

Telework Tips and Guidance

For PEI Providers

Working remotely carries a unique set of challenges. Here are some suggestions remote workers can follow, plus tips on making the most of your workday at a home office.

There are [plenty of articles](#) and resources online on how to successfully work remotely. These are some of the recurring themes and tips they have in common:

- **Have a dedicated space for your home office:** This helps build some separation between your work and your personal life. It can be as simple as a designated spot at the dining table. Regardless of what you choose, think of a space you can 'walk away from' during your time off.
- **Ensure you have the equipment needed to work effectively and efficiently at home:** Talk to your supervisors about the things you'll need, like an extra monitor or keyboard. Create a checkout sheet or inventory list that shows what you're taking out of the office, and talk about liability in case of loss, theft or damage.
- **Develop a routine and stick to a schedule:** Create some structure for your day. This will look different for each person but having a predictable routine will help you manage your workload, be more productive, and avoid distractions. Have a clear start and end time to your workday.
- **Take care of your technology:** Make sure your laptop/phone is charged, your WiFi connection is strong and your charging cables are all in order. Save documents you are working on early and often, especially if you're working on a shared drive or via VPN.
- **Build time for breaks and social interactions:** Part of working in an office is social interaction with colleagues, and there's no reason you can't do that in a virtual environment. Feel free to schedule a short virtual 'coffee chat' with a colleague to see how they are doing. Try video conference calling with Skype or Teams when you do!

Telework in Action:

- How should your team schedule virtual days? Things don't need to look much different than what they look for your team's 'in the office' work. However, it may be helpful to set up more frequent check-ins at first to ensure everyone has the resources, information, clarity, and support they need.
- Calendars should be visible to the chain of command and kept up-to-date.
- Start of Day/End of Day lists or calls: Lists can be kept on the calendar or sent by email as directed by each manager. The list should include what staff plan to accomplish each day and updated to show what was accomplished. These can also be handled with end of day close-out calls. Check with your manager on their preferred method.
- Remove your office number from your email signature. Only list your cell phone number.

Keeping Up with Tasks:

- Make sure there are clear deadlines. In emails, if you are asking for something, let people know when you need it. If you say “Can you get me XYZ” but then are not clear when you need it, it is confusing to staff on how to prioritize and hard to hold people accountable. If you are asked for something but not given a deadline, it would be helpful to respond asking “when do you need that by?”
- When assignments require multiple people to work on something, managers should try to share the whole scope of the project so you understand how your piece fits into the bigger picture. This should help with keeping things from falling through the cracks.
- It is easier/better to over-invite people to participate in a call/meeting than to have critical people missing.
- Working from home makes it easy to forget that you are supposed to be working 40 hours a week, but that is in fact the expectation. Set up your work schedule in such a way so that you don't accidentally under-work or overwork. It is okay to adjust when your hours are worked throughout the day, but you should be clear with your manager and others when you are working so they know when it is realistic to expect a response from you.

Keeping in Contact:

- **Align with your team on norms and expectations:** How quickly should you respond to email? How often will you check-in with your supervisor? When should you let your team know you are working on a project or a ‘deliverable’ and need a block of time to work undisturbed? How will your supervisor know you are on/off track on the projects you are working on? Discuss these and other relevant questions with your team and align up-front about expectations.
- **Set up weekly check-ins with staff:** this may just be a call to each person or a team-wide conference call.
- **Managers should set “office hours”:** Consider setting a weekly block of time on your calendar for your team to schedule against to give them an additional opportunity to connect with you for direction. If no one needs it, then managers will have time to get work done.
- **Keep scheduled team meetings:** Even if it is short and sweet. Constant contact is crucial to ensure your team stays on track in meeting business plan goals.

Keeping a Positive Attitude:

- **Find ways to help your team stay positive.** Encourage fun! Send an email message to the whole team for motivation weekly or each morning. It could be inspirational, a meme or some humor about working together to get through a hectic week.

- **Be flexible:** Understand that, especially in the current environment, your team has a lot going on. That's not an excuse for not getting things done, but it is a reason to reconsider what productivity really means. Punching a clock for eight hours is out. Regular work hours are also probably out for many people. Instead, trust your teammates and give them the freedom and flexibility to get work done on the schedule that helps them be the most productive. That's good for your team in the long run anyway.
- **Take advantage of your resources for your personal health and well-being:** talking to counselors, finding positive ways to release stress and reaching out to friends and family will go a long way towards helping you manage change in the workplace and at home.
- **If you have a concern or issue, please talk to your manager about it.** All change brings challenges. Be willing to have candid, honest conversations with management. We won't know there is an issue unless you tell us!