

Managing Employees and Faculty While Working Remotely

With K-State's decision to shift to remote teaching, faculty and employees are encouraged to work remotely until further notice. As the supervisor or department head, you have the responsibility to support faculty/employees through the current coronavirus situation. Below are some practices and resources which may be beneficial.

- Telecommuting provides a creative solution to accomplish work. As you and your team adjust to working remotely, please consider the following:
 - What type of work is accomplished through telecommuting? This requires employees to think differently about what work is a priority. Are there other goals that can be accomplished? Are there special projects that are appropriate to begin or resume?
 - For faculty, the biggest change will be in teaching. As department head, please support faculty efforts to not only convert their classes to remote teaching, but also as they continue to assist student learning once remote classes begin.
 - Meetings can be held using Zoom or other video conferencing technologies. Therefore, committees can still function.
What functions are *not* able to be done remotely? What communication needs to occur so that your team and stakeholders are aware of the adjustment of services per your department's continuity of operations plan (COOP).

- When working remotely, please consider the following:
 - A formal telecommuting agreement is *not* required to work from home/alternate location on an infrequent basis or for period of time in this specific situation.
 - For faculty, since remote teaching can take many forms, it is expected that most will operate best from home or an alternate location. Especially if faculty utilize asynchronous technologies, faculty will be working across many hours of the day. It is important for faculty to communicate with the department head regarding how they will be conducting their teaching and research work.
 - Employees and supervisors should be in regular contact during this time about the work, productivity, problems experienced, and other concerns.
 - K-State has strict policies regarding access to sensitive data. No one is allowed to take sensitive data to their home or any other off-campus facility. This includes hard copies, flash drives, and personal laptops or other technologies. Supervisors are encouraged to have conversations with employees regarding what constitutes confidential information.

- Utilize K-State Resources. The [K-State Remote Work Guide](#) and [Resources for Remote Work](#) webpages provide information and support for your team to work remotely. For faculty, the [Keep Teaching](#) website has many resources to assist you in setting up and teaching classes from a distance. Contact the IT Help Desk 785-532-7722 or via email at helpdesk@k-state.edu.

- Employment guidelines regarding exempt and non-exempt employees include:
 - Telecommuting is possible for employees whose job duties are conducive to working from home, regardless of their Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) status as either non-exempt or exempt (from overtime).
 - Non-exempt employees should utilize official timekeeping systems and all hours worked must be recorded and compensated.
 - If a non-exempt employee is working remotely, overtime is not recommended.

Cultivating a Positive Culture in a Remote Environment

As supervisors communicate and support their employees through the current coronavirus situation, it is important to exercise leadership through cultivating a positive culture. Helpful ways to demonstrate this include:

- **Exercising empathy and understanding** that support K-State's [Principles of Community](#).
- **Providing constant and consistent communication** which may look and feel different than the communication everyone is used to in person. It may be helpful to establish frequent, recurring unit meetings (i.e., [Zoom](#)) that can accommodate everyone's schedule.
- **Remaining available** to field and centralize questions and answers from your staff. As a supervisor, your transparency instills trust and helps alleviate worries and concerns.
- **Being clear** and concise with your staff as possible. Ensure you articulate your goals and expectations of this remote-working timeframe.
- **Supporting work life balance** due to school closings and disruptions of care arrangements, employees may have to balance family caregiving tasks with work tasks. Employees and supervisors are encouraged to communicate about their circumstances and to use both common-sense and empathy when it comes to working around them.
- **Reassuring employees** that their health and safety matters. You should encourage and fully support self-care. Supervisors may find it helpful to direct employees to K-State's [employee assistance program](#) (EAP).
- **Work with students.** It is important to remember that for many students, these are the first online/remote classes that they have taken, as well. The change is not simple. Please support them and help build their confidence in the new learning environment.

If you have further questions or need support through supporting your employees, please contact Human Capital Services at hr@ksu.edu.

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