

Highlights of Departmental Telework Program Policy Personnel Bulletin 19-02

Telework is a work flexibility arrangement under which an employee performs the duties and responsibilities of his or her position, and other authorized activities, from an approved worksite other than the location from which the employee would otherwise work. Effective July 15, 2019, the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) revised the Departmental telework program policy via Personnel Bulletin (PB) 19-02 to bring better clarity, transparency, and organization to the program. Highlights of the new telework policy include:

- Telework is an **effective workplace flexibility** for accomplishing work, ensuring continuity of operations in a crisis, and recruiting and retaining valued talent. However, **employees do not have a presumptive right** to telework.
- An **employee's participation in the DOI telework program (i.e., entering into a telework agreement) is voluntary** and telework must only be approved when it is deemed to be in the best interest of the agency.
- Teleworkers must physically report to the regular work site **at least two full work days per bi-weekly pay period**, except for rare short-term circumstances or as a reasonable accommodation. These days can be any two days during the pay period as approved by the supervisor.
- Two types of telework arrangements available within the agency: **core** or **situational telework**. Regardless of the type of telework arrangement, an approved telework agreement must be in place in order for an employee to participate in telework.
- Core telework agreements (i.e., telework on a recurring, scheduled basis—fixed day(s) per week or pay period) must be **approved by supervisor and a higher level management official** (“concurring management official”).
- Given the value and importance of interpersonal interactions between supervisors and their employees, **supervisory positions are not suitable for core telework arrangements**. Supervisors may be considered for situational telework arrangements on a case-by-case basis.
- Telework agreements must be **reviewed and recertified on an annual basis** to validate that the arrangements are still effective and in the best interest of the agency.
- New telework agreements must be initiated when a new supervisor has been assigned and/or an employee is reassigned to a different position.
- Telework-ready employees (i.e., those with approved agreements in place) **must telework when the official worksite is closed due to an inclement weather event or other emergency condition** (e.g., building fire).
- The period of telework ineligibility for the two bases provided for in the Telework Enhancement Act (i.e., employees who have been officially disciplined for being absent without permission for more than five days in any calendar year or for reviewing/downloading/exchanging pornography on a federal computer or while performing federal duties) **depends on the type of disciplinary action issued and that the period of ineligibility may be permanent**.

- Teleworkers **cannot personally care for a dependent** while teleworking and are responsible for securing appropriate arrangements for any dependents who are unable to care for themselves independently.
- **Mobile work** and **remote work** arrangements are not considered telework and are not covered by the Departmental telework program policy.

Telework Eligibility Requirements

To the extent that mission requirements are not jeopardized, eligible employees who exhibit acceptable work performance and conduct, occupy suitable positions, and have access to an appropriate alternative worksite may be permitted to telework. The following factors must be evaluated when determining telework eligibility:

Position Suitability. Positions suitable for telework must have:

- Quantifiable, project-oriented, or other portable job tasks that can be performed at the approved alternative worksite (e.g., reading reports, analyzing documents and studies, preparing written documents).
- Limited need for access to classified information.
- Off-site access to needed technology.

Positions are not suitable for telework that require on a daily basis (every work day):

- Direct handling of classified or other secure materials determined to be inappropriate for telework by management.
- On-site activity that cannot be handled remotely or at an alternative worksite (e.g., face-to-face personal contacts; intake or distribution of mail; hands-on contact with machinery, equipment, or vehicles; law enforcement).

When an employee's position is determined not normally suitable for telework, there may be circumstances or portions of the employee's work (e.g., reading and analyzing documents and preparing reports or other types of correspondence, non-classified assignments) that may be considered for telework on a situational basis if the supervisor deems it to be in the best interest of the agency.

Position Suitability - Supervisory Positions. Supervisory positions generally require frequent interpersonal interactions. As such, supervisory positions are not suitable for core telework. On a case-by-case basis, supervisory positions may be considered for a situational telework arrangement if deemed in the best interest of the agency.

Employee Eligibility. To be considered eligible for telework, an employee must demonstrate characteristics indicating his or her ability to effectively work away from the official worksite. Employees eligible for telework must display:

- Dependability, responsibility, and conscientiousness;
- The ability to work independently and without close supervision;
- Self-motivation and self-discipline; and
- The ability to prioritize work and manage time wisely.

Employee Ineligibility. Employees are ineligible to telework if:

- Their conduct has resulted in an official disciplinary action taken against them (e.g., written reprimand, suspension, removal, reduction in grade/pay) for any type of misconduct. Disciplined employees may remain ineligible to telework for a maximum of two years from the effective date of the official disciplinary action.
- They have received less than a Fully Successful performance rating at any time during the rating period or been notified in writing of less than Fully Successful performance.
- Consistent with 5 U.S.C. § 6502(a)(2), they have been officially disciplined for:
 - being absent without permission (i.e., AWOL) for more than five days in any calendar year; or
 - violations of subpart G of the Standards of Ethical Conduct of Employees of the Executive Branch for reviewing, downloading or exchanging pornography, including child pornography on a Federal computer or while performing Federal Government duties
 - The period of ineligibility for employees who have been officially disciplined for being AWOL for more than five days or for reviewing/downloading/exchanging pornography of federal computer or while performing official duties depends on the type of action and whether a non-permanent or permanent record of the discipline is filed in the employee's electronic official personnel folder (eOPF). For non-permanent records (e.g., reprimand), the prohibition from telework exists until the document is removed. For permanent records (e.g., Standard Form (SF) 50 documenting a suspension), the prohibition is permanent.

Establishing a Telework Agreement

If it is determined that telework is a viable option and in the best interest of the agency, the supervisor and the employee must:

- Complete the required telework training¹
 - Telework Fundamentals – Employee Training
 - Telework Fundamentals – Manager Training
- Complete a telework agreement form (Form DI-3457)
 - Must be completed by the employee and supervisor. For core telework arrangements, the agreement must also be reviewed and approved by the concurring management official.

To view the DOI telework program policy and other additional telework resources, please visit <https://www.doi.gov/telework>. For questions regarding telework, please contact your Bureau Telework Coordinator.

¹ This is a one-time requirement. Once completed, employees and supervisors do not need to repeat the training. If employees or supervisors have documentation demonstrating they completed previous training titled "Telework 101 for Employees," or "Telework 101 for Supervisors," or equivalent training, they do not need to complete these courses.