COVID-19 Telecommuting Guide
LACOE’s Internal COVID-19 Response and Plans

LACOE has four priorities to get through this crisis, with consistent and deliberate communication as the foundation:

1. Safe and Healthy Employees and Families
2. Adapt to Today’s Work that Matters
3. Meet Expectations
4. Thrive with Telecommuting

Consistent, deliberate communication

We have a powerful mission to accomplish. We cannot accomplish it without you.
LACOE’s COVID-19 priorities keep us safe and mission-focused

Managers should use the following information as a guide for operations during this time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Safe and Healthy Employees and Families</th>
<th>Adapt to Today’s Work that Matters</th>
<th>Meet Expectations</th>
<th>Thrive with Telecommuting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support each other to stay safe and healthy</td>
<td>Adapt to best serve today’s student, family, district, and LACOE needs</td>
<td>Operate in accordance with all directives and applicable collective bargaining agreements</td>
<td>Learn, grow and thrive with telecommuting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take care of yourself, your families and each other emotionally and physically</td>
<td>Provide accurate, timely information to one another, and to districts and partners</td>
<td>Ensure we are consistently clear on roles, priorities and work to be done</td>
<td>Help each other to learn—operate with inclusivity and efficiency</td>
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<td>Model a culture of empathy, responsiveness and service to others</td>
<td>Facilitate collaboration and problem-solving among districts, county agencies, partners and philanthropy</td>
<td>Complete all LACOE functions in a timely manner and to the best of our abilities</td>
<td>Create practices and norms that best support telecommuting</td>
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<td>Provide a safe space and resources for employees during this crisis</td>
<td>Advocate for resources, guidance, and legislation at the local, state and federal level</td>
<td>Maintain focus on our professional standards (e.g., CPSEL, CSTP, etc.)</td>
<td>Utilize virtual resources and tools necessary to conduct work</td>
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Consistent, deliberate communication
**Safe and Healthy Employees and Families**

- Take care of yourself, your families and each other emotionally and physically
- Model a culture of empathy, responsiveness and service to others
- Provide a safe space and resources for employees during this crisis

**Considerations for Managers:**

- Are you supporting and connecting with your team and others in meaningful ways? Are you asking for help?
- Are you utilizing available LACOE resources and benefits?
- Are you highlighting practices and policies that have been most helpful with supporting you and your team during this time? Are you identifying challenges and recommending solutions where practices and policies do not yet exist?

**Best Practices**

- **Schedule brief, virtual coffee chats** and/or begin meetings by checking in with team members
- Use your calendars and your out of office email to indicate availability (e.g., “I’m online but focusing for the next few hours. Text if urgent.” Or, “I’m out of office until tomorrow.”)
- Approach interactions with colleagues knowing that we all handle stress differently and are experiencing different challenges at different times, including essential service workers who may still be reporting to a worksite—**breathe and practice empathy**
- **Review LACOE’s employee benefits** and review the links under the “Resources” column to find additional information that can help you and your family

**Resources**

- LACOE’s 2020 Benefits Booklet
- **Being Productive while Remote**
- **Maintaining Culture in a Remote Environment**
- **Ergonomic Tips for Telecommuting**
- CDC COVID-19 updates
- Coping with stress during COVID-19
- **EASE Resources and Services**
- EASE Daily Affirmations E-mails (check LACOE email inbox daily)
Adapt to Today’s Work that Matters

- Provide accurate, timely information to one another, and to districts and partners
- Facilitate collaboration and problem-solving among districts, county agencies, partners, and philanthropy
- Advocate for resources, guidance, and legislation at the local, state, and federal level

Considerations for Managers:
- Is what you are working on aligned to priorities for your division/department/LACOE?
- How is your work directly impacting students, educators, and/or communities; and/or keeping LACOE’s engines running as smooth as possible (e.g., HRS, Technology Services, Business, Legal, Administrative Support)?
- Is there anything else you could be doing (or stop doing) to better serve LACOE’s COVID-19 response needs?

Best Practices

- Understand your division’s COVID-19 priorities; update work plans and project timelines and seek guidance about what to focus on
- Regularly communicate with your teams and partners to identify collaboration opportunities and avoid duplicating efforts
- When necessary or manageable, seek opportunities to support other divisions severely impacted
- Support, attend, or review notes from level-alike meeting to keep abreast of what is happening in districts
- When identifying problems, also propose solutions to address them—such as highlighting where additional support is needed (e.g., by the Greater LA Foundation, other LACOE divisions, state/federal government)
- Be explicit in communicating what is optional and what is required to create more flexibility to focus on work that matters (e.g., in meeting invites)
- Communicate any flexibility you have to take on additional work
- Plan ahead to avoid frequent interruptions

Resources

- LACOE’s COVID-19 Priorities
- Communicating during Change
- LACOE’s COVID-19 Response website
- LACOE’s 2018–2021 Strategic Plan
Meet Expectations

- Ensure we are consistently clear on roles, priorities and work to be done
- Complete all LACOE expectations, on time and to the best of our abilities
- Maintain focus on our professional standards (e.g., CPSEL, CSTP, etc.)

Consistent, deliberate communication

Considerations for Managers:

- Are you beginning each day and week with a clear picture of what you need to accomplish? Are you looking ahead?
- Are you taking the appropriate steps to move work forward, including any collaboration necessary?
- Are you holding yourself accountable to completing the best work you can, and on time?
- Are you asking for help when you need more support?

Best Practices

- Maintain running team notes, work plans, project updates and other essential documents in a Microsoft Teams folder
- Be present on video and in your team’s instant messaging chat to strengthen collaboration
- Take mini-breaks throughout the day and eat lunch, as needed and in accordance with your department’s guidelines
- Maintain a consistent schedule to avoid burnout
- Make your work plan visible to others you work with (what you are working on and action steps you are taking) on a weekly basis
- Participate in regular team meetings to align on team and individual priorities and needs

Resources

- LACOE Telecommuting Agreement
- Microsoft Teams Training
- Collaborating During Change
- Leading during Change
### Considerations for Managers:

- Have you revisited the Telecommuting Agreement to ensure all expectations for employees are being met?
- [LACOE's Telecommuting Agreement](#)
- Are you feeling connected to your colleagues, even as you are remote?
- Are you revisiting and updating team norms and practices given the shift to telecommuting?
- Are you learning to utilize available technology differently to communicate and collaborate?

### Best Practices

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<th>Resources</th>
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<td>Regularly confer on meeting frequency (weekly at minimum), communication norms (scheduling in advance vs. as needed), and mode (e.g., video conferencing, email, document sharing)—be willing to adjust as the situation evolves. Check-ins should be equitable and based on the need to ensure employee well-being/maintain morale, not necessarily as a disciplinary tool (however, please see slide 12 of this guide for advisement on addressing noncompliance with check-in directives)</td>
<td><a href="#">Ed First’s “Making the Most of Going Virtual”</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Create a shared document space such as Microsoft Teams, SharePoint, OneDrive, or the Google shared drive for resources, news articles and research that may be of value</td>
<td><a href="#">Virtual Meeting Facilitation Guide</a></td>
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<td>Use calendars to communicate (enter “do not schedule” or “check before scheduling” during times you may be unavailable)</td>
<td><a href="#">Team check-in template</a></td>
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<td>Post meeting agendas in advance with clear objectives</td>
<td><a href="#">Inclusive meetings checklist</a></td>
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<td>Celebrate learning and each other—working remotely does not mean working alone and maintaining team connection is key (e.g., encourage collaboration, send regular shout-outs to recognize individual and team accomplishments)</td>
<td><a href="#">10 Ways to Secure Zoom</a></td>
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<td>Operate with efficiency and flexibility, for each other and for yourself</td>
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<td>Make time to connect—offer optional, low-prep meeting opportunities (e.g., optional coffee chats, GIF contests, “picture of your pet” thread)</td>
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<td>Hold periodic check-ins between Division leadership and Directors to discuss the effectiveness of telecommuting and make any modifications as necessary</td>
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Employee Assignments during Temporary Telecommuting Arrangements

Determining Essential Functions of Positions

Managers in a supervisory role are advised to review employee job descriptions (or classification specifications), regular tasks, recent assignments, and speak with employees to gauge workloads and the employees’ abilities to work from home based on this information.

- If some or all of the employee’s duties cannot be performed remotely, the supervisor should determine whether other appropriate assignments may be assigned based on the employee’s job description.

- If other appropriate assignments are minimal or non-existent, the supervisor may consider offering Professional Development opportunities, such as online trainings.
Employee Assignments during Temporary Telecommuting Arrangements

Professional Development Opportunities

**Online Trainings:**  [Training Course Guide]

- LinkedIn Learning (including Lynda.com), Microsoft Trainings, Target Solutions and LACOE produced online trainings may be viable options for Professional Development opportunities. However, Supervisors are advised to adhere to the following guidelines prior to assigning these trainings:
  - Personally vet each training to ensure that trainings are relevant and job-related.
  - Clearly articulate the connection between the training and the employee’s job specifications.
  - Show flexibility on completion timelines.
  - Schedule assignments in a reasonable, logical, and structured sequence.

- Additionally, the supervisor may assign the employee the task of developing a desk manual for future reference and/or succession workforce planning.

- Managers and staff are also encouraged to share ideas on how to improve efficiency and effectiveness, participate in other Professional Development activities which improve culture and attitude, including TED talks on the subject or starting a leadership book club with staff.

- Regardless of the type of Professional Development activities utilized, managers assigning the activities should follow up with employees at the conclusion of the activity and reiterate its significance, including what was learned, and how this knowledge can be applied in a work setting.
Establishing Clear Expectations for Employees

- Regardless of whether employees are continuing ongoing projects or are navigating new assignments, supervisors are advised to establish clear written expectations for employees during the period of telecommuting. Expectations should be equitable across job classifications. Examples of expectations include:
  - Attending scheduled check-in meetings.
  - Responding to calls and e-mails in a timely manner (e.g., either providing the appropriate response to the e-mail or an acknowledgment of receipt of the e-mail should the e-mail require additional time to respond within 24 hours).
  - Meeting expected deadlines and progress reports (if applicable) for employee assignments.
  - Any modified practices for submission or review of assignments/work product based on the transition to telecommuting.
FAQ

Reasonable accommodations during temporary telecommuting arrangements

How are reasonable accommodations addressed while employees are telecommuting?

LACOE remains obligated to participate in the interactive process when employees submit a medical certification with restrictions or require workplace accommodations. Supervisors who receive medical certification indicating that an employee has restrictions should contact Human Resource Services (HRS) for assistance.

What do I do if an employee who is currently placed off of work would like to telecommute?

- Employees who are currently placed off work due to their inability to perform essential functions of their position but are requesting to return earlier to telecommute, must submit a revised medical certification (doctor’s note) prior to beginning any telecommuting arrangement. The supervisors should then contact Human Resource Services (HRS) to initiate the interactive process and determine whether telecommuting is a viable option.

- If telecommuting is a viable option, the supervisor, in consultation with HRS, should explain to the employee that telecommuting is a temporary accommodation based on the extraordinary circumstances (e.g., COVID-19).

- Supervisors may then discuss with HRS whether telecommuting would be feasible when all staff return to the office, or whether the parties must re-engage in the interactive process at that time.
FAQ

Leaves, progressive discipline, and workers’ compensation implications during temporary telecommuting arrangements

**Do employees still have access to accrued leaves? If so, which leaves are available?**

- Supervisors should be advised that employees maintain/have access to all available accrued leaves.
- Supervisors should remain up to date on any new leaves offered to employees during extraordinary circumstances, such as COVID-19 (e.g., HR 6201).

**What should supervisors know about progressive discipline while telecommuting?**

- While progressive discipline should not be the primary focus during periods of extraordinary circumstances, supervisors should be aware that the same principles for progressive discipline remain in full force and effect. As a result, supervisors should be reminded that establishing clear expectations (including those for scheduled check-ins) and documenting incidents are critical factors should formal discipline become appropriate.
- Supervisors should consult with HRS as needed for any progressive discipline related issues, including modifications to suspension or termination processes during extraordinary circumstances, such as COVID-19.

**What are the workers’ compensation implications while employees are telecommuting?**

- Managers should note that workers’ compensation law and rules may apply if employees incur a work-related injury arising out of and in the course of employment while telecommuting.
- Managers are encouraged to remind employees to follow all LACOE rules, regulations and policies, and notify their supervisors of any work-related injury or illness immediately, and to complete and submit all necessary and/or management requested documents regarding the injury.
Thank you!

If you have questions about this guide, please contact communications@laco.e.edu.