

PLAISTOW PUBLIC LIBRARY TELECOMMUTING POLICY

I. Purpose

Telecommuting allows employees to work while outside the library for all or part of their workweek. Telecommuting can be informal, such as working from home for a short-term project or on the road during business travel, or a formal, set schedule of working away from the library. In certain circumstances, telecommuting may be the only alternative available for completing work (for example, when an employee is not permitted to work in the building for legal or health reasons, or when the library building is closed because of a natural disaster or pandemic).

Telecommuting is not a general work practice of the Plaistow Public Library and the supervisor must always grant prior approval. Telecommuting does not change the Library's expectations or obligations regarding employment and all other policies and procedures remain in full effect unless otherwise noted. The Library reserves the right to alter or cancel a telecommuting agreement at any time, with or without cause or advance notice.

II. Suitability & Eligibility

Because of the small size of the Library's workforce and the essential role of direct interaction with patrons, the Library will approve telecommuting arrangements only when they are likely to have a significant positive impact on overall operations, budget, delivery of services, and/or distribution of work. The Library will secondarily consider the effect on a particular employee's job performance and productivity, work/ home balance, and other personal factors. The Library will not approve such arrangements if they are likely to have a negative effect on employee morale as a whole.

Employees requesting a formal telecommuting arrangement must be employed with the Library for a minimum of 9 months of continuous, regular employment and must have a satisfactory performance record.

Telecommuting may not be appropriate for all employees, positions, and work responsibilities. Remote work is most appropriate for individuals with a strong record of independent performance and for work that does not require the employee's presence in the workplace and has both clearly defined tasks and measurable work activity. Before entering into any telecommuting agreement, the employee and supervisor will evaluate the suitability of such an arrangement, reviewing the following areas:

- A. Employee suitability. The employee and supervisor will assess the needs and work habits of the employee, compared to traits customarily recognized as appropriate for successful telecommuters.
- B. Job responsibilities. The employee and supervisor will discuss the job responsibilities and determine if the job is appropriate for a telecommuting arrangement.

- C. Equipment needs, workspace design considerations, and scheduling issues. The employee and supervisor will review the physical workspace needs and the appropriate location for the telework.
- D. Tax, insurance, and other legal implications. The employee must determine any tax, insurance, or legal implications of working out of a home-based office. Responsibility for fulfilling all obligations in this area rests solely with the employee.

Where a prospective telecommuting arrangement has been proposed by an employee, the burden of proof for demonstrating the advantages rests with the employee. If the employee and supervisor agree on terms, both will sign a telecommuting agreement outlining mutual expectations and an eight week trial period will commence.

Telecommuting is not designed to be a replacement for appropriate child care. Although an individual employee's schedule may be modified to accommodate child care needs, the focus of the arrangement must remain on job performance and meeting the Library's operational needs. The Library strongly encourages prospective telecommuters to discuss expectations with family members prior to entering the trial period.

III. Procedures

Either an employee or a supervisor can suggest telecommuting as a possible work arrangement. Telecommuting arrangements are generally on a trial basis and may be discontinued at will and at any time at the request of either the telecommuter or the organization. The Library will make every effort to provide 30 days' notice of such change to accommodate commuting, child care, and other issues that may arise from the termination of the arrangement. There may be instances, however, when no notice is possible.

IV. Communication & Schedule

The supervisor and employee will agree upon an appropriate level of communication between the telecommuter, supervisor, and work colleagues as part of the discussion process.

Communication will be more formal during the trial period to ensure clear lines of communication. After conclusion of the trial period, the supervisor and telecommuter will communicate at a level consistent with that of other employees still working in the library or in a manner and frequency that is most appropriate for the work and individuals involved.

Communication about availability is much more challenging for employees not working on-site. The primary responsibility for this communication rests with the telecommuter. While a flexible work schedule is often one of the most attractive benefits of telecommuting arrangements, the Library reserves the right to require a formal work schedule during which telecommuters agree to be accessible to colleagues and library partners. In all cases the supervisor must be informed when a telecommuter will not be accessible for longer than brief periods during periods when others would normally have a reasonable expectation of reaching them.

V. Evaluation

Evaluation of performance during the trial period will include regular interaction between the employee and the supervisor, and weekly face-to-face meetings to discuss work progress and problems. At the end of the trial period, each will each complete an evaluation of the arrangement and make recommendations for continuation, with or without adjustments. Evaluation of performance beyond the trial period will be consistent with that received by employees working at the library in both content and frequency, but may focus more on work output and the completion of objectives than on time-based performance (hours worked or work schedule).

VI. Work Environment & Equipment

The Library will not be responsible for costs associated with the setup of an employee's home office, such as furniture or lighting, or for repairs or modifications to the home office space.

The Library will determine on a case-by-case basis the appropriate equipment required for each telecommuting arrangement. The Library will purchase necessary equipment and pay for its maintenance to the extent the employee uses it responsibly and for work purposes. The Library is not liable for any loss, damage, or wear of any equipment, furniture, or supplies owned by a telecommuting employee. Employees may use equipment supplied by the Library for non-business purposes if equipment performance and lifespan are not adversely affected.

Employees must sign an inventory of all Library property received and agree to take appropriate action to protect the items from damage or theft. Employees must return all Library property in working condition upon termination of employment, unless the Library has agreed to other arrangements.

VII. Security

Consistent with the organization's expectations of information security for employees working at the library, the Library will continue to expect telecommuting employees to ensure the protection of confidential library and patron information accessible from their remote workspace. Steps include the use of locked file cabinets, regular password maintenance, and any other measures the Library deems necessary.

VIII. Safety

The Library will provide guidance and recommendations, but telecommuting employees assume full responsibility for establishing an environment that is appropriate for work purposes. This includes maintaining a workplace that is free from recognized hazards and that complies with all applicable occupational safety and health standards, rules, and regulations.

The Library will provide each employee with a safety checklist that must be completed at least twice per year. Injuries sustained by the employee in a home office location and in conjunction

with his or her regular work duties are normally covered by the Library's Workers' Compensation policy. Telecommuting employees are responsible for notifying the employer of such injuries as soon as practicable. Employees are liable for any injuries sustained by visitors to a home work site.

IX. Reporting an Injury

Employees must continue to report any work-related injuries to their supervisor even if they occur away from the library. In some cases, an employee may be required to allow a representative from the Library's Workman's Compensation carrier to visit their home office to investigate an injury report.

X. Time Worked

Telecommuting employees who are not exempt from the overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act will be required to accurately record all hours worked using the Library's time-keeping system. As with all non-exempt employees, hours worked per day and per week in excess of those scheduled require prior approval from the supervisor.

XI. Ad Hoc Arrangements

The Library may approve temporary telecommuting arrangements for circumstances such as inclement weather, special projects, business travel, or periods when the building is closed. These arrangements are approved on an as-needed basis only, with no expectation of ongoing continuation. The supervisor will manage staff transitions back to onsite work, maintaining consistency to the extent possible. Plans for each individual may have to take into account unique circumstances, however, such as availability of suitable remote work, building occupancy limits, health status, or other factors.

The Library may also agree to informal, short-term arrangements for employees on family or medical leave to the extent practical for the employee and the Library and with the consent of the employee's health care provider, if appropriate.

All ad hoc telecommuting arrangements are made on a case-by-case basis, focusing first on the business needs of the Library.