



To: Tacoma Housing Authority Staff  
 From: Michael Mirra *Michael Mirra*  
 Date: April 1, 2021  
 Subject: Executive Emergency Authorization #18: Pandemic Telework Guidelines

THA Board Resolution 2020-03-18(1) allows the Executive Director (or his designee) to take emergency actions during the COVID-19 pandemic that he deems necessary to ensure continued operations of Tacoma Housing Authority, while protecting its employees, clients, vendors, partners and the community as a whole.

**PURPOSE**

As a part of THA’s move to modified operations to help slow the spread of COVID-19, departments have been urged to require telework eligible employees to telework and provide maximum flexibility to teleworkers. Teleworking is neither a benefit nor an entitlement and in no way changes the terms and conditions of employment. As a result of this necessary, temporary measure, telework is no longer just an option to offer, it is a necessary mode of work to help slow the spread of COVID-19. If an employee can telework, they should be teleworking.

**SCOPE**

These guidelines apply to all employees of the Tacoma Housing Authority (THA). THA’s two union’s -Trades Council and OPEIU have both authorized these Guidelines to be put into place.

**EFFECTIVE DATE AND TERM**

The Executive Action #18 is effective April 1, 2021. It will end upon declaration by the Executive Director or December 31, 2021, whichever is sooner, unless extended by the Executive Director. These guidelines are subject to change during this time and will be reissued if changes are needed.

**DEFINITIONS**

<b>Alternate Worksite</b>	Alternate worksite means a location where the employee performs work, other than their regular and primary worksite
<b>Primary Worksite</b>	Primary worksite means the worksite where the employee regularly reports to work under normal business operations
<b>Regular or Core Office Hours</b>	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
<b>Telework</b>	Telework means working from home or an approved alternate worksite away from the regular or primary worksite
<b>Alternate Schedule</b>	Alternate schedule means working an established schedule that is different than the schedule the employee typically works

## **GENERAL EXPECTATIONS**

These telework guidelines provide a general framework for all THA's teleworkers and do not attempt to address the special conditions and needs of all individuals. Specific conditions relating to the employee working at home will be considered on a case by case basis subject to supervisor and director approval. Teleworkers need to be available by phone and regular contact with supervisors and co-workers. Once approved, the supervisor will work out a telework schedule with the employee for the workweek. As with any work schedule, changes in work schedules may be made to meet management needs or to accommodate an employee's request and will be at the discretion of the department director.

Teleworking does not change salaries, benefits, job responsibilities, major medical leave, or any other basic terms of employment. The department director, in accordance with those personnel policies must authorize overtime if applicable. Leave policies apply to any instance where the teleworker does not perform work either at the workplace or at the alternative workplace as scheduled.

Clear and consistent performance management principles should guide supervisors as they work with teleworking employees. Supervisors must hold staff accountable for performance, not their presence. However, supervisors should consider that performance may look different right now. Our resilience as valuable members of the THA community depends on how flexible we are in this moment of unprecedented uncertainty, disruption, and stress.

**Confidential and Sensitive Information.** Teleworkers shall adhere to all laws, policies, regulations and procedures regarding security and confidentiality for the computer, its data and information and any other information handled in the course of work. If approved, Teleworkers working from a public Wi-Fi must log in to THA's VPN to protect network data. Teleworkers must protect confidential information and irreplaceable documents and are expressly forbidden from printing information that contains PII material.

**Caregiving and/or Home-Schooling Responsibilities.** The Emergency Operations Committee has considered what options can be made available to teleworkers who have caregiving responsibilities due to closure of schools and/or unavailability of care providers as a result of locally directed precautions for COVID-19.

One option to address the dual demands of work and caregiving at this time, is to establish flexible work schedules that provide expanded zones of time during which employees may perform telework to facilitate the performance of work despite caregiving responsibilities. A flexible work schedule allows an employee to complete his or her 80-hour bi-weekly basic work requirement by determining his or her own work schedule within the limits set by the department director.

A flexible work schedule consists of workdays with core hours and flexible hours, established by and agreed upon by the department director. Core hours are the designated period of the day when employees must be present for work (including telework). Flexible hours are the part of the workday when employees may (within limits or "bands") choose their time of arrival and departure and break periods (i.e., work starting and stopping times). Under a flexible work schedule, an employee could choose to have shorter

workdays and work more than the normal 10 workdays biweekly (e.g., work on the first Saturday in a pay period). A flexible work schedule can help an employee to balance work and caregiving responsibilities.

An employee may also use a combination of telework and available leave if child or family members caregiving responsibilities do not permit the completion of the 80-hour bi-weekly work schedule. Specific situations should be addressed with Human Resources.

**Alternate Workplace Environment.** The teleworker may work somewhere outside of the home; however, the employee needs to obtain prior written or email approval of the alternate workplace. Unless travel has been preapproved, employees are expected to remain close enough to physically report to work, if necessary. At this time, moving outside of Washington State will not be authorized. If the employee is approved to work in a location outside of their home and finds there is inadequate internet access, they must take leave time until they can arrange for internet to perform their duties.

Alternate workplaces must be clean and free of safety hazards. The alternate workplace may not create a conflict of interest with THA's operations. The teleworker is responsible for ensuring his or her alternate workplace complies with these requirements. Department directors may decline to approve an alternate workplace and/or revoke any prior approval at the director's discretion.

**Worker's Compensation Insurance.** 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 in OpenDoor.

## EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

**Equipment.** THA will provide the teleworker equipment and supplies deemed necessary to perform their job. This may include computer, keyboard, mouse, headset, pens, paper, and office desk chair (may be taken home). This is not an exhaustive list, and equipment requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis and approved at the discretion of the department director.

**Owner.** Any software purchased by THA to assist the teleworker will remain the property of THA and the teleworker will comply with all THA policies. Employees should pay special attention to public records laws. Installation of software on THA computers may only be performed by or under supervision of THA's IT staff.

**Network Connections.** Teleworkers wishing to connect their own personal computer equipment to THA equipment must obtain advance email approval from both their immediate supervisor and THA's IT department and must follow all instructions provided by the IT division. Changes to a personal computer or THA's laptop that results in an incompatible or unsupported PC configuration are not allowed. Teleworkers must immediately notify their department director of any changes that may negatively affect THA equipment. The teleworker must take adequate measures to protect against

computer viruses, including scanning any flash drives or discs for viruses prior to using.

**Maintenance, Repair and Replacement.** In the event of equipment or software malfunction, the teleworker must notify his/her department director immediately. THA will not provide onsite assistance at the alternative workplace but may be able to provide troubleshooting assistance over the telephone or electronically. If repairs will take some time, the teleworker may be asked to report to the regular office or worksite until the equipment is usable or may be given a loaner.

If an employee chooses to and receives permission to use a personal computer for work purposes, any repairs to such teleworker owned equipment will be the responsibility of the teleworker. THA must be notified immediately if any electronic device that either contains THA information or is THA owned equipment is lost, stolen or malfunctions.

**Office Supplies, Postage, Faxing & Copying.** The teleworker will obtain any office supplies, postage, faxing services or copying as authorized. The Agency will only pay for a claimed expense which has been separately and expressly pre-approved.

c: Stanley Rumbaugh, THA Board Chair