

G. Telework

DFPS Human Resources Manual October 2025

Importance of Telework Policy

DFPS is primarily an in-person organization with the majority of the employees supporting the DFPS mission through in-person services to children, families, and vulnerable adults.

In support of that work, maintaining a physical presence is an important factor in fostering connections, enhancing teamwork, and supporting our mission. DFPS believes that in-person collaboration often contributes to meaningful work experiences and is integral to achieving organizational goals.

Telework arrangements will be assessed based on business priorities and team requirements. This policy outlines the process for requesting, approving, and monitoring telework, as well as the expectations for employees while teleworking.

Telework Guidelines and General Expectations

Telework, regardless of type (full-time, hybrid, and temporary exception), may only be approved in order to:

- Address a lack of available office space.
- Provide reasonable flexibility that enhances the agency's ability to achieve its mission.

It is important to note that this policy does not apply to mobile workers, employees working remotely due to agency-related travel, or as part of an approved reasonable accommodation.

Regardless of how the position is classified, the agency continues to support flexibility. As approved by supervisors, employees may be allowed to work from home to maximize productivity in response to specific circumstances such as:

- Working on a time-limited project that requires focus.
- Meeting a service repair person.
- Weather event or office closure.

Periodically working remotely under these or similar circumstances is not considered telework for the purposes of this policy.

Telework schedules, regardless of type (full-time, hybrid, and temporary exception), must be entered into the Telework Module within the CAPPS system. The Telework Module serves as the agency's written agreement to allow the employee to telework and includes the reason the employee is authorized to telework.

Employees are prohibited from conducting in-person agency business at the employee's personal residence. For example, a supervisor cannot conduct an in-person unit meeting at their residence.

Definitions

Chapter 3: General Employment (G. Telework)

Mobile Work

Mobile work is a working practice that is not limited to a physical office location. Mobile work differs from telework, as the core job functions take place outside of the office, typically:

- Traveling from one location to another
- Working cases with families
- Attending court
- Performing other agency business

Mobile workers have a designated headquarters but may use workspace at other locations as needed. Mobile work is not optional; it is a function of a classification of positions. Mobile workers are not included in the CAPPS Telework Registry and do not have to fill out a telework agreement to continue mobile work.

Examples of mobile positions include:

- Adult Protective Services Investigators
- Child Protective Investigators
- Child Protective Services Caseworker I–IV
- Human Service Technicians

Telework

Telework is a work arrangement that allows an employee to conduct, on a regular basis, all or some agency business at a place other than the employee's regular or assigned temporary place of employment during all or a portion of the employee's established work hours; this is typically the employee's home. Telework is a privilege at DFPS and is not considered an employee right and may not be offered as a condition of employment.

The following are the types of telework:

Full-time Telework: Full-time telework is a work arrangement where employees perform their duties full-time from a location other than a traditional office location, typically their home. This arrangement is based on the essential functions of the position rather than individual employee preferences or individual situations. Positions generally suitable for telework are positions where employees perform work that is:

- Measurable, routine, completed independently with input from others as needed.
- Consistent day-to-day.
- Clearly defined in scope.

The Commissioner designates full-time telework based on job function.

Hybrid Telework: An arrangement where employees are approved to split their time on a set schedule between a primary DFPS in-office location and a second location, typically their home, up to two days per week. Hybrid telework is considered on a case-by-case basis for each position. Certain job functions within a position may be appropriate for hybrid telework, while the job as a whole is not appropriate for full-time telework. Positions generally suitable for hybrid telework are positions where employees perform work that is measurable, routine, completed independently with input from others, as needed, but are less consistent day-to-day. Also, the scope is less defined than full-time telework positions, or the person or position requires collaborative supervision.

Temporary Exception Based Telework: By executive exception, an employee may be approved to work a telework schedule on a temporary basis. This may be a limited time arrangement that allows for a flexible work schedule that can accommodate both the needs of the organization and the

personal circumstances of the employee. Approval for this telework arrangement is subject to periodic review and may be adjusted based on performance and organizational requirements, such as space availability.

Telework Site

A telework site is the established and documented location from which the employee works remotely. The telework site is the employee's official duty station and is typically the employee's residence.

Shared Workspace

A shared workspace is a physical space at a designated site that is designed for use on a shared, as-needed basis to accommodate business needs. This is frequently referred to as "hoteling." Employees who telework full-time and do not have an assigned workspace may use a shared workspace in situations when they cannot use the telework site, such as during power or Internet outages.

Telework and ADA (Reasonable Accommodations)

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An approved reasonable accommodation may allow an employee to telework, but the arrangement is separate from the DFPS Telework policy and should not be entered in the CAPPS Telework Registry.

If an employee requests telework as a reasonable accommodation, the agency's established processes for such requests will be followed. Employees approved for telework who later require accommodation should adhere to the standard procedures for submitting a request. For more details, refer to the HR Manual, Chapter 16: Equal Employment Opportunity, Section D, Reasonable Accommodation.

Employees Subject to Telework Policy

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This policy applies to all DFPS employees except the following:

- Employees in designated mobile work positions.
- Employees working remotely due to agency-related travel.
- Employees in approved reasonable accommodation positions.

Mobile work and full-time telework is based on the functions of the position and not individual circumstances. The agency has predetermined which positions are designated as mobile work and full-time telework.

Eligibility for Telework

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Full-Time Telework

Eligibility for full-time telework is based on the functions of the position and not individual circumstances. The agency head has predetermined which positions qualify for full-time telework. To designate a position as full-time telework, executive team members must prepare an action memo to the Commissioner for approval.

Hybrid Telework

Hybrid teleworking may be granted to employees in specific instances that present no negative impact to business operations. Eligible employees may be allowed to telework up to two days per week. The following categories are not appropriate for hybrid telework:

- Mobile workers
- Full-time teleworkers
- Employees in client-facing roles (non-mobile workers located in regional offices)
- Employees in location-specific positions
- Executive leadership: Deputy Commissioners, Associate Commissioners, executive team members, and other positions at the discretion of executive leadership

It may also be necessary to adjust or suspend teleworking schedules or arrangements to meet specific business needs. An employee must meet all of the following requirements to be eligible for hybrid telework:

- Be available to attend in-person meetings, trainings, or other events where the employee's physical attendance is beneficial to the outcome of the event.

- Be able to demonstrate similar performance (quality and quantity) as an in-office worker.
- Be able to connect to the DFPS network with minimal connectivity disruptions.
- Meet established performance requirements for the employee's position.
- Has no active written warning or other formal disciplinary action. (Employees under disciplinary action cannot request telework.)

Hybrid telework is considered on a case-by-case basis for each position. Certain job functions within a position may be appropriate for hybrid telework while the job as a whole is not appropriate for full-time telework. Positions generally suitable for hybrid telework perform work that is measurable, routine, completed independently with input from others as needed, but are less consistent day-to-day. Also, the scope is less defined than full-time telework positions, or the person or position requires collaborative supervision.

Not all positions are eligible for a hybrid telework arrangement. When considering hybrid telework, the supervisor may also consider other factors such as the distance the employee drives to the office and the number of other employees in the unit teleworking.

Employees who are considered for hybrid telework should be self-motivated, high performers who thrive in an independent work environment, but some onsite collaboration of projects or team activities is also needed.

Temporary Exception-Based Telework

Adequate office coverage must be maintained at all times. The services and support that telework employees provide to clients and employees must remain consistent with the services and support provided by employees in the traditional work environment.

Not all job functions or positions are suitable for telework. Each division and its executive management determine which job functions and positions are eligible. A position is not eligible for telework if its job functions must be performed on-site and cannot be handled remotely.

Employees may consult with their immediate supervisor for information about temporary, exception-based telework eligibility. An employee must meet all of the following requirements to be eligible:

- Be available to attend in-person meetings, trainings, or other events where the employee's physical attendance is beneficial to the outcome of the event.
- Be able to demonstrate similar performance (quality and quantity) as an in-office worker.
- Be able to connect to the DFPS network with minimal connectivity disruptions.
- Meet established performance requirements for the employee's position.
- Have no active written warning or other formal disciplinary action. (Employees under disciplinary action cannot request telework.)

Telework Expectations

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Regardless of the type of telework, on telework days, employees must work their scheduled work hours and must be available to other employees who are in the office during work hours. Unplanned periods of unavailability, including sick leave, family emergencies, and power outages or technical difficulties, must be reported immediately to the employee's supervisor. Employees account for any time away from work on their time sheet in CAPPS. See the HR Manual, Chapter 5: Work Leave.

If an employee is needed in the office on a scheduled telework day, it is possible that the employee will not telework that week. For example, during a Legislative Session, telework days may be reduced to meet the business needs of the agency. Supervisors are encouraged to provide advance notice regarding temporary schedule changes, when possible.

Employees

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Employees approved for telework must continue to comply with all DFPS policies, procedures, and performance expectations, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Being subject to the same rules and disciplinary actions as any other agency employee.
- Completing the DFPS Telework Training course in the DFPS Learning Station.
- Adhering to their assigned work schedules.
- Maintaining responsiveness to all internal and external inquiries.
- Exercising flexibility to meet business needs.
- Being available to attend in-person meetings, trainings, or other events where the employee's physical attendance is beneficial to the outcome of the event.
- Following procedures accurately and consistently.
- Ensuring that telework does not negatively impact job performance, service delivery, or client outcomes.
- Complying with the agency dress code policy while attending meetings electronically.

Supervisors

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Supervisors of employees approved for telework are responsible for the following actions:

- Completing the DFPS Telework Training for Managers course in the DFPS Learning Station. Supervisors are required to take this training only once, no matter how many teleworkers they supervise.
- Reviewing and approving each teleworker's teleworking agreement and work schedule in the CAPPS system.
- Establishing a renewal period of 365 days within the CAPPS Telework Module. This renewal is conducted annually thereafter.

- Reviewing the applicable employee and telework expectations with the employee.
- Managing the daily activities of their teleworkers, including conduct and disciplinary issues, remotely.
- Monitoring the productivity of their teleworkers to ensure that they are working during designated hours and that business goals are being met.
- Reviewing telework agreements during the annual performance evaluation process.
- Reviewing the teleworking employee's annual performance during the employee's annual performance evaluation to include the employee's performance of all job duties while teleworking.
- Ensuring that a teleworking employee is subject to the same rules and disciplinary actions as any other agency employee.

Safety of the Telework Site

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The telework site must have a workspace free of safety hazards and conducive to proper work conditions.

The employee, or a person acting on the employee's behalf, should report work-related injuries or illnesses at the time they occur to both of the following:

- The employee's supervisor.
- In CAPPs—Sign in and locate the Employee Self Service box. Click My Incident/Injury Reporting. Click the applicable categories shown below and enter the necessary information:
 - Add an Accident/Incident
 - View/Update Accident/Incident
 - Print Accident/Incident Report

The teleworker agrees that it may be necessary for management to access the telework site to investigate an accident or injury report.

Telework employees are covered by workers' compensation. Injuries sustained during work duties may be covered regardless of where the employee is performing the duties. For more information about workers' compensation, please see the HR Manual, Chapter 8: Benefits and contact the workers' compensation mailbox at DFPSWorkersComp@dfps.texas.gov.

Equipment and Space for Teleworkers

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Equipment and Costs

Telework must not cost the agency more than an on-site work arrangement for the employee.

Employees requesting to telework must provide the necessary office equipment to conduct their daily work in an alternative work environment. DFPS does not purchase office furniture or office supplies related to an employee's telework agreement unless the purchase is part of a reasonable accommodation agreement.

However, teleworkers may use certain DFPS-issued equipment (such as laptop computers and computer monitors) at the telework site. Unless approved, all DFPS equipment remains within the United States.

Office Workspace

Full-time teleworkers are not assigned a dedicated workspace.

Hybrid teleworkers who telework three or more days per week are not assigned workspace. Mobile workstations are available for use by any DFPS mobile workers and teleworkers.

Hybrid teleworkers who telework two days or fewer per week are assigned workspace based on their position type.

Requesting Telework

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Full-Time Telework and Mobile Workers

Only the Commissioner can designate a position classification as full-time telework or mobile work. These arrangements are based on the essential functions of the position rather than individual employee preferences or

individual situations. In order to request full-time telework, the appropriate Associate Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, or other executive team member must submit a decision memorandum to the Commissioner requesting this change.

Hybrid Telework

Before submitting a request to telework, employees should first talk to their supervisor to see whether telework is appropriate for their position.

The following table describes how to request hybrid telework.

STEP	ACTION
1	<p>The employee does as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completes DFPS Telework Training for Staff in the DFPS Learning Station. • Submits a telework request in CAPPS under My Telework, and then completes the Telework Profile. • Completes the Telework Expectation and Agreement in CAPPS.
2	<p>The supervisor does as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verifies telework eligibility as stated in the HR Manual, Chapter 3: General Employment, G. Telework. • Completes DFPS Telework Training for Managers in the DFPS Learning Station (only taken once). • Verifies the employee completed DFPS Telework Training for Staff in the DFPS Learning Station. First-level supervisors receive an email notification when a direct report employee initiates a request to telework. A Worklist Item will be assigned to the supervisor in CAPPS. • Reviews the Proposed Telework Start Date as entered by the employee. The start date must be equal to or greater than the current date and not more than 60 days in the future. The first-level supervisor may revise the date to meet business needs. • Approves or denies the Telework Request Approval.

STEP	ACTION
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviews telework agreements during the performance evaluation process. <p>The second-level supervisor then:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receives an email notification when a telework request has been approved by the first level supervisor. Approves or denies the Telework Request Approval.

Temporary Exception-Based Telework

The following table describes the process and approval for temporary exception-based telework.

STEP	ACTION
1	<p>The following must take place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The employee must discuss telework suitability with his or her supervisor before submitting a request. The supervisor confirms eligibility based on HR Manual Chapter 3: General Employment, G. Telework. If eligible, the supervisor follows the temporary exception telework process (refer to SafetyNet).
2	<p>Once temporary exception telework is approved, the supervisor informs the employee that the employee may enter his or her telework agreement and schedule in CAPPS.</p>
3	<p>The employee does as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completes DFPS Telework Training for Staff in the DFPS Learning Station. Submits a telework request in CAPPS. Completes the Telework Expectation and Agreement in CAPPS.
4	<p>The supervisor does as follows:</p>

STEP	ACTION
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completes DFPS Telework Training for Managers in the DFPS Learning Station (only taken once). • Verifies the employee completed DFPS Telework Training for Staff in the DFPS Learning Station. First-level supervisors receive an email notification when a direct report employee initiates a request to telework. A Worklist Item will be assigned the supervisor in CAPPs. • Reviews the Proposed Telework Start Date as entered by the employee. The start date must be equal to or greater than the current date and not more than 60 days in the future. The first-level supervisor may revise the date to meet business needs. • Approves or denies the Telework Request Approval <p><i>Note:</i> Supervisors must review telework agreements during the performance evaluation process.</p>
3	<p>The second-level supervisor then:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receives an email notification when a telework request has been approved by the first-level supervisor. • Approves or denies the Telework Request Approval.
4	<p>Third level supervisor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receives an email notification when a telework request has been approved by the second-level supervisor. • Approves or denies the Telework Request Approval.

Restrictions on Teleworking Outside of Texas

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The appropriate Associate Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, or other executive staff member may approve an exception for an employee to telework outside of Texas, but within the United States, for up to 60 calendar days during any Texas state fiscal year. Employees are prohibited from

teleworking outside of Texas for more than 60 calendar days during any Texas state fiscal year, unless they have an approved DFPS Form F-501-5321 Out-of-State Residency, or they are traveling within the United States on DFPS official business.

All employees are strictly prohibited from teleworking outside of the United States or United States territories under any circumstances, unless approved as indicated below.

Employees must seek prior approval from their appropriate Associate Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, or other executive staff member, and from the chief information security officer to temporarily telework from a United States territory or outside of the United States. Additionally, the employee must submit a request through the Service Portal and Resource Center (SPARC) system, and have that request approved by the DFPS Office of Information Security (OIS) no less than 10 business days prior to departure. For all OIS requirements to travel abroad refer to operating policy OP-2116 DFPS Information Security While Traveling Abroad Policy.

According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the following are considered United States territories:

- American Samoa
- Baker Island
- Guam
- Howland Island
- Jarvis Island
- Johnston Atoll
- Kingman Reef
- Midway Islands
- Navassa Island
- Northern Mariana Islands
- Palmyra Atoll
- Puerto Rico

- U.S. Virgin Islands; and Wake Island.

Employees residing outside of the United States, including Mexico, are not authorized to telework from their residence, and all DFPS equipment, including the agency-issued laptop and cell phone, must remain in the United States. Failure to follow the requirement that DFPS equipment remain in the United States may result in administrative or disciplinary action, up to, and including, dismissal.

DFPS is not liable for damages to an employee's real or personal property during the performance of official duties.

Other Requirements Related to Telework

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Telework Site Requirements

Employees must have a telework site that is free from distractions and conducive to confidentiality. This includes not being the primary caretaker for any other individuals in the home while teleworking.

Employees are responsible to ensure and maintain appropriate security controls of all physical and electronic information as well as agency equipment while teleworking.

Required Time in the Office

Employees approved to telework may be required to work in the office or an alternate location when their physical presence is necessary to conduct normal business on days they are scheduled to telework. When an employee's physical presence is necessary, the employee is not entitled to a "replacement" telework day.

Examples of times when an employee may be required to forego a telework day include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Emergency situations
- Special projects
- Times of high work volume or high collaboration
- In-person training
- In-person meetings

- To provide office coverage
- Special event
- Other engagement for which the agency determines in-person interaction is necessary

Meetings

Teleworkers may participate in meetings virtually with supervisory approval. Telework employees are not exempt from attendance at mandatory in-person meetings.

If an employee has a responsibility to participate in an in-person meeting, the employee cannot miss or reschedule the meeting because it falls on the employee's scheduled telework day.

Overtime

Overtime for all employees who are nonexempt (that is, who are covered by the overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act or FLSA) must be both of the following:

- Pre-approved by the supervisor
- Entered in CAPPS by the employee

Travel

An employee does not receive reimbursement for travel between the employee's residence and designated headquarters (office location). Travel reimbursement for training or off-site meetings must be pre-approved by the employee's supervisor. See the *DFPS Travel Claims and Services Handbook*, 4100 Telework Travel Policy.

Events Affecting the Ability to Telework

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Office Closures

If an employee's designated office location closes on the employee's normally scheduled telework day, the teleworker must work, unless the reason for the closure also affects the employee's telework site.

If the employee is unable to work at the telework site, the employee must immediately contact the supervisor for instructions and may be required to work in another DFPS office.

Inclement Weather

During inclement weather, employees follow the policy in Chapter 5: Work Leave.

If an office closes because of inclement weather on an employee's normal telework day, the employee must work, unless the weather prevents the employee from working at the telework site.

If the employee is unable to work at the telework site, the employee must immediately contact the supervisor for instructions.

Power Outages

If there is a power outage at an employee's office on the employee's normal telework day, the employee must work, unless one of the following applies:

- The power outage also affects the telework site.
- The power outage at the office prevents the employee from accessing the DFPS network remotely.

If there is a power outage at the employee's telework site on a normal telework day, the employee's supervisor may require the employee to do one of the following:

- Work from a DFPS office.
- Work from an alternate telework site that is not affected by the outage.
- Use accrued leave for the time that the employee is unable to work.

If the employee is unable to work at the telework site, the employee must immediately contact the supervisor for instructions.

Ending Telework

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Ending Mobile and Full-Time Telework

Mobile and full-time telework is based on the functions of the position and not individual circumstances. The agency head has predetermined which positions are designated as mobile work and full-time telework. Any modifications to these designations must be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis by the Deputy Commissioner, Associate Commissioner, or another designated executive team member, and approved by the Commissioner.

If needed, the supervisor should consult with his or her HR employee relations specialist for information related to performance and conduct related to a mobile or full-time telework employee.

Ending Hybrid and Temporary Exception Based Telework

Voluntarily Returning to a Regular Schedule

To end a telework arrangement, an employee must request to discontinue teleworking by completing a request in CAPPs. The employee must provide at least 30 days' notice to give the supervisor time to make arrangements for the employee's return.

After discontinuing the telework arrangement, the employee may not submit another telework request for three months.

When a telework arrangement is discontinued, DFPS provides the employee with the best office accommodations possible. If space is not available, the employee may be required to share office space or agree to other temporary arrangements.

Involuntarily Suspending or Removing Employees from Telework

If it appears that an employee's performance is declining, or if an unexpected negative impact to the division or unit work emerges, the telework arrangement for a hybrid or temporary exception-based employee may be suspended or revoked at any time and without notice.

To do so, the supervisor should consult their HR employee relations specialist before taking action.

Telework Annual Review

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Supervisors must review and renew telework agreements annually during the performance evaluation process. See the Annual Performance Evaluation for more information and instructions.

Agency Telework Plan

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In accordance with Section 658.012 of the Texas Government Code, a state agency that authorizes telework under Texas Government Code, Section 658.011 and Section 658.012, shall publish the agency's telework plan on the agency's publicly accessible Internet website. In accordance with Texas Government Code, Section 658.012 of the DFPS telework plan has been published to the publicly accessible internet website.