

Work from Home Policy

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Introduction

Where feasible and administratively efficient, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health (SMDHU) Unit may provide employees with flexibility in their work locations when it assists the health unit in the efficient delivery of programs, the effective use of office space and contributes to workplace wellness and work-life balance.

The Infrastructure Review Plan released in 2009 made a number of recommendations that have been implemented and have led the health unit to a flexible work environment. One of the core recommendations was to implement a voluntary employer approved work from home strategy in order to reduce our office footprint and maximize the efficient use of our office space. SMDHU's experience with staff working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic allowed for the temporary enhancement of the Work from Home (WFH) Program through remote access and work processes. SMDHU is now better equipped to expand work from home options across the health unit and offer eligible employees the opportunity to volunteer to participate in a hybrid work environment

Purpose

To maximize effective use of office space thereby improving service delivery and supporting a healthy workplace and work-life balance. Providing a work from home approach which will result in changes to office design and must be balanced with maintaining effective client/customer service. The WFH Program applies to full and part-time employees. Notwithstanding, in declared public health emergency situations where the immediate health and safety of all employees is required, the WFH Program may be temporarily available to all eligible employees.

Legislative Authority

Occupational Health and Safety Act
 Income Tax Act
 Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1991
 Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004
 WSIB

Policy Definitions and Interpretation

HR: Human Resources

Supervisor: The person to whom the employee directly reports (may be a Supervisor, Manager, Vice President, or the Medical Officer of Health).

Work from Home Program (WFH): A voluntary, formal arrangement that supports an employee to work part of their work week from their approved home office.

Office Supplies: General purpose, consumable items which commonly have a shorter life span in use than equipment and machines and which are stocked for recurring use.

Office: The SMDHU branch office formally assigned to the employee as their base workplace office within Simcoe Muskoka.

Full and Part Time Employees: non managerial employees

Policy

The WFH Program is a temporary voluntary arrangement requiring Supervisor approval. Accordingly, as per the discretion of the individual Supervisor, not all positions or employees may be eligible, and employees approved to WFH must be within a 2-hour drive of their assigned SMDHU office. Notwithstanding, subject to program needs Supervisors have the discretion to require specific individuals to be able to work from home less than 2 hours of their assigned SMDHU office in order for them to be eligible to participate or continue in the WFH Program.

As the WFH Program is a voluntary program staff apply to, acceptance into the WFH Program is an employee benefit or workplace perk, not a right and as such employees with work performance issues as determined by the Supervisor may not be eligible to participate or continue in the WFH Program until such performance issues are corrected to the satisfaction of the Supervisor.

Every employee in the WFH Program is required to spend time working in their assigned SMDHU office as determined by their Supervisor along with program requirements for in-person service delivery requirements in SMDHU offices or community settings based on their position and work assignments. The specific workspace in the employee's assigned SMDHU office for each individual employee is decided by the Supervisor and takes into consideration the amount of time the employee spends in the health unit office, the nature of the work while in the office, any accommodation requirements and the employee's Full Time Equivalent (FTE) status. The employee's specific workspace in the health unit office may or may not be a unassigned workstation station as decided by the Supervisor. The number of days working from home and their assigned SMDHU office will be discussed between the employee and their Supervisor. Notwithstanding, all final decisions about work from home and the days worked at home and in the health unit office rests with the sole discretion of the Supervisor.

The application of this policy may be amended or temporarily replaced as needed to manage any public health emergency declared by either the government or the Medical Officer of Health.

Procedures

For A New Work from Home Participant:

1. As not all positions or employees in those positions are eligible to WFH, Supervisors will identify and communicate to their program employees which employee positions may be eligible to apply for the WFH program. Any WFH parameters and the Supervisor's expectations regarding WFH including the time required in SMDHU office verses one's home will be explained by the Supervisor. To be eligible to be considered to WFH, an employee is required to have successfully completed their probation and not in the Supervisor's sole opinion, have any work performance issues.

2. As it is the Supervisor's sole discretion on which positions and which employees in those positions are suitable or eligible to WFH if an employee holds a position that is eligible to work from home based on the Supervisor's identification as per #1 above, the Supervisor will advise the employee whether the employee is supported to apply to WFH, the Supervisor's expectations if granted and the parameters around how many days and if applicable what days are to be designated Work from Home days, which at the sole discretion of the Supervisor may be subject to change.
3. There are three steps in the approval process:
 - Step 1- Supervisor approval to apply for participation in the WFH Program.
 - Step 2- Completion of a satisfactory WFH Checklist; and
 - Step 3- Supervisor approval of the submitted images (pictures or videos) of the employee's WFH set up and workstation.
4. If the employee's intent to apply is supported, the Supervisor as per Step 1 will provide an email confirmation to the employee and instruct them to complete and submit the WFH checklist.
5. The employee in Step 2 will complete the Work from Home (WFH) Checklist and submit the form to their Supervisor.
6. The Supervisor will review the WFH checklist and meet with the employee to discuss questions and or concerns and advise the employee of what needs to be corrected before they can approve the form. Before approving the form, the Supervisor may consult with Human Resources (HR) related to any health and safety concerns or modifications that have not been adequately addressed by the employee.
7. If the Supervisor approves the Step # 2 WFH Checklist the employee must, as per Step # 3, submit a video or pictures of their WFH set up and workstation to their Supervisor for approval. The Supervisor may consult HR if needed. If the Supervisor does not approve the WFH set up and workstation they will advise the employee what needs to be corrected before they are able to approve them WFH. The employee will be required to submit a further video or pictures demonstrating the corrections have been made.
8. Until all three steps have been approved by the Supervisor the employee's request to WFH will be pending.
9. Once all three steps have been approved the Supervisor will advise the employee of their acceptance in the WFH Program, noting continuation in the WFH Program is at the sole discretion of the Supervisor.
10. The Supervisor will then forward all documentation to the department Administrative Coordinator for initiation of the WFH Program Terms and Conditions
11. The Administrative Coordinator will prepare and then forward the WFH Program Terms and Conditions to the employee for signing and the employee will return the signed WFH Terms and Conditions to the Administrative Coordinator. The Administrative Coordinator will forward the signed WFH Terms and Conditions to the Supervisor for signing and the Supervisor will return the fully signed WFH Terms and Conditions to the Administrative Coordinator.
12. The Administrative Coordinator will forward a copy of the fully signed WFH Terms and Conditions to the employee and retain one copy in the Department as needed. All original documentation and an electronic version of the WFH Terms and Conditions is then forwarded to HR where the information will be placed in the employee's employment file and recorded for tracking purposes in HR.

13. The Administrative Coordinator will notify the helpdesk via a helpdesk ticket of the approved WFH Program participant and the need for any additional Supervisor approved IT or office equipment.
14. IT/Facilities will contact the employee to determine when the employee can pick up the equipment and receive orientation to the equipment set up.

Current Work from Home Participant going on Extended Leave or Changing Programs or Positions that are Ineligible for Work from Home:

1. An extended leave from work (including sick leave, maternity leave, etc.) or a temporary ineligible WFH assignment/transfer/job posting will result in a temporary withdrawal of the employee's participation in the WFH Program. The duration will be for the period the employee is not working in their initially approved WFH position. As a WFH arrangement is subject to Supervisor discretion, employees transferring or posting to another position need to consider they may not be eligible to continue to participate in the WFH Program as the new Supervisor may not approve the employee WFH. As such before accepting another position employees should discuss and clarify available WFH opportunities with the new Supervisor.
2. As soon as it has been confirmed an employee will be taking an extended leave from work or they will be temporarily/permanently moving to a position that is not eligible for the WFH Program, the Supervisor who has managed the employee in the WFH Program will send written notification of withdrawal with the effective date and the anticipated date of return to the WFH Program to the Administrative Coordinator, HR, Facilities, and IT.
3. The Supervisor will advise the employee of the withdrawal and the requirement to return any additional SMDHU equipment that has been issued to the employee over and above their assigned SMDHU office equipment.
4. Such SMDHU equipment must be returned to SMDHU on or before the effective date of the withdrawal. Once all equipment has been returned, IT/Facilities will send a confirmation email to HR.
5. Prior to returning to work from an extended leave from their initial WFH position, the Supervisor will discuss the employee's continuing participation in the WFH Program. If reinstatement is required, the WFH Program process in Steps 2 and 3 will need to be completed a second time.

Changes to a Current Work from Home Program Terms and Conditions:

1. As the terms and conditions of participation and continued participation in the WFH Program is at the sole discretion of the Supervisor the days and hours of WFH/SMDHU Office may be changed at any time. Notwithstanding, employee requested changes must be mutually agreed with the Supervisor. Accordingly, when changes are made, a revised Terms and Conditions is required.
2. If the employee is not in agreement with the changes the Supervisor or the employee may end the participation in the WFH Program.
3. The Supervisor provides their approval of the required changes to the Terms and Conditions to the employee and to the Administrative Coordinator, via email, within one week of notification of the change, for initiation of a Revised WFH Program Terms and Conditions.

4. The Administrative Coordinator will prepare and then forward the Revised WFH Program Terms and Conditions to the employee for signing and return to the Administrative Coordinator. The Administrative Coordinator will forward the signed Revised WFH Terms and Conditions to the Supervisor for signing and the Supervisor will return the fully signed Terms and Conditions to the Administrative Coordinator.
5. The Administrative Coordinator will forward a copy of the fully signed Revised WFH Program Terms and Conditions to the employee and retain one copy in the Department if required. All original documentation and an electronic version of the Revised WFH Program Terms and Conditions is then sent to HR where the information will be placed in the employee's employment file and recorded for tracking purposes in HR.
6. If there are any changes to the current WFH Terms and Conditions or understanding including but not limited to a planned move of the home office within the home or there will be a home office address change, the employee will notify their Supervisor in writing specifically referencing their WFH Program participation and request approval of the changes.
7. The Supervisor must agree and preapprove any changes in advance to the current WFH arrangement or Terms and Conditions otherwise the employee participation in the WFH Program will end.
8. If the Supervisor approves the changes completion of Steps 1, 2 and 3 of the WFH approval process may be required and a new WFH Terms and Conditions will be processed. As there is a limit of how far away any individual employee, based on operational requirements, may be allowed to WFH from their SMDHU assigned office a WFH office relocation may result in the Supervisor cancelling the employee's participation in the WFH Program.

Work from Home Program Review:

1. At any time, the Supervisor may review the employee's participation and performance in the WFH Program. However, at a minimum of annually, the Supervisor must initiate a formal review of participation in the WFH Program for participants who report to them. A satisfactory performance review, in the Supervisor's opinion and noting no work performance, excessive absenteeism or discipline issues is required for the employee to continue in the WFH Program.
2. If during a review either party requests changes, and if approved by the Supervisor the Supervisor will inform the employee of their decision and send a request to the Administrative Coordinator for initiation of the Renewal Work from Home Terms and Conditions.
3. The Administrative Coordinator will prepare and then forward the Renewal WFH Program Terms and Conditions to the employee for signing. Once signed by the employee, the Administrative Coordinator will forward to the Supervisor for signing and return the fully signed Terms and Conditions to the Administrative Coordinator.
4. The Administrative Coordinator forwards an electronic copy of the fully signed Renewal WFH Program Terms and Conditions to the employee and retains one electronic copy in the Department as needed. An electronic version of the Renewal Terms and Conditions is then sent to HR where the information will be placed in the employee's employment file and recorded for tracking purposes in HR.
5. If the employee does not wish to renew the WFH Terms and Conditions, the Supervisor shall proceed with Termination of Participation in the WFH Program.

Termination of Participation in the Work from Home Program:

1. As per the WFH Program Terms and Conditions this arrangement may be terminated by either party. The employee or the employer must provide four weeks' notice in advance of the termination date. Notwithstanding, a WFH Program Terms and Conditions will be terminated sooner if:
 - employment ends;
 - there is a move to a non-eligible WFH position
 - the WFH Program arrangement is no longer of mutual benefit;
 - if there is a change in program, position or reporting Supervisor, participation may be reviewed, suspended, or terminated, where the new Supervisor does not approve a WFH arrangement.
 - home office internet service no longer meets the required high speed internet requirements to perform efficiently as determined by the Supervisor.
 - the Supervisor no longer feels the arrangement is suitable
 - the Supervisor, in their sole opinion, is experiencing work performance issues with the employee
2. If the employee wishes to terminate the WFH Terms and Conditions, they will notify their Supervisor in writing and provide the reason(s) for discontinuation in the WFH Program.
3. The Supervisor advises the Administrative Coordinator and HR via email of the end date of the employee's participation in the WFH Program, including the reason for ending WFH Program participation.
4. The Supervisor sends IT/Facilities the end date for WFH Program participation.
5. When an employee discontinues participation in the WFH Program, all health unit owned equipment over and above their assigned SMDHU office equipment will be returned to SMDHU on the effective date of the end of the participation in the WFH Program or the employee's next regular workday. The Administrative Coordinator will ensure all health unit equipment over and above the assigned SMDHU office equipment provided to the employee is returned and will advise IT/Facilities and HR via email once all equipment has been returned.
6. When the Supervisor discontinues an employee's participation in the WFH Program, all SMDHU owned equipment over and above their assigned SMDHU office equipment will be returned to SMDHU no later than the end of the participation in the WFH Program. The Administrative Coordinator will ensure all health unit equipment over and above the assigned SMDHU office equipment provided to the employee is returned and will advise IT/Facilities and HR via email once all equipment has been returned.
7. HR will place all documentation in the employee's employment file and will record the termination of participation for tracking purposes in HR.

HR will maintain the Agency master list of employees participating in the Work from Home Program.

HR will monitor the WFH Program to confirm that up-to-date documentation is on file and is recorded in HR. Reminders will be sent to Supervisors regarding outstanding or upcoming actions for the WFH Program that they should be made aware of.

Additional Information for employees in the Work from Home program

Employees participating in the WFH Program:

- Will not conduct health unit business in person with community partners or clients at the home office location.
- May be required at any time by their Supervisor to work from their assigned SMDHU office for a period of time or to adjust their work from home days to accommodate program requirements.
- May end participation in the WFH Program or participation may be ended by the Supervisor (see Procedures, Termination of Participation in the Work from Home Program).
- Must WFH at a distance from their assigned home office that will allow them to return to their home office if needed within 2 hours of travel time or less as per their individual WFH Terms and Conditions with their Supervisor. As such, there is a limit of how far away an employee will be permitted to WFH from their assigned SMDHU office.
- Will not be allowed to change their WFH approved location without prior approval of their Supervisor. For example, WFH at the cottage or while visiting friends or relatives rather than their initially approved home location.
- Must maintain an acceptable level of work performance as determined by their direct Supervisor and not have work performance issues as identified by their Supervisor.

Equipment Requirements:

As WFH is a voluntary arrangement with no increased costs to SMDHU, generally there is no duplication of equipment supplied by SMDHU. For example, employees will only be provided with one laptop and headphones, which they are to use in both their home and assigned SMDHU office as they deem necessary.

Every effort will therefore be made to limit duplication of equipment between the home office and health unit office. This will require the employee to transport some equipment (i.e., laptop, headset) between the two locations. Any equipment, software or hardware belonging to the health unit will be used for health unit business only.

All equipment, software and hardware supplied by the Agency will remain the property of the health unit and will be supported and/or maintained by the IT Team.

The employer will provide the following equipment, if required and not already deployed for use at the employee's assigned SMDHU office:

- Headset,
- Encrypted Laptop
- A monitor for WFH
- Software, mouse, keyboard
- Laptop carrying case

The employee will provide the following:

- Private, segregated space for home office
- Ergonomic Workstation including adjustable chair
- Locked storage for confidential files

- If only a cell phone is maintained (and no land line) the cell phone is to have 911 service.
- Fire extinguisher, first aid kit and smoke detector (all located within the home)
- High Speed Internet Service.

Technical Support:

The employee is personally responsible for the set-up of office equipment and their workstation at their home office.

Internet provider technical difficulties require the employee to follow up with their own internet provider and not SMDHU IT.

The Helpdesk ticket system will be used for any regular ongoing technical issues.

In the event of a work disruption at the employee's home office (including WFH equipment troubleshooting) for more than 60 minutes, staff must report this to their Supervisor and may be required to travel to the nearest or another office to continue working, depending on desk availability as per the branch office Program Assistant's available desk assessment.

Participant Review:

Employee participation and continued participation in the WFH Program is at the sole discretion of the Supervisor, is subject to ongoing review by the Supervisor and will be part of the formal performance review process. The Supervisor therefore may complete a review of the employee's successful participation in the WFH Program at any time in order to determine the continued feasibility of participation in the WFH program.

A review of participation will also occur if there is a change in program, position, reporting Supervisor or work performance or discipline issues.

Termination of Participation:

The Supervisor has sole authority to end an employee's participation in the WFH Program in accordance with this policy at any time or when the arrangement in their sole opinion is no longer supporting the program as needed. The employee may also end their participation in the WFH Program where they do not feel the arrangement is satisfactory. Either party wishing to end participation in the WFH Program must provide a minimum of four weeks' written notice, except as noted herein.

Travel:

As employees are not paid to drive back and forth to work the Travel Conservation and Reimbursement Policy will apply to participants in the WFH Program. As such, employees are not compensated for either time or mileage from their home to their assigned SMDHU office whenever they may be required to travel from home to their assigned office or travel back home from their assigned office. That is, no time and mileage for one round trip to attend their SMDHU office notwithstanding the times of the travel to and from the office. Allowing an employee to WFH should not negatively impact the cost of travel for the organization. If mileage issues arise the employee's participation in the WFH Program may be cancelled as the intent is not for the health unit to absorb any additional costs than it normally would if the employee is solely working out of their assigned SMDHU office. HR is available to discuss how this policy will be applied to mileage claims if necessary.

Related Forms

- OP0110(F1) – Work from Home Program Application Checklist
- OP0110(F2) – Work from Home Program Terms and Conditions

Related Policies

IM0101 Personal Health Information Privacy Policy

IM0108 Information Privacy and Security Incident Management Policy

OP0108 Hybrid Office

TQ0107 Use of Portable Electronic Storage Devices

TQ0101 Electronic Monitoring and Acceptable Use of SMDHU IT Equipment Policy

IM0110 Records Management

TQ0104 Remote Access to Agency Network

FI0101 Travel Conservation & Reimbursement (requires review)

TQ0103 Email and Voicemail Access from Home (requires review)

HR0105 Performance Review Policy

HS0119 Cleaning and Disinfection of Non-Critical Multi-Use Device/Equipment

Final Approval Signature: _____

Review/Revision History:

August 26, 2020, Rogers Program Deletion

June 2022 revisions, related to parameters of percentage of time in office, WFH location distance from assigned office, process, and form changes

December 14, 2022 revision to update language to unassigned workstations, improve clarity around equipment provided by SMDHU, and update related policy names.