

TELEWORK/REMOTE WORK QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. Who is eligible for this policy?

A. The policy memorandum applies worldwide to all DAF civilian employees and service members, to include Regular, Guard and Reserve Airmen and Guardians, and personnel at Joint service organizations where DAF is the executive agent, unless otherwise noted. Telework or remote work position eligibility is determined by the squadron commander or equivalent position of responsibility with input from the supervisor. Telework or remote work employee/service member eligibility is determined by the supervisor and may not be appropriate in all cases.

Q. When does it go into effect?

A. All guidance is official upon publication of the DAF guidance memorandum.

Q. How do I get approved to telework or remote work?

A. For civilians, commanders, or equivalent, and supervisors first establish whether an employee's position is telework eligible, which is determined by the nature of the duties and responsibilities. Part of making the position eligibility determination is based on what proportion of the duties can be performed through telework. After determining position eligibility, the position must be properly coded in DCPDS for civilians. If the employee is requesting or volunteering for telework, the supervisor must determine whether or not the employee occupying the telework eligible position is eligible to telework. The factors for this determination aren't significantly changing and supervisors should review the policy prior to making this determination. For military personnel, the approval process begins with a conversation between the military member and their commander.

For both civilians and military members, the supervisor and employee must complete the DD Form 2946 *Telework Agreement*, which outlines the terms, conditions, obligations, and responsibilities of the telework arrangement. After completion, including signature by the appropriate approval authority, the telework arrangement can begin.

Q. What would make an employee ineligible to telework?

A. Some employees may not typically be eligible to participate in tele/remote work, even though their positions may be determined tele/remote work eligible. Typical examples include: employees whose performance or conduct warrants closer supervision than telework may provide; employees whose last performance rating of record is below fully successful (or its equivalent); employees whose conduct resulted in disciplinary action within the past 12 months; and employees recently assigned or newly appointed to trainee or entry-level positions. Additionally, good telework and remote work candidates are self-directed and require minimal supervision, are able to work independently and be responsive to the organization, team and customers. They should have the initiative to keep supervisors and co-workers informed on the status of work, and to seek out work assignments when workload permits, as well as be comfortable not having daily face-to-face contact with colleagues.

Q. What kind of work is suitable for telework or remote work?

A. Examples of portable work suitable for tele/remote work include, but are not limited to reading/drafting reports, completing online training, conducting virtual meetings and training sessions, analyzing documents and studies, preparing written letters, memorandums, reports and

other correspondence, providing customer service where the service does not require face-to-face interaction, setting up and participating in conference calls, and similar tasks that do not necessarily require an employee be physically present.

Q. What kind of work is not suitable for telework?

A. Examples not suitable are those who require, on a daily basis, direct handling of secure materials; positions that require, on a daily basis, an on-site activity that cannot be handled remotely, or at an alternative workplace (e.g. hands-on contact with machinery, equipment, or vehicles); and positions that require, on a daily basis, face-to-face personal contacts (e.g. direct patient care, face-to-face customer service).

Q. What is the difference between telework and remote work?

A. Remote work is considered a form of telework, and is covered under the provisions of the Telework Enhancement Act. In general, telework and remote work can be determined by looking for regular, recurring, or short-notice requirements for the employee to report to the regular worksite, as determined by the nature of the duties of the position. If a commander determines there is no regular/recurring, frequent or short-notice requirement for the employee to report to the regular worksite (i.e. the office), then the employee could be a remote worker. However, if there IS a requirement for the employee to be able to report, either on a regular/recurring, frequent, or short-notice basis to the office, then the employee can't live far away, and therefore would likely be limited to normal telework but not remote work.

Q. Why would someone be approved for remote work?

A. Remote work, if approved, can be used for a variety of important business reasons, including, but not limited to: retention of high performing civilian employees who must move for personal reasons and would otherwise leave the DAF; recruitment of civilian employees with specialized skills, who may not want, or be able, to relocate for personal reasons; achieving agency real estate and other business cost reductions; and increased employee/service member work/life balance.

Q. What options are available for civilians who want to be a remote worker and relocate outside of the commuting area?

A. There are two ways for an employee to enter into a remote work arrangement. An employee could request remote telework and utilize the current standard telework agreement (DD Form 2946). Alternatively, the employee could request to remote work and voluntarily enter into a remote work agreement/contract. Utilizing the standard telework agreement only, the remote arrangement could be cancelled or changed at the discretion of the supervisor. Under a remote work agreement/contract, the employee and the agency enter into a legally binding contract which changes the employee's conditions of employment to that of remote work and legally binds both the agency and employee to mutually agree upon remote work arrangement terms.

Q. What if I am not approved to telework when I believe I should be?

A. There is no entitlement to telework participation. Management always has the discretion to approve or disapprove requests to participate in the telework program based on mission requirements, employee performance, conduct concerns or needs of the workgroup. Supervisors should provide the employee the basis for the disapproval, in writing, including information

about when the employee may reapply or actions the employee should take to improve their chances of approval.

Q. If approved, will I get government reimbursement for expenses used during telework/remote work?

A. This ultimately depends on the type of expense and what is agreed to and approved by management. Commanders are authorized, but not required, to use appropriated funds to install necessary infrastructure (e.g. telephone lines, broadband, telecom equipment) to enable an employee to telework, and to fund appropriate monthly expenses (e.g. internet service). Such authorization should normally not be used in situations where the employee already possesses and maintains such items/services or where the tele/remote work arrangement does not significantly benefit the DAF. Commanders should review both the DoDI1035.01 as well as the DAF guidance memorandum to DoDI1035.01_DAFI36-816 for additional details regarding what may be reimbursed and when reimbursement may be appropriate.

Q. Will I get to set my own schedule?

A. No. Management retains the right to establish an employee's work schedule, and the work schedule must be codified on the DD Form 2946 for both civilian and military members. Both managers and employees should remember tele/remote work and alternative work schedules are different work flexibility arrangements; concurrent use IS permissible and is encouraged when compatible with mission requirements and individual performance, and in accordance with DAF policy. In many cases, alternative work schedules can enhance the effectiveness of tele/remote work.

Q. Why is this policy published now? We've been in the pandemic for a year.

A. While the option to telework has been in place for some time, the shift to expand telework and remote work on such a large scale because of the pandemic was new territory. It took some time to gather successes and lessons learned. The DAF will continue to conduct a comprehensive review of the telework and remote work policy and will provide updates when available.

Q. Is the DAF going to save money with this policy?

A. That is one of the goals, but not the only goal. There is potential, if properly utilized, for tele/remote work to save money on real estate and associated footprint costs, utilities, PCS costs, turnover costs, etc.

Q. How are you going to enforce compliance? How do you know people are working when they are supposed to?

A. It starts with establishing effective performance standards that evaluate and measure accomplishments. It will mean using our technology tools to actively engage in meaningful communication.

Q. What about teleworking with kids? Is that allowed?

A. Simply having dependents in the home is not prohibited under current policy. Current policy states employees may not use telework as a substitute for dependent care. However, recognizing many people telework in order to achieve a good work/life balance and manage dependent care responsibilities, the new policy discusses this in some detail. The new policy states tele/remote

work should not be approved solely for the purpose of enabling dependent care; however, tele/remote work can be an important component in establishing a quality work/life balance. Employees are now, and always have been, responsible to account for their time working versus not working. If dependents are expected to be present in the home, the DD Form 2946 should clearly outline expectations regarding work hours, breaks, time and attendance documentation, work schedules, leave requests, etc.

Q. How does this apply to DETO?

A. Domestic Employee Working Overseas arrangements are a special subset of telework, but with a separate approval process. The Air Force has not previously had policy on DETO arrangements, but the new policy does include robust guidance on the subject. Please consult the DAF guidance memorandum for additional guidance.

Q. Are service members eligible for remote work (and to live outside commuting distance to assigned unit)?

A. In general yes, but the rules are different than the rules for civilian employees. For example, under the new policy, remote work for service members only applies to HAF and CONUS MAJCOMs/FIELDCOMs. A new section for service members has been included in the new policy. Again, telework or remote work is not an entitlement and is subject to commander, or equivalent, approval.

Q. Are civilians eligible for remote work (and to live outside of commuting distance to their regular worksite)?

A. By definition, remote workers are in positions that do not require any regular/recurring or short-notice reporting to the regular worksite. So yes, by definition, they can live outside the local commuting area. If the position requirements are such that they could not live far away, they could still perform regular/recurring telework.

Q. Which locality pay and COLA are remote workers authorized?

A. A civilian employee's locality pay is based on their official worksite which is defined as follows:

If a teleworker regularly reports to the regular worksite at least twice per pay period, then the regular worksite is also their official worksite. If they regularly report to the regular worksite less than twice per pay period, then the official worksite is the alternative worksite (tele/remote work site). By definition, a remote worker does not regularly report to the regular worksite, therefore the official worksite would be the remote worksite and the employee will be paid at the locality rate for that location. The supervisor is responsible for submitting a SF-52 *Request for Personnel Action* to change the civilian employee's official worksite location.

Q. How will a military member's BAH be updated to reflect a remote working location?

A. Service member entitlements and allowances will be based on a service member's operating location, not the location of the owning organization. For example, if the service member is assigned to the Headquarters Air Force in Washington D.C., but the operating location is Peterson Air Force Base, CO, allowances will be paid based on Peterson AFB.

Q. What happens if the locality pay is higher at the worker's remote work location than the organization's location? Will the worker be authorized to receive locality pay at the remote work location rate anyway? Who is the approval authority for this option?

A. It is always based on the official worksite, therefore if the cost would be higher at the remote work location, the commander should consider this before approving a remote work arrangement. The locality pay of the official worksite could be more, less or the same as that of the regular worksite. The authority to approve remote work arrangements or any change in official worksite in a tele/remote work arrangement resides at the squadron commander, or equivalent, level due to the organizational budget implications.

Q. Are the rules different for military and civilians?

A. It depends; some rules are the same, some are different. The new policy addresses those differences. Consult the DAF guidance memorandum for details.

Q. Can I be forced to telework, even if my position is not telework eligible?

A. Outside of emergency/extraordinary conditions, civilian employees cannot typically be ordered to participate in a telework program unless the employee's duties are designated as mission-critical or essential, and the employee is required to report to an alternative worksite or the employee's telework agreement addresses this requirement.

Q. How will teleworking affect my performance evaluation?

A. Performance standards for employees who telework should be the same as performance standards for on-site employees. Supervisors shall communicate expectations of telework arrangements, including work assignments, office coverage and staff communication to teleworking and non-teleworking employees in the workgroup. As with on-site personnel, employees shall be held accountable for the results they produce while teleworking.

Q. Do service members need to continue regular acceptable grooming standards even if teleworking or remote working?

A. Yes, service members are expected to maintain grooming standards when in uniform, even if they are teleworking or remote working. In addition, AFI 36-2903 mandates service members must meet personal grooming standards when wearing civilian clothing in an official capacity. This extends to in-person or virtual environments when participating in an official capacity.