



# Tacoma Housing Authority

## Temporary Emergency Telework/Alternate Schedule Guidelines

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** March 16, 2020 to April 24, 2020

\*The effective date and contents of these Guidelines may be changed dependent on the COVID-19 State of Health Emergency response period.

**SCOPE:** These Guidelines apply to all employees of the Tacoma Housing Authority (THA).

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of these temporary emergency guidelines is to provide guidance and establish procedures regarding the eligibility, approval and use of telework and alternate schedules for THA employees under the COVID-19 Health Emergency Resolution. Telework and alternate schedules are supported as alternative work arrangements and these guidelines allow supervisors to implement telework and/or schedule change arrangements, where appropriate, for eligible employees.

### DEFINITIONS:

**“Alternate Worksite”** means a location where the employee performs work, other than their regular and primary worksite.

**“Regular or Core Office Hours”** means the set of hours during the day when the supervisor and coworkers can expect to communicate with the teleworker, as established in the Telework/Alternate Schedule Agreement.

**"Telework"** means working from an alternate worksite.

**“Alternate Schedule”** means working an established schedule that is different than the schedule the employee typically works.

**"Primary worksite"** means the worksite where the employee regularly reports to work under normal business operations.

### 1. *Can an employee telework?*

In many cases, yes. However allowing an employee to telework is based solely on the discretion of the employee’s immediate supervisor and the department director. The decision will take into consideration business need, feasibility and guidance from the Emergency Operations Committee.

### 2. *Who is eligible to telework?*

Telework is designed for regular employees who, in general, meet the following criteria:

- a. The work requires minimal face-to-face interaction or can be scheduled to permit telework;
- b. There is minimal need for specialized material, equipment or other resources for telework capability;
- c. The work is not dependent on the location and clear work objectives can be set and results can be measured.

### 3. *What is the purpose of telework or alternate schedules and why can we not allow all employees to telework or request alternate schedules?*

The purpose of the telework is to support social distancing as a precautionary measure to

inhibit the spread of COVID-19. This is a key recommendation by Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department for all employers throughout the county. Positions that were identified as eligible for telework were based on the function of the position. The goal is to increase overall social distancing with the safety of the community in mind. While we may have temporarily closed our facilities to the public, THA remains open and we continue to provide services to the public. Certain functions require the presence of an employee. As the situation continues to evolve, we will reassess what services we are able to provide and what level of staffing is required to meet that service need.

4. *What if I am sick for other reasons or have scheduled vacation time planned?*

Employees who would usually use their accrued leave under these circumstances should plan to follow current practices.

5. *How does telework impact the conditions and benefits of employment?*

Employee salary, benefits, and conditions of employment shall not change as a result of telework.

6. *Do telework employees need to abide by the same policies and laws as they do when at the primary worksite?*

Yes. Telework employees must comply with all employment policies, rules, and practices as well as with all federal, state, and local laws, policies, and regulations (including privacy and public records requirements) while teleworking.

7. *What will the work schedule be for a telework employee?*

The amount of time spent teleworking during a work week may vary according to each job, department expectations and equipment availability. A work schedule and hours of accessibility will be agreed upon and included in the Telework/Alternate Schedule Agreement. Minimally, the telework schedule must allow adequate time for meetings, access to facilities and supplies, and communication with other employees and with customers. Any changes must be approved by the supervisor in writing in advance.

8. *What rules address privacy, confidentiality and public records while teleworking?*

In general, the same rules that apply at the primary worksite regarding privacy, confidentiality and public records apply while teleworking; however, personal information such as the employee's home address and home phone number may be shared with the his/her supervisor and necessary coworkers.

9. *What if the Agency declares an emergency and/or the primary worksite is closed?*

If an emergency is declared resulting in an office closure, but the telework employee can continue to work offsite, the employee may be required to continue telework or adjust his/her schedule as necessary.

During an emergency declared under federal, state or local law, telework schedules may be adjusted or rescinded as necessary.

10. *How does an employee request telework or an alternate work schedule?*

Employees must complete the Telework/Alternate Schedule Agreement form, which must then be approved by the employee's supervisor, Department Director and/or the Emergency Operations Committee.

*11. How will employees obtain necessary equipment, supplies and support?*

The employee is responsible for establishing and maintaining a safe and adequate work space at the alternate worksite. Employees shall be responsible for providing alternate worksite furniture and equipment. On a prioritized basis, the employee may be provided Agency resources (computers and wireless communication capability) as available and as prioritized by the IT Department and the Emergency Operations Committee. If Agency resources are not available, the employee will provide his/her own computer hardware and software and whatever data communications and services are needed to complete specified telework tasks, unless otherwise approved by the employee's supervisor and specified in the Telework/Alternate Schedule Agreement form. All computer hardware, software, data communications and other services needed for an employee to work at an alternate worksite are subject to the approval of the IT department.

No technical support will be provided for employee-owned equipment or employee provided data communications. IT support will be provided for Agency resources, as needed, with first priority being placed with primary worksite employees. IT will not respond to the employee's alternate worksite. Depending on the problem, Agency owned equipment may be required to be brought into the primary worksite, or may be resolved remotely.

*12. What obligations do telework employees have pertaining to Agency owned property and materials?*

Any equipment and/or supplies that are provided by the Agency shall remain Agency property and may only be used by the teleworker for Agency business purposes. Any records or other information used or created by the telework employee, whether created on an Agency owned or a personal device are the property of the Agency, may be subject to public disclosure requests, and shall be delivered to the Agency upon request.

Employees will return, in good working condition, Agency-owned hardware, software, supplies, documents, and other information or property at the termination of the Telework/Alternate Schedule Agreement form or employment with the Agency.

Employees are responsible for ensuring the safety and security of Agency information and equipment in their possession, or that they access using the equipment in their possession, regardless of the worksite.

*13. Will the Agency assume costs associated with telework?*

The Agency will be responsible for the repair and maintenance of Agency equipment unless damage is caused by the employee's intentional actions or gross negligence.

The Agency will not be liable for damages to an employee's property when they are using an alternate worksite, nor will the Agency be responsible for any operating costs associated with the alternate worksite, including printing costs, maintenance, insurance, or utilities.

*14. Are employees covered by worker's compensation laws while teleworking?*

If the employee is injured in the course and scope of performing official duties during the agreed upon work hours, regardless of work location, the employee is covered under the Washington State Worker's Compensation Law. The employee must notify his/her supervisor immediately of any accident or injury that occurs at the alternate worksite and must complete any required forms.

*15. Can a telework or alternate schedule arrangement be terminated or changed?*

A telework or alternate schedule arrangement can be terminated or changed by the Agency at any time. Changes requested by the employee must be requested and authorized in writing with their supervisor. The Agency may terminate the arrangement if there is a violation of the telework agreement, the employee no longer meets the eligibility requirements or the employee is unable to maintain reasonable levels of productivity.