maintenance/Support

- 5.1 Teleworkers who have their own equipment may use it. Employees who use their own equipment are responsible for its maintenance and repair. The employer assumes no liability concerning damage or loss of property owned by the employee at the alternate work site.
- 5.2 The employer may provide equipment depending on the nature of the job, equipment availability, and funds. The OCC is responsible for the maintenance and support of all equipment that is provided to employees.
- 5.3 Software may not be duplicated except as formally authorized and in accordance with the manufacturers' licensing agreements.
- 5.4 Any hardware or software purchased by the OCC remains the property of the OCC and must be returned upon OCC's request or upon the termination of the teleworker's employment with OCC.
- 5.5 The teleworker is responsible for protecting the integrity of copyrighted software, policies, procedures and practices to the same extent applicable at the teleworker's office location.
- 5.6 All equipment, furniture, software, supplies or other materials purchased or maintained by the OCC are to be used only by the teleworker and only for official OCC business.
- 5.7 The teleworker has the same responsibility for damage to agency property at the alternate work site as would exist at the regular office.
- 5.8 Surge protectors must be used with any computer, laptop or other electronic equipment. Responsibility for damages resulting from a power surge, if no surge protector is used, will be borne by the employee.
- 5.9 The OCC may, at its discretion, assume responsibility for all costs associated with the installation, operation, and maintenance of a second telephone line if OCC determines one is needed due to (or as a condition of) the teleworking arrangement. The OCC may, at its discretion, assume responsibility for additional costs to a teleworker for long distance calls pertaining to work, during the scheduled work hours.
- 5.10 Teleworkers will be responsible for the security of all items furnished by the OCC.

6. Supplies

Supplies required by the teleworker to complete assigned duties should be obtained from OCC's main office. Employees' expenses for materials and supplies, which are available at the office but purchased elsewhere will not be reimbursed.

7. Workers' Compensation

A teleworker may be covered by the state of Ohio's Workers' Compensation laws while in telecommuting status. Any injury that occurs within the course and scope of employment must be reported to one's supervisor immediately, using the standard injury reporting form and process. For the purposes of Workers' Compensation, a teleworker's designated home workspace is considered an extension of state workspace only during the telecommuter's scheduled work hours.

8. Third-Party Liability

The OCC does not assume responsibility for third-party injury or property damage that may occur at an alternative work site. A teleworker cannot hold state business-related meetings at the teleworker's residence or elsewhere while teleworking unless the teleworker's director approves the meetings.

9. Dependent Care

- 9.1 Teleworking is not a substitute for childcare, dependent care or elder care.
- 9.2 Teleworkers must continue to arrange for child, dependent or elder care to the same extent as if the teleworkers were working at the main office. Exceptions can be made in certain instances with prior authorization from one's director. Absent such arrangements or authorization, the teleworking agreement will terminate.

10. Miscellaneous Financial Responsibilities of Teleworkers

Individual tax implications, auto/homeowner's insurance, or incidental residential utility costs are the responsibility of the teleworker. In addition, a teleworker's pre-authorized expenditures that are incurred at the request of the employer will be reimbursed in accordance with OCC's policies and procedures.

11. Weather Emergencies

A teleworker, who is considered an essential employee and is scheduled to work at home on a day that is declared a weather emergency may be asked to work at home or the office, based on the needs of the OCC.

12. Training

Teleworkers and their supervisors will be expected to read and understand this policy prior to commencement of a telecommuting work arrangement.