

Working from Home or a SMDHU Office Location During COVID-19

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Introduction

Employee work locations during the COVID-19 pandemic is an important area of focus under Occupational Health and Safety for Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) employees. In order to prevent and limit COVID-19 transmission for employees, students, volunteers and our clients, SMDHU is implementing a temporary initiative of allowing designated employees the opportunity to work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic to address the efficient operational needs of the Health Unit while ensuring the health and safety and wellbeing of its employees. This policy temporarily supersedes any other informal or formal existing work from home arrangement, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Purpose

To formalize the process of work location assignment during the COVID-19 Pandemic, to assist in reducing the risk of COVID19 transmission amongst SMDHU employees by temporarily limiting the number of employees working in SMDHU offices and advising employees on the criteria for assigning their temporary work locations for the remainder of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Legislative Authority

Occupational Health and Safety Act R.S.O and Regulations made under the Occupational Health and Safety Act

Income Tax Act

Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004

Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act and ONTARIO REGULATION 116/20 WORK DEPLOYMENT MEASURES FOR BOARDS OF HEALTH thereunder

Ontario Human Rights Code

Policy Definitions and Interpretation

ESA: Employee Supervisor Assessment

HOA: Home Office Assessment Checklist

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)

Policy

At the sole discretion of the Health Unit designated employees may be assigned to temporarily work from home and/or from an assigned SMDHU office location until the SMDHU determines this initiative is no longer needed to assist in reducing the transmission of COVID-19.

In order to safeguard employees from the potential for COVID-19 transmission in the workplace, the majority of employees are being allowed to temporarily work from home. Notwithstanding, the Supervisor has the discretion to require an individual to work in an SMDHU office, subject to the limitations on the maximum desk space for employee's in each office, taking into consideration:

- the nature of an employee's work,
- an employee's ability to work safely, securely and productively from home,
- SMDHU's operational efficiency needs,
- accommodation requirements, the degree of such requirements, and the employee's ability to create and maintain an acceptable workspace at their home that is free of distractions and private
- have access to suitable internet bandwidth (for Skype/Zoom and VPN).

The assigned work locations for each employee may include working fully from their home, working fully from an SMDHU office location or a combination thereof. The number of days working in each location (when there are more than one) will be discussed between the employee and their Supervisor, the latter of which still retains the final say on the parameters of the employee's work location assignment.

Criteria for working from a SMDHU office location

Employees who meet the following conditions as determined by their Supervisor may be required/supported to work in an SMDHU office when:

- Their position or program requires them to be in an SMDHU office location – (e.g. Receptionists, some IT, some HR, Branch Office Program Assistants, other Administrative positions, in-person interviews, clinical or client services etc., as determined by the Supervisor).
- An onsite presence is required to retrieve, print or photocopy and file hard copy documents (printing of any corporate confidential information, official record, active record and records containing personal or personal health information - see definitions in transporting records policy).
- They are unable to work from home based on the criteria to work from home during COVID-19.
- There are other personal or organizational efficiency factors.

Working from Home (WFH)

Employees who meet the following conditions as determined by their Supervisor may be assigned to temporarily work from home during COVID -19. Such employee is required to

demonstrate (written and visual submissions) that the set-up of their home work location meets the following criteria:

- A private, separated space for a home office during work hours.
- Proof of a suitable workspace that allows for proper ergonomic set up (not a bed or couch).
- Alternate care is available for dependents who are present in the home while working, such that you are not required to attend to their needs during working hours any differently than if you were working in the office (see COVID 19 Employee compensation support document regarding flexible working hours for dependent care situation).
- Fire extinguisher, first aid kit (readily available) and smoke detector.
- Ability to call 911 in case of emergencies.
- Stable internet connection with speed sufficient to operate SMDHU applications.

Employees approved to work from a SMDHU office location should only work from that office location unless they are required to complete work at a different office location (e.g. working or covering clinics across multiple offices, work in a different community). Unless the direct supervisor has given prior written approval, any other locations such as a restaurant, secondary residence, community library, a relative's home etc., are not permitted unless their work requires them to be in such location (e.g. Inspection at a restaurant) in order to ensure the employee's health and safety and well-being is maintained. Accordingly, an employee's individual unique circumstances may be considered on a case by case basis by the direct supervisor.

Employees who may be experiencing difficulties WFH will advise their Supervisor of any and all issues. When employees advise they are experiencing issues at home, such as poor ergonomic set up, it should generally be understood that where proper ergonomic set up cannot be achieved through common interventions/tools (e.g. change in mouse), they will be required to work in an SMDHU office for their own health and safety and wellbeing. However, individual circumstances will be considered and in all cases the health unit will comply with its duty to accommodate, where acceptable medical documentation requiring accommodation is submitted to the health unit, but reserves the right to determine where the accommodations will be provided; either the employees home or an SMDHU office.

SMDHU Office Workstation Assignment

The total number of available workstations in each SMDHU office location may be limited for up to one and half years or longer to reduce risk of COVID-19 transmission in the workplace. Workstation assignment at an SMDHU office location will balance priority operational requirements for on-site work and consideration of individual employee factors. Employees may temporarily be assigned different SMDHU office workstations during COVID -19.

Equipment Requirements for Working from Home:

All equipment, software and hardware supplied by the health unit will remain the property of the health unit and will be supported and/or maintained by the IT and Facilities Team. Every effort will be made to limit duplication of equipment between the home office and health unit office. This will require the employee to transport some equipment (e.g. laptop, headset)

between the two locations. Any equipment, software or hardware belonging to the health unit will be used for health unit business only.

The employer may provide the following equipment:

- Headset, if required and if not already deployed for use at the employee's assigned office
- Encrypted Laptop
- Monitor
- Software, mouse, keyboard, docking station
- Office supplies, (e.g. paper pen, file folder) as approved by the Supervisor
- Laptop carry case
- Adjustable chair (employee's office chair is available if requested through facilities)
- If and where reasonably possible, on a case by case basis, given the employee's individual homework location set up, supportive equipment (e.g. a sit stand desk), for employees with documented medical accommodations may be accessed from the health unit through HRI.

Technical Support:

The employee is responsible for set up of equipment at their home office. Internet provider technical difficulties require the employee to follow up with their own internet provider. The Helpdesk ticket system may be used for any, ongoing IT issues.

In the event of a work disruption at the employee's home office (including Work from Home equipment troubleshooting) for more than 60 minutes, the employee must report this to their Supervisor and may be required to travel to the nearest office to continue working.

Review of and Changes to Assigned Work Location:

Employee temporary assigned work locations is subject to ongoing review by the Supervisor to ensure that the work location assignment continues to meet the criteria listed above. The Supervisor has the authority to alter an employee's temporary assigned work location during COVID- 19 at any time if in their sole opinion the arrangement is no longer feasible and/or supporting the program as needed, or is no longer operationally efficient. Likewise, the employee may also request to change their assigned work location where they do not feel the arrangement is satisfactory. However this requires the mutual agreement of their Supervisor.

Procedures

For Assigning work locations during COVID 19:

The Supervisor at their sole discretion will advise employee in writing with a copy to Human Resources whether or not an employee is supported to temporarily work from home, from an SMDHU office or a combination of both, based on program requirements/efficiency using the criteria listed in the policy statement.

Working from home during COVID-19

1. The Supervisor will request the employee submit the Working from Home during COVID -19 checklist and a visual confirmation of the workspace they are using, to assist in determining the appropriateness of the workspace. Employees are not required to submit a signature on the checklist but rather type in their name. The email used to submit the checklist to the Supervisor will be used in place of a signature.
2. The Supervisor will review the working from home during COVID 19 checklist and visual confirmation for acceptability.
3. If the Supervisor has any questions related to the health and safety of the proposed work location they are to consult with Human Resources before final approval is given.
4. The Supervisor will assign the work location(s) and days of work in each location if more than one location is chosen and record that on the checklist.
5. The Supervisor shall report each employee's assigned work location(s) to their Administrative Coordinator.
6. The Administrative Coordinator will record the assigned work location for each employee (including days of the week when they will be working at an SMDHU office) in a centralized tracking tool, and update any changes at the time they are made.
7. The Administrative Coordinator will send work from home checklists with emails to Human Resources to be filed in employee Human Resources files.
8. If the employee is assigned to work at an SMDHU office please see procedures in the section assigning workstations at SMDHU office locations.

Changes in the assignment of work locations during COVID-19:

1. This temporary assignment of work location arrangement may be changed by the Supervisor at their sole discretion at any time.
2. If the employee wishes to no longer work from home they will notify their Supervisor in writing and provide the reason(s) for a request to change assigned work location. Such work assignment location change may only occur with mutual agreement of the Supervisor.
3. The Supervisor will advise the employee if this can be accommodated at this time and if so, advises Administrative Coordinator with a copy to Human Resources via email of the change in work location.
4. If an employee is approved to work at a SMDHU office location, the Supervisor will follow the section on assigning workstations at a SMDHU office location procedures to determine availability of workstations.
5. When a Supervisor allows an employee to change work locations all health unit owned equipment will be transferred to new work location or returned to IT on the date of the change. IT will ensure all health unit equipment provided to the employee is moved and will advise facilities.
6. The Administrative Coordinator will record the location change for tracking purposes and advise Human Resources who will place all documentation in the employee's employment file.

7. The department Administrative Coordinator is responsible for the coordination of all correspondence and tracking of employee work location assignments and shall copy all such correspondence to Human Resources for the employment file.

Assigning Workstations in a SMDHU office location

1. Approved work stations (Appendix A) will be labeled as such including identifying workstations that are assigned to an employee(s) or are available for booking for occasional use.
2. The department Vice President will have ultimate accountability for their employee's desk assignments.
3. The Vice President will assign desk inventory control and assignment to their Administrative Coordinator who will create and maintain a database for their department.
4. When an employee or non-employee (consultant/contractor/volunteer) requires a desk in a particular location the Administrative Coordinator of the department will coordinate, keep track of all desk allocations, ensure there is no more than one desk per employee and ensure that agency desk sharing criteria is adhered to.
5. When new employees are hired or existing employees move part of the employee activation process coordinated by the Administrative Coordinator will include a notification to Facilities, the Manager and the Branch Office Lead of the desk assignment. All parties will be fully aware of who is to be located where and sharing which desk with whom.
6. Employees will be notified of their desk assignments by the Administrative Coordinator based on any agreed upon desk sharing criteria which may be established by Executive.
7. Should a conflict arise in a desk assignment in an SMDHU office, given the limited number of available desks, the departmental Administrative Coordinators will first attempt to resolve the issue, failing that the applicable Vice Presidents will attempt to resolve the issue.
8. The assignment of workstations for employees working full time in a SMDHU office or area (15 Sperling) will be made with following considerations.
 - a. When an employee's workstation has been configured for a documented accommodation that cannot be easily replicated at another workstation they will continue to use their typically assigned workstation.
 - b. Where possible, if an employee's current workstation is an approved workstation and the employee is assigned to work in the office full time, they will be given priority to continue to use that workstation.
 - c. If an employee is assigned to work from the office full time but their typically assigned workstation is not approved for use during COVID-19 they will be provided another workstation close to or adjacent to their typically assigned work station where possible.

9. The assignment of workstations for employees working less than full time in an office location will be made with the following considerations:
 - a. Employees working less than full-time in an SMDHU office location may be required to share a workstation with another employee working less than full time in the office. For these work stations, employees should clean and disinfect the workstation at the beginning of their shift at the work station.
 - b. Managers should approve work from office days to support scheduling of time at workstation in cases where the demand for approved workstations exceed the total number of workstations available.
10. For employees required to occasionally work at an SMDHU office location (power outage, loss of internet connectivity at home, filing records etc.) designated hoteling stations will be available for use.
 - a. Employees may request to book these workstations through the Branch Office Program Assistant (BOPA) or the department Administrative Coordinator (15 Sperling) or book these assigned stations on line if available.
 - b. If the request for workstations on a given day exceed availability of those workstations the employee can either choose a day when there is a workstation available or for urgent needs request a workstation in the next nearest office.

Related Policies

IM0101 Personal Information Including Personal Health Information Privacy – Principles
 IM0102 Personal Information Including Personal Health Information Privacy – Accountability
 IM0103 Personal Information Including Personal Health Information Privacy – Consent
 IM0104 Personal Information Including Personal Health Information Privacy – Collection & Use
 IM0105 Personal Information Including Personal Health Information Privacy – Disclosure
 IM0106 Personal Information Including Personal Health Information Privacy – Access
 IM0107 Personal Information Including Personal Health Information Privacy – Correction
 IM0108 Personal Information Including Personal Health Information Privacy – Privacy Breach
 OP0108 Innovative Office
 TQ0107 Use of Portable Electronic Storage Devices
 TQ0101 Acceptable Use Policy Records Management
 TQ0104 Remote Access to Agency Network
 FI0101 Travel Conservation & Reimbursement
 OP0106 Alternate Worksite Policy
 TQ0103 Email and Voicemail Access from Home
 HR0105 Performance Review Policy
 HS0119 Cleaning and Disinfection of Non-Critical Multi-Use Device/Equipment

Appendices

Appendix A – Office Floor Plan

Appendix B – Video Office Ergonomics – Tips for Working at Home

Related Forms

- OP0111(F1) Home Office – COVID-19 Checklist

Final Approval Signature: _____

Review/Revision History:

Revised: November 2020 Supervisor discretion in alternative work locations added

Appendix A – SMDHU Office Floor Plans

1. Barrie – 15 Sperling Drive
 - [Upper Floor](#)
 - [Lower Floor](#)
2. [Barrie Clinic](#)
3. [Collingwood](#)
4. [Cookstown](#)
5. [Gravenhurst](#)
6. Huntsville
 - [First Floor](#)
 - [Second Floor](#)
 - [Third Floor](#)
7. [Midland](#)
8. [Orillia](#)