

HOME OFFICE
POLICY AND PROGRAM

**Nebraska Department of
Health and Human Services**

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Introduction

Home Officing as a work option can help the Department of Health and Human Services maximize the efficient use of its resources. Home Officing is also consistent with sound business practices and will help the organization be more competitive in attracting and retaining talented and skilled employees throughout the state. Home Officing can also increase the productivity and morale of employees, boost efficiency in the use of space, and reduce overall operating costs.

Policy

It is the policy of the Department of Health and Human Services, herein after referred to as the Agency, to support the option of Home Officing when opportunities exist for improved employee performance, reduced commuting miles, organization savings, and other benefits while meeting customer needs. Home Officing may not be suitable for all employees and/or positions.

This policy creates no new employee rights in relation to employment, and all Agency policies are applicable to Home Officing employees.

Management decisions regarding Home Officing are not grievable. Either the Agency or the employee may discontinue the arrangement at any time, giving two week's notice, unless otherwise provided in the Home Officing Agreement. Management may temporarily suspend Home Officing without notice, due to operational needs.

The Agency is committed to improving the capacity for Home Officing by increasing network access from remote locations. However, current system capabilities do not guarantee access to the central office's local area network (LAN) or Agency data files.

Applicability

This policy applies to all employees of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Principles of Home Officing

Home Officing is a management option and not a universal employee benefit. Home Officing is voluntary. The Home Officing program incorporates a written agreement between supervisor and employee, and approved by the Agency Director or designee, which defines expectations and responsibilities for both parties. Home Officing should not be considered a substitute for dependent care because an employee cannot adequately care for or supervise dependents in the home and meet the requirements of the job while they are on their agreed-upon work schedule. Employees considering home officing are encouraged to seek tax advice prior to applying.

Definitions Home Officing

Home Officing is defined as working one or more days per week from a space specifically set-aside as an office in an employee's residence.

Central Work Site

Central work site is defined as the employee's officially assigned worksite, where work tasks are performed which may not be performed from the home office. Not all employees participating in the Home Officing Program may require a central work site. Divisions may choose to leave office space as is or implement space sharing among Home Office workers initially. Office reconfiguration should not be undertaken until the Home Office option for specific employees and their supervisors is judged feasible and satisfactory by both parties.

Home Office Site

Home office site is defined as an area specifically designated as an office in the employee's residence. The Home Office Site must be specified in the Home Office Agreement and must be clean and free of obstructions and hazardous materials.

General Requirements

1. Employees may apply for Home Officing after completing their original probationary period. The Agency Director or designee may approve exceptions.
 - a) Supervisors must provide a performance monitoring plan for employees who are authorized to Home Office prior to the completion of original probation.
2. Management will consider home officing when employees have demonstrated work habits and performance well-suited to successful home office work and Home Officing provides opportunity for improved employee performance or retention, reduced commuting miles, organization savings, or other benefits. The following guidelines need to be considered:
 - a) **Work habits**
Home Office workers must have demonstrated self-motivation, self-discipline, adequate knowledge to complete tasks correctly, the ability to work independently, the ability to manage distractions, and the ability to meet deadlines.
 - b) **Job/Tasks/Assignments**
The job/tasks/assignments which are proposed for Home Office work must have minimum requirements for direct supervision or contact with customers; the Home Office worker's need for specialized material must be minimal or flexible; and the Home Office worker's work objectives and tasks must be clearly defined with measurable results.
3. Employees shall sign and abide by the Home Office Agreement.

Work Schedule / Accessibility / Time & Injury Reporting

1. The number of hours worked will not change because of Home Office work. A consistent schedule of Home Office workdays and hours is required for all non-exempt employees. For some positions, more flexibility in work hours and days is feasible.
2. The Home Office Agreement will specify work schedules that comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) regulations, Agency policies and time reporting procedures and requirements
3. The Home Office work schedule needs to allow adequate time at the central work site for meetings, access to facilities and supplies, and communication with other employees and customers. Home Office work must not adversely affect customer service delivery, employee productivity, or the progress of an individual's assignment or team assignment.
4. In approving the Home Office work schedule, the employee's supervisor will take into consideration the overall impact of the Home Office worker's total time out of the central work site and its effect on adequate communication with the supervisor, coworkers, and the public or customers.
5. While home officing, the employee must be reachable via telephone, fax, pager, or e-mail during agreed-upon work hours or specific core hours of accessibility. The employee shall notify assigned office staff if they leave their Home Office worksite, according to the terms of the home office agreement, just as they would inform the receptionist or sign out when leaving the central work site during the workday.
6. The Home Office worker and his/her supervisor will agree on how to handle telephone messages, including the feasibility of call forwarding, frequency of checking telephone messages, and the need for having a home phone answering machine.
7. If the central work site is closed due to an emergency or inclement weather, the employee's supervisor will contact the Home Office worker. The Home Office worker will continue to work at the Home Office site if conditions permit. If there is an emergency at the Home Office work site, such as a power outage, the Home Office worker will notify his/her supervisor as soon as possible. The Home Office worker may be assigned to the central work site or an alternate work site.
8. The Home Office worker and his/her supervisor will agree on procedures for reporting work related injuries.

Dependent Care

Home Office workers will not act as primary caregivers for dependents during the agreed-upon work hours. This does not mean dependents must be absent from the home during the Home Office work hours. It means the dependents may not require the Home Office worker's attention or supervision during work hours. Home Office workers must make dependent care arrangements to permit concentration on their work assignments. Emergency situations will be handled by the supervisor on a case-by-case basis.

Supplies, Equipment, And Furniture

1. The Home Office Agreement must specify all reimbursable costs. Any additional costs related to Home Office work must be authorized by the Agency Director or designee before purchase or installation. The Agency will provide standard office supplies (pens, paper, pencils, etc.). Out-of-pocket expenses for supplies normally available at the central work site will not be reimbursed. Home Office workers need to acquire supplies while at the central work site.
2. The Agency will provide Home Office site furniture and equipment, as required to support the Home Office work. All Agency furniture and equipment furnished must be documented in the Home Office Agreement. The employee will return to the Agency all equipment, records, supplies, and materials within 5 days of termination of this agreement.
3. Repair and/or replacement costs and liability for Agency-owned equipment used during Home Office work is the responsibility of the Agency for normal use and wear. Situations where repair/replacement is needed as a result of negligence or deliberate damage, destruction, or loss will be dealt with on a case by case basis.
4. When needed to complete specified Home Office work tasks, the Agency will provide computer hardware, software, and whatever data communications and services are needed.
5. Equipment, software, and supplies provided by the Agency for use at the Home Office worksite are for conducting state business and may not be used for personal purposes by the employee or other individuals. Employees using state equipment must take reasonable care to ensure the equipment's safety and performance.
6. The employee, at their option, may provide their own equipment or furniture. The Agency assumes no financial responsibility for that equipment or furniture and will not reimburse the employee for its acquisition, maintenance, or operation.

Security, Privacy, And Confidentiality Of Data

1. Home Office workers must provide reasonable security of the data and information they carry to and from their office site. Simple measures such as removing disks that contain sensitive data from the computer and placing them in secure storage may prevent a burglary from becoming a major and potentially costly security breach.
2. Home Office workers needing restricted-access information while working at their Home Office work site must discuss the need with their supervisor before taking the information off-site. Home Office workers are responsible for protecting the privacy and confidentiality of data at remote work locations the same as they are at the central worksite.
3. Data created and maintained on a Home Office computer, is subject to the state's records management statute. This means proper retention and disposal procedures are required and the data remains the property of the state.

Employee Self-Assessment

The following questions will help you assess whether or not you would be a successful Home Office worker. Answer each question.

For the following questions, rate yourself using the following numeric scale:

Always = 5 Most of the time = 4 Generally = 3 Seldom = 2 Never = 1.

- | | Rating |
|--|--|
| 1. Are you self-motivated, self-disciplined and able to work independently? | _____ |
| 2. Can you complete projects correctly on time with minimal supervision and feedback? | _____ |
| 3. Are you productive when no one is checking on you or watching you work? | _____ |
| 4. Do you have strong organizational and time-management skills? | _____ |
| 5. Are you results-oriented? | _____ |
| 6. Will you remain focused on your work while at home? | _____ |
| 7. Do you manage your time and workload well? | _____ |
| 8. Are you able to solve many of your own problems? | _____ |
| 9. Do you find satisfaction in completing tasks on your own? | _____ |
| 10. Are you able to set priorities and deadlines for your work? | _____ |
| 11. Are you able to work alone? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 12. Are you disciplined enough to start and stop work at designated time? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 13. Can you adjust to the relative isolation of working at home? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 14. Will you miss the social interaction at the central office on your Home Office days? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 15. Rate your knowledge of your organization's procedures and policies?
<input type="checkbox"/> EXTENSIVE <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR <input type="checkbox"/> LIMITED | |
| 16. Have you been on the job long enough to know how to do your job in accordance with your organization's procedures and policies? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |

APPENDIX A

17. Do you have well-established work, communication and social patterns at the office? YES NO
18. Have you and your supervisor discussed whether co-workers would have additional work because you work at home?
If the answer is YES, attach your explanation to this questionnaire. YES NO
19. Have you determined how to provide support to co-workers while working at home?
If the answer is YES, attach your explanation to this questionnaire. YES NO
20. Do you have an effective working relationship with co-workers? YES NO
21. Are you adaptable to changing routines and environments? YES NO
22. Have you demonstrated an ability to be flexible about work routines? YES NO
23. Are you willing to come into the designated office on a regularly scheduled Home Office day if your supervisor, co-workers or customers need you there? YES NO
24. Are you an effective communicator and team player? YES NO
25. Do you communicate well with your supervisor and co-workers? YES NO
26. Have you developed ways to communicate regularly with your supervisor and co-workers that you can use when you Home Office? YES NO
27. Are you successful in your current position? YES NO
28. Do you know your job well and have a track record of good performance? YES NO

Supervisor's Assessment

The Ideal Jobs for Home Officing

Most jobs that require writing, reading, research, thinking, editing, working with data (entry, processing, coding, etc.) and talking on the phone can be performed easily from a home office work site. Other jobs that may not seem appropriate at first may be modified so that the worker can home office. One of the secrets of designing a good home office program lies in the ability to organize specific jobs so they can be done without constant interaction or need for feedback.

The following two groups of characteristics relate to the job and the employee under consideration for the Home Officing Program. Please carefully consider each characteristic.

Please check only one response for each characteristic.

Job Characteristics	High	Medium	Low
a. Amount of face-to-face communications with co-workers required.			
b. Amount of face-to-face communications with public required.			
c. Feasibility of grouping required face-to-face communications into predetermined time periods.			
d. Degree of telephone communication required.			
e. Amount of interface with data bases not on the PC.			
f. Amount of time spent working at a terminal or PC.			
g. Availability of quantitative measures for assessing performance (how many reports, forms, cases completed, etc.).			
h. Clarity of objectives for a given work effort.			
i. Degree of autonomy (job independence/self-determination).			
j. Degree of employee's control over work flow.			
k. Amount of in-office reference material required.			
l. Amount of physical access to special resources required.			
m. Feasibility of grouping in-office reference/resource requirements into predetermined time periods.			
n. Amount of concentration required.			
o. Need for physical security of data.			

APPENDIX B

Employee Characteristics	Always 5	Most of thetime 4	Generally 3	Seldom 2	Never 1
a. Is self-motivated, self-disciplined and able to work independently.					
b. Completes projects correctly on time with minimal supervision and feedback.					
c. Is productive when not being observed or checked on.					
d. Is results-oriented.					
e. Manages time and workload well.					
f. Solves many of their own problems.					
g. Finds satisfaction in completing tasks on their own.					
h. Sets priorities and deadlines for their work.					
i. Desire/need to be around people.					

Responses to questions in **bold print** may be compared to employee's self-assessment.

Application For Home Officing Program

Instructions: Employee completes application and gives it to his/her supervisor. Supervisor conducts preliminary review of application, completes Supervisors Assessment - Home Officing, and confers with Division Director to reach a decision to either approve or deny application. Supervisor meets with employee to discuss approval or denial.

1. EMPLOYEE INFORMATION

Name:	Work Phone:
Division:	Program:
Division Director:	Supervisor:
Date of Application:	Proposed Home Office Start Date:

2. PROPOSED HOME OFFICE WORK SITE LOCATION (The proposed Home Office must be a distinct area within the residence.)

Address:	City/Zip:
Home Office Phone:	Home Office email: (if different from central work site)

Describe the Home Office Work Site, including dimensions of work area:

3. HOME OFFICE TRAVEL STATISTICS

- A. Round trip distance from residence to central work site: _____
- B. Travel time round trip from residence to central work site: _____
- C. Number of proposed home office work days per week: _____

4. Economic Benefit Calculations - Supervisor Use Only

From data above:

- 1. Multiply A. x C. x 50 weeks = travel distance saved annually:
- 2. Multiply B. x C. x 50 weeks = travel time saved annually:
- 3. Divide travel distance saved annually by 15 = Gallons of fuel saved annually:
- 4. Multiply travel distance save annually by \$(current mileage rate) = Annual vehicle savings:

APPENDIX C

5. Do you have dependents requiring care and/or supervision during proposed Home Office work schedule? YES NO

(If your response is Yes, describe the arrangements you propose to relieve you of those primary care and/or supervisory responsibilities.)

6. Proposed Home Office Work Schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
AM Start							
AM End							
Lunch Start							
Lunch End							
PM Start							
PM End							

Note: A minimum 30 minute Lunch Break must be scheduled in the middle of each Home Office workday. The workweek ends at 5:00 pm Friday, so time worked after 5:00 pm is included in the next week. Non-exempt employees must account for at least 40 hours work or leave time each week to be considered full-time. Agencies must assure public access from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday (excluding holidays).

7. Proposed Home Office Work Tasks, or Projects (List each separately)

1.	2.	3.
4.	5.	6.
7.	8.	9.
10.	11.	12.
13.	14.	15.
16.	17.	18.
19.	20.	21.
22.	23.	24.

8. Briefly describe each of the above listed work tasks or projects (attach more paper if necessary).

APPENDIX C

9. Describe how each task/project will be evaluated. Each unit of work, task, or assignment must be measurable; definable in terms of a beginning and ending point; and must incorporate a quality component.

10. What equipment office furniture and software would be required to support the proposed Home Office work? List each separately, (attach more paper if necessary).

11. For the following, check your response for each item. In the proposed home office site, do you have?

Item	Yes	No
Grounded electrical outlets		
Sufficient number of electrical outlets in order to dedicate use for home office equipment only.		
Electrical surge protector		
Fire extinguisher, type ABC Dry Chemical		
Adequate lighting to support your home office work		
Adequate heating/cooling to provide a comfortable home work environment		

12. I have read the Home Officing Program and understand and agree to the requirements and obligations I am expected to meet as a Home Office worker.

Employee Signature

Date

Home Officing Agreement

This agreement specifies the conditions applicable to an arrangement for performing work through the Home Officing Program. The agreement begins on _____ and continues until _____. It can be withdrawn with a ten work day written notice by either party. The supervisor may temporarily suspend the Home Office option due to operational needs or performance problems. Any information contained in the Application For Home Officing Program may be included in this agreement by reference.

- 1. Days and hours when the employee is normally expected to be in the Central Work Site are (Specify days and hours.)

- 2. The Home Office work site is located at _____ .

- 3. Days and hours when the employee will normally work at this alternate work site are

- 4. Additional hours involving overtime at any work site must be approved in advance by the supervisor.

- 5. Actual dates and hours worked shall be reported on forms prescribed by the agency and submitted within specified timeframes

- 6. Duties and assignments (specify duties, tasks, or assignments) authorized to be performed at this alternate work site, and agreed upon results are:

The supervisor reserves the right to assign work as necessary at any work site.

7. Recognizing that effective communication is essential for this arrangement to be successful, the following methods and times of communicating are agreed upon (**Specify who including backup and emergency contacts, when, how often, during what time frames, and how e.g. phone, fax, beeper, face-to-face, etc.):**)

8. Home Officing is not a substitute for dependent care or supervision of dependents during scheduled Home Office work time. The employee agrees to provide for dependents' care during agreed-upon Home Office work hours. The Dependent care/supervision arrangement described in the Application for Home Office Program is incorporated herein by reference.
9. The employee agrees to remain accessible during designated work hours, and understands management retains the right to modify this agreement on a temporary basis as a result of operational necessity.
10. Regarding space and equipment purchase, set-up, and maintenance, the following is agreed upon: (SPECIFY. purchase, set-up, maintenance, provision of supplies, insurance arrangements necessary), etc., for each piece of equipment, furniture, phones, etc.)

11. The employee agrees to maintain a safe and secure work environment. The employee agrees to allow the Agency access to assess safety and security, during home office work hours on a scheduled basis, or whenever deemed necessary.
12. The employee agrees to report work-related injuries to the supervisor at the earliest opportunity. The employee agrees to hold the Agency harmless for injury to others at the Home Office work site.
13. The employee agrees to use Agency-owned equipment, records, and materials for purposes of Agency business only, and to protect them against unauthorized or accidental access, use, modification, destruction, loss, theft or disclosure. Personal use is not permitted.
14. The employee agrees to report to the supervisor instances of loss, damage, or unauthorized access at the earliest opportunity.
15. The employee understands that all equipment, records, and materials provided by the Agency shall remain the property of the Agency.

16. The employee understands his/her personal vehicle will not be used for Agency business unless specifically authorized by the supervisor.
17. The employee agrees to return the Agency equipment, records, and materials within 5 days of termination of this agreement. All Agency equipment will be returned to the Agency by the employee for inspection, repair, replacement, or repossession with 5 days written notice.
18. The employee understands she/he is responsible for tax consequences, if any, of this arrangement, and for conformance to any local zoning regulations.
19. The employee understands all obligations, responsibilities, terms and conditions of employment with the Agency remain unchanged, except those obligations and responsibilities specifically addressed in this agreement.
20. FORCE MAJEURE – Neither party shall be liable for any costs or damages resulting from its inability to perform any of its obligations under this Home Office Agreement due to a natural disaster, or similar event outside the control and not the fault of the affected party (“Force Majeure Event”). A Force Majeure Event shall not constitute a breach of this Home Office Agreement. The party so affected shall immediately give notice to the other party of the Force Majeure Event. Upon such notice, all obligations of the affected party under this contract which are reasonable related to the Force Majeure Event shall be suspended, and the affected party shall do everything reasonably necessary to resume performance as soon as possible.

I hereby affirm by my signature that I have read this Home Officing Agreement, and understand and agree to all of its provisions.

Employee

Date

Supervisor

Date

Director/Designee

Date

A signed copy of this document will be placed in the employee's personnel file.