

Montgomery County Public Schools

Telework Frequently Asked Questions

If you have questions that are not addressed on the telework web page or in this document, please contact the Division of Human Resources and Talent Management at (240) 740-8055.

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OVERVIEW

What is MCPS's definition of telework?

Telework is the practice of working at an approved alternate work location, a non-MCPS location that is identified for completing the employee's assigned duties, while not altering the employee's duties or work standards/competencies. The alternate work location must be in Maryland, Virginia, District of Columbia, West Virginia, or Pennsylvania.

What are some of the advantages of telework?

Telework can serve as a means to recruit and retain excellent employees, provide flexibility, honor professionalism, and increase productivity when the responsibilities of an employee's position do not require direct supervision, in-person collaboration, specialized equipment, or onsite presence. Telework can also ease traffic congestion, reduce the environmental impact of greenhouse gas emissions, conserve office space, and promote a healthy balance between home and work.

What approach was used to make decisions related to the telework regulation?

The telework regulation is designed to balance the operational needs of our school system, the professional growth and well-being of our employees, and the fostering of strong relationships that enhance our effectiveness. MCPS values the flexibility that telework offers and also recognizes the importance of maintaining strong, in-person relationships that are crucial to our mission. Building and maintaining strong relationships is fundamental to achieving system goals. In addition, we believe that relationships are most effectively nurtured through some face-to-face interactions.

EMPLOYEE ELIGIBILITY

Who is eligible to telework?

- All employees may submit a request for a telework schedule. However, school-based employees may not request a schedule that includes telework on instructional days.
- Eligibility for telework is described in Section V. B. of the regulation. Section V. C. includes factors that direct supervisors should consider when a telework request is received, including location, portability of the work and employee's record of performance.
- Exceptions specific to a telework option for special education staff who are engaged in IEP meetings are subject to the guidance provided by the Office of Special Education.
- The amount of telework approved will depend on numerous factors including operational needs and schedules of team members. While all employees are welcome to apply to telework, employees who do not wish to telework are not required to apply.

How about someone who is new to a position or new to MCPS?

All employees new to a position, even those not new to MCPS, must complete a period of in-person work prior to initiating a telework request. The duration of the in-person period will be determined by the employee's direct supervisor and will not exceed six months. The duration of the in-person work must be consistent among comparable positions overseen by a supervisor but can be different for employees new to a position versus new to MCPS. The direct supervisor will communicate the in-person period expectations at the time the employee is offered the position.

How does the process work for special education teachers?

- Special Education teachers, consistent with the MCPS/MCEA, must participate in-person for IEP meetings when a parent requests an in-person meeting.
- Special Education teachers may be granted approval to telework when a substitute teacher has been secured and the special education teacher has provided their principal with evidence which confirms the parent's participation virtually is preferred.
- Special Education teachers may be granted access agreement to telework when a substitute teacher has been secured for the purpose of allowing the special education to either prepare for a series of IEP meetings or to actually conduct a series of IEP meetings during the entire day.
- The principal/designee as required under IDEA and COMAR must participate in each virtual IEP meeting as well as ensure that all members of the IEP team, including the general education teacher, related service providers and school psychologist have access to the virtual platform for each IEP meeting.
- Telework for the reasons stated above requires the approval of the principal; an approved telework request is not required.

TELEWORK FREQUENCY AND SCHEDULE

How many days a week can I telework? Can I choose my own schedule?

The employee's telework schedule will be established as part of the approval process. The schedule will identify days of the week and duty day start and end times for teleworking. Determination of the number of days of telework per week or pay period is at the discretion of the direct supervisor and appropriate executive staff member up to the established maximum number of telework days.

The maximum number of days for full-time employees the maximum is one (1) per week or four (4) per month and for part-time employees the maximum is 25% of the allocated full-time equivalency (FTE) per week and/or pay period. The nature of the work along with the needs of the team should guide the supervisor's decision on the frequency of telework for each employee. When determining telework frequency, supervisors will balance the flexibility for the employee with the system's commitment to effectively support schools, efficiently maintain operations, and collaborate with our stakeholders. Executive staff members, supervisors and teams will work together to develop telework schedules for their team, unit, or department that balance employee flexibility and system, department, unit, or office needs.

Will everyone on the team be approved for the same number of days?

The employees' telework schedules will be established as part of the approval process. The schedules will identify days of the week and duty day start and end times for teleworking. Supervisors will maintain consistency and equity within the unit when approving telework requests. Differences in decisions should have explanations such as impact of unit operations, employee performance, employee experience, team effectiveness, or portability of tasks. Consistency and equity do not mean that all on the team will have an equal number of days. Experience, type of responsibilities, and the need for supervision may impact the need to have one employee in the office for a different number of days than another employee.

If I am approved to telework, do I have to telework the same days every week?

In general, employees should have a regular schedule that allows for collaboration and supports operations as needed. Depending on the circumstances, this may be consistent by week or pay period or use another cycle, but it allows team members and stakeholders to plan accordingly. The employee's telework frequency, consistency and schedule will be determined at the time of the request. Requests for changes or adjustments to the telework schedule can be initiated by the employee, supervisor, or chief. In the event of extenuating circumstances, an employee and their supervisor may agree on a change during a specific day or week.

Can I use some of the time I save being efficient to do other work and earn additional income?

MCPS employees who telework will maintain a full workday and may not serve in any other paid employment or unpaid service during the approved duty day. Volunteer work during the approved telework duty day is not permitted, except as approved by the employee's direct supervisor.

TELEWORK LOCATION

Can I work from different locations?

- Part of the approval process will include approval of the location(s) where you will be performing your telework. The employee's alternate telework location(s) must be within Maryland, District of Columbia, West Virginia, Virginia or Pennsylvania. Changes in work location resulting in the employee working in a different approved state must be recorded on [MCPS Form 425-58, Request to Telework](#) and submitted to the employee's supervisor for approval. Before implementing any change, the supervisor must approve.
- The approved alternate locations will need to be appropriate for completing your assigned duties without altering those duties or impacting your quality or quantity of work.

I am going to be on leave. Can I telework from <name of location> for hours or days prior to or after my leave so that I can extend the trip?

MCPS employees approved to telework are approved to telework from specific alternate locations within Maryland or one of the states enumerated above. In addition, the employees cannot use telework to extend leave.

Would working from MCPS work sites or while traveling between work sites, other than an employees' primary work location, constitute telework?

No. Routine and regular travel that is required in order to carry out an employee's official job duties at various MCPS locations or worksites other than the authorized alternative worksite, does not constitute telework.

What is an example of the type of work mobile work that would not be subject to the definition of telework?

An employee's regular telework day, as approved by her supervisor, is Thursday. Her primary work location is located at 15 W. Gude Drive in Rockville. Her alternate work location is at her home in Silver Spring. The employee's job duties require that she visit multiple MCPS schools during the day. On Tuesday, she visits multiple schools and ends her day with a 4pm meeting in Damascus. Therefore, based on her Tuesday schedule, she never reports to her office in Rockville. Tuesday, is not considered a telework

day because she engaged in mobile work from locations other than her identified alternative work location in the execution of MCPS official business. The employee may still telework on Thursday as approved by her supervisor. The employee and her supervisor should continue regular communication regarding workload, location and scheduling.

PROCEDURES

How do I request to telework?

- An employee who wishes to be considered for telework must complete and submit [MCPS Form 425-58, Request to Telework](#) to their direct supervisor. The telework request must be approved and the required telework training completed prior to the initiation of telework.
- The direct supervisor and the appropriate executive staff member (includes chiefs, appropriate executive staff member or his/her designee) reviews the request and approves, approves with revisions, or denies it. Within ten (10) business days, the supervisor will send the employee the completed and signed telework request form.
- A request that is denied must include a written rationale for the recommendation.
- Together with the employee, the supervisor determines the telework schedule.
- For situational telework the request must be completed for each telework instance.

Can telework be for a part of the day or must it be for a full day?

Employees may be approved to telework for a portion of a day, full day(s) or for the duration of specific project(s) or task(s).

Do I have to specify a particular day of the week to telework when I make my request?

This will be a dialogue and decision between the employee and the supervisor. In some situations, a specified day(s) may be most appropriate and in other situations a more flexible day(s) designation may be most appropriate.

Is there a deadline for which I must submit a telework request?

Employees can submit a telework request to their supervisor at any time. Employees may not begin to telework until the request has been reviewed and approved by their supervisor and chief. A new request must be completed and approved each year prior to July 1.

Where can I find the telework request form and telework resources?

Employees are encouraged to visit the [telework webpage](#) on the MCPS website to access forms and review available resources.

Can I submit an appeal if my telework request is denied or revised by my supervisor?

Telework decisions may not be appealed. However, employees whose telework request is denied, may

pursue a grievance or complaint outlined in the appropriate negotiated agreement or established MCPS process. Examples of established MCPS processes include, Administrative Complaint (See, Regulation GKA-RA) or Bullying, Harassment (See, ACH-RA).

Can my telework schedule be adjusted or terminated?

- Telework schedules can be adjusted or terminated at the discretion of the supervisor or the appropriate executive staff member. Adjustment and terminations can be due to a change in focus or as a result of performance issues.
- If performance issues arise, the professional growth system will be used as it is with employees who do not telework. An employee who is subject to disciplinary action, whose performance evaluations do not meet standard or competency, or who are placed on a formal or informal performance improvement plan may have the telework program adjusted or terminated.
- The supervisor or executive staff member may terminate telework immediately if the employee violates the provisions of this regulation or fails to abide by any established Board of Education policies or MCPS rules. Prior to termination of approved telework based on conduct, the supervisor must meet with the employee to discuss the rationale for the decision and, if applicable, give the employee an opportunity to remedy the situation. Telework termination must be communicated to the employee in writing.
- An employee who has appealed the telework termination must return to in-person work throughout the duration of the appeal process.
- An employee who has had the telework opportunity terminated based on conduct may submit a new request for telework after the employee's next scheduled evaluation.
- The supervisor or executive staff member may immediately adjust or terminate the employee's option to telework if some or all of the work responsibilities are determined to no longer be portable or there is a change in the operational needs of the office. Telework terminated based on the portability of work responsibilities or operational need cannot be appealed.
- The frequency approved for telework may be adjusted by the direct supervisor at any time in response to organizational needs. A change of telework frequency may not be appealed.

Does the telework regulation conflict with contract language about remote or flex work?

All language in the association negotiated agreements is aligned with the language in the telework regulations.

How is teleworking time reported on the payroll?

Hours teleworked (worked at an alternate location) are reported the same as hours worked at the primary work location.

TELEWORK AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Can an employee participate in a virtual training via telework?

Yes, if the professional development has been designated as remote and the employee has approved professional development leave. A telework request form is NOT required to participate in remote professional development.

Can I telework on school days designated as early release or professional development days?

For school-based staff, the work location on days designated as early release days or professional development is determined by the leadership team at each school and is based on the work requirements and/or professional development content for that particular day.

CONTINUATION OF TELEWORK (NEW POSITION, NEW SUPERVISOR, AND YEAR OVER YEAR)

What if I change jobs after I am approved to telework?

An employee's approval to telework is valid for the job or position held at the time of the approval. An employee who changes their job or full-time equivalent (FTE) allocation must submit a new telework request to their appropriate supervisor.

How long does an approval to telework last?

An employee's approval to telework is valid from when it is approved until June 30. Depending on when the request is approved this could be up to one year. Prior to July 1 of each fiscal year, employees must submit a [Request to Telework MCPS Form 425-58](#), complete training, and sign the telework agreement. The telework renewal will supersede any prior agreement and approval. Failure to complete the process prior to July 1 will result in a suspension of telework for the employee until the process is completed.

My telework schedule was approved 3 months ago. I now have a new supervisor. What does this mean for my telework schedule?

A supervisor new to the office will meet with employees in that office to discuss current approved telework. A supervisor has the authority to adjust or terminate telework schedules based on the needs of the office or organization. The supervisor must follow the telework adjustment or termination process should the supervisor choose to change the telework schedule for any of the employees.

I have an approved telework schedule that I have used for three months. I would like to stop teleworking.

An employee may choose to terminate teleworking at any time. If an employee wishes to terminate the recurrent telework, written notification must be provided to the direct supervisor at least ten (10) business days prior to the employee's return to full-time in-person work.

TELEWORK AND LEAVE

Can I telework in order to care for children or other relatives?

Telework is not a substitute for child/dependent care. Appropriate leave must be used to care for a dependent/child or take dependent/child to an appointment. Employees are expected to manage caregiving or personal responsibilities while teleworking the same way those responsibilities are managed while working at the primary work locations. Dependents who are present at the alternate work location during an employee's telework hours must not require the employee's attention during the telework hours.

Can I telework when I am sick?

Employees who are experiencing an illness that limits their ability to perform their duties should use appropriate leave.

I will be away on vacation. Can I telework part of each day, so I do not have to use all my leave up?

You may not use telework to extend leave. In addition, employees approved to telework must have an alternate (telework) location in Maryland or one of the approved states.

Due to a medical condition, I am unable to work onsite. Can I utilize telework for my duties?

Employees who are considered qualified individuals with a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) may be granted telework as a reasonable workplace accommodation if the employee finds it difficult or impossible to perform the essential functions of their job onsite at their primary MCPS work location. Requests for telework as a reasonable accommodation are not automatically granted. These requests must be analyzed and evaluated under a different legal framework, not the MCPS telework regulation. This process requires the employee to submit supporting medical documentation and engage in the interactive process as facilitated by the Department of Compliance and Investigations.

For additional information regarding the workplace accommodation process, please contact the department at 240-740-2888.

If I have a personal appointment while scheduled to telework, do I have to take leave?

The employee must request and take leave during approved telework hours in accordance with established MCPS rules and the employee's contract.

AVAILABILITY DURING TELEWORK

If I am teleworking, do I have to be available to my supervisor and stakeholders?

Responsiveness to the public, partners, and colleagues cannot be impacted by telework. Employees who are teleworking should be available during their duty day and must provide their supervisor and all stakeholders a contact phone number at which they can be reached during their scheduled duty day. Calls from the public, partners, and colleagues should be answered as if the employee is working from the primary work location. When the employee is teleworking, MCPS phone lines should be forwarded to the employee's contact number and the contact number should be included in the employee's email signature. Every effort must be made by an employee who is approved to telework to have interactions with stakeholders appear the same, whether they be in the office or working at an alternative location.

If I am scheduled to telework, can my supervisor or executive staff member require that I work in person?

If an employee who typically teleworks on a given day is needed to attend a meeting, hearing, or event, or meet with a client in person they may be required to be onsite or at an identified location other than the employee's alternate location. Employees should be prepared to report to their primary work location given 24 hours' notice based on operational need. In urgent or emergency situations an employee approved to telework may be expected to report to their primary work location. In these situations, the employee will be given as much notice as possible.

Can I work overtime via telework?

Written approval must be obtained from your supervisor before working overtime (whether the work is to be performed as telework or on site.) However, it is important to notify your supervisor that the work will be performed as telework in the request so the supervisor is clear as some types of work cannot be performed offsite. Failure to obtain approval overtime prior to using it may result in termination of the teleworking agreement and/or disciplinary action.

TELEWORK AND PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Is the work I do while teleworking included in my overall performance evaluation?

The employee's duties, obligations, responsibilities, standards/competencies remain unchanged while teleworking. The evaluation of an employee's job performance while teleworking shall be based upon current MCPS performance expectations, competencies, and standards.

EQUIPMENT

Will MCPS provide supplies in order for me to telework?

MCPS will not purchase equipment or supplies solely for the purpose of permitting an employee to telework. In addition, MCPS will not reimburse employees for equipment or supplies purchased for the purpose of permitting an employee to telework. However, MCPS may provide equipment for your work that you can use while teleworking. Any MCPS equipment used by an employee at an approved alternate work location must have approval from a supervisor and must be used for work-related purposes only. All equipment and supplies provided by MCPS remain the property of MCPS and must be returned promptly to MCPS at the conclusion of the employee's participation in the telework program or at the time of the employee's separation from MCPS. Employees are financially responsible for equipment that is lost, stolen, or damaged due to the employee's negligence, misuse, or abuse in accordance with Regulation IGT-RA *User Responsibilities for Computer Systems and Network Security*.

Can I use my own personal equipment/supplies while teleworking?

The use of any personal equipment by the employee for purposes of telework is done solely at the employee's risk.

Who is responsible for the cost of my internet and any personal equipment repairs?

Repair and maintenance of employee-owned equipment used for telework is the responsibility of the employee, as is the cost of any Internet Service Provider required to access MCPS email and other network or information systems.

DATA SECURITY

Am I expected to secure equipment and data while teleworking?

- While teleworking the employee must follow the same security and privacy practices that are required at the primary work location. MCPS may require additional security protections on personally owned devices. Employees are required to inform MCPS immediately if equipment with MCPS data is lost or stolen.
- An employee who teleworks must protect information and resources against theft, unauthorized access, tampering, and loss, in accordance with Regulation IGT-RA, *User Responsibilities for Computer Systems and Network Security*. Employees are prohibited from copying certain data onto personally owned computers or other personal devices.
- All official school records, files, and documents must be protected from unauthorized disclosure or damage. The employee must take the same precaution to maintain confidentiality through proper shredding and disposing of sensitive data and documents in both printed and electronic formats.

WEATHER EMERGENCIES

Can I telework during a weather emergency if I am not scheduled to telework that day?

Depending on the type of closure (late opening, early closure, schools only, schools and offices) and your position you may be able to telework. Do not make assumptions. Some positions are expected to be onsite, others are not expected to work, and others may have the option to telework or come in. Contracts and the Telework Regulation lays out the specific steps to be taken during a weather emergency. It is best to have a clear understanding of what is expected of your position before the weather emergency occurs. When in doubt, contact your supervisor.

OTHER QUESTIONS ABOUT TELEWORK

Who can I contact if I have other questions about teleworking?

- Employees with other questions about telework requests should first ask their supervisor. If your supervisor cannot answer the questions, contact the Division of Human Resources and Talent Management at 240-740-8055.
- Questions about the telework regulation or telework training should contact the Division of Human Resources and Talent Management. at 240-740-8055.