



Program

Ad hoc Telecommuting Program Guidelines- DRAFT

June 2017

Introduction

The Law Society of British Columbia recognizes that allowing certain flexibility in the way that employees carry out their work can have benefits for both employees and the organization.

Ad hoc telecommuting, whereby employees perform some of their work at home or at another location outside of the office on an ad hoc basis, is an example of providing employees some flexibility.

The Law Society also recognizes that to work effectively, ad hoc telecommuting must be fair to both telecommuting employees and others in the work group or department and be consistent with the needs and the best interests of the Law Society.

The following outlines a framework for ad hoc telecommuting for employees at the Law Society, including definitions, reasons for ad hoc telecommuting, eligibility requirements and the responsibilities of employees and managers.

These guidelines may be updated from time to time to reflect updates in technology and other matters that may affect Law Society employees' ability to telecommute.

Definitions

The following terms are defined to ensure a common understanding of what ad hoc telecommuting means at the Law Society.

Ad hoc telecommuting – Working outside the office on an infrequent and irregular basis. In practice, this would in most cases mean telecommuting less than one day per month, and only one day at a time; however, depending on the circumstances, it may also include a more extended time period on a “one off” or ad hoc basis.

Ad hoc telecommuting is commonly done for convenience (e.g. so that the employee can attend to personal matters without taking a whole day off work) or for the purpose of accomplishing a specific task (e.g. so that the employee can focus on completing a report without interruption).

Examples:

- a) An employee has a report to complete and believes that the best way to get it done is to have a day at home without any interruptions. The employee’s manager agrees and allows the employee to work from home.
- b) An employee has a medical appointment that cannot be scheduled outside of work hours. The medical appointment is close to the employee’s home and is in the middle of the work day. The employee requests to work from home in the morning and then to come into the office following the appointment. The manager approves the request. The employee codes any hours not worked to sick time, personal day or vacation.
- c) The employee’s regular commute to the office is temporarily affected due to such factors as road conditions (e.g. icy roads or snow), a major traffic accident, or problems with public transit. Depending on the specific situation, the employee requests to work from home either for the entire day or until such time the issues are resolved. The manager approves the request. The employee codes all hours worked, either at home or in the office.
- d) An employee has a broken ankle and cannot make it into the office without great inconvenience. The employee tells their manager that they can complete at least some of their work from home while their ankle heals. The employees completes at least some work from home over the course of the week; hours not worked are coded to sick time.

Work Hours – The employee’s regular work schedule. An example would be Monday – Friday, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm.

Remote work location – A location where a telecommuter completes work, other than the office. Usually, this is the telecommuter’s home.

Eligibility

To be considered for ad hoc telecommuting, an employee must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- permanent employment status;
- probationary period completed;
- has a current acceptable performance appraisal;
- has access to suitable technology for telecommuting;
- is competent with relevant technology; and,
- is in a role that is eligible/suitable for telecommuting (see below).

| Job Category | Eligibility/Suitability | Manager approval required |
|--------------|--|--|
| Managers | Manager roles are generally suitable for ad hoc telecommuting. | Managers may telecommute at their discretion, provided |

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| | | that it does not have a negative impact on their team or their work overall. |
| Professionals | Professional roles are generally suitable for ad hoc telecommuting. | Professional employees may telecommute with their manager's approval. |
| Technical Professionals | Some technical professional roles may be suitable for ad hoc telecommuting. | Technical professional employees may telecommute with their manager's approval. |
| Administrative Staff | A limited number of administrative roles may be suitable for ad hoc telecommuting. | Administrative employees may telecommute with their manager's approval. |

The suitability of roles for telecommuting may change over time, depending on such things as changes in available technology and job functions.

Manager Approval Process

Employees who require managerial approval for telecommuting (as described above) must complete and submit a **Telecommuting Request Form** to their manager prior to the first time they telecommute. The manager will review and either approve or deny the request. The form will then be sent to Human Resources for tracking and filing.

Once an employee has an approved Telecommuting Request Form on file, employees must request approval from their manager for each incidence of telecommuting. This may be done by email, phone or in person. When requesting approval to telecommute, the employee must state the reason and duration of telecommuting.

Use of Equipment/Office Supplies

Equipment

All employees must use Law Society computers and/or mobile devices for telecommuting.

This section may change subject to updates to the Information Management Policy.

Office Supplies

Telecommuting employees are to use Law Society office supplies on an as-needed basis, much the same as when working at the office. Since telecommuting will mostly involve work on the computer, the requirement for office supplies is expected to be minimal. Out-of-pocket expenses for other supplies will not be reimbursed unless by prior approval of the employee's manager.

Internet, phone and data charges

Employees will be responsible for paying their home internet, phone and other similar bills.

Health & Safety and Worker's Compensation

The employee is responsible for choosing a workspace within their home (or other remote work location) that is private and free from hazards and other dangers to the employee and equipment.

During work hours and while performing work functions in the designated work area of the home, telecommuters are covered by worker's compensation.

Dependent Care

Telecommuting is not a substitute for dependent care. Telecommuters will not be available during their work hours to provide dependent care.

Communication and Meetings

Employees must be available by phone and email during their work hours. In-person meetings must take place at the Law Society of BC office or other meeting site approved by the Law Society of BC. Employees must be available for staff meetings and other meetings deemed necessary by their manager.

Privacy Considerations

The Office of the Information & Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia¹ has produced a document called *Protecting Personal Information Away from the Office*.

The document includes the following guidance that has been adapted for Law Society employees who telecommute on an ad hoc basis:

- Only remove personal information from the office if it is necessary to carry out your job duties.
- Take the least amount of personal information you need and leave the rest behind.
- If possible, take copies and leave the originals in the office.
- Check to see if you need management approval before removing records from the office.

¹ <https://www.oipc.bc.ca/tools-guidance/guidance-documents/>

- Encrypt any electronic device that stores personal information. This includes but is not limited to home computers, USB flash sticks, laptops and mobile phones.
- Avoid viewing personal information collected and used for work in public. If you must, take precautions to make sure no one else can view the personal information.
- Consider installing a privacy screen filter on your laptop screen or monitor when working outside of the office.
- Upon returning to the office, return records to their original storage place as soon as possible or destroy the copies securely.
- Log off or shut down your laptop or home computer when you are not using it.
- Set the automatic logoff to run after a short period of idleness.
- Do not share a laptop used for working with personal information with other individuals, including family members and friends.
- When records aren't being used, store in a locked filing cabinet or desk drawer that you have sole access to.
- Avoid sending personal information by email or fax from public locations.

Employee Responsibilities

Employees who telecommute have the following responsibilities:

- Choosing and maintaining a safe and private workspace for telecommuting, free of hazards and distractions;
- Communicating with their manager about the reason for telecommuting, as well as the expected duration;
- Communicating with their manager, colleagues and others (if applicable) when they will be telecommuting, and how to contact them (this may include such things updating their out-of-office messages for email and voice mail, providing alternate contact information, etc.);
- Adhering as much as possible to their regular work hours;
- Coding their time worked (and time not worked) accurately;
- Attending work meetings in person whenever possible;

- Paying for home internet and phone charges (unless otherwise approved);
- Complying with all Law Society policies, practices and instructions.

Manager Responsibilities

Managers of employees who telecommute have the following responsibilities:

- Approving or denying employee requests for ad hoc telecommuting in a fair and equitable manner;
- Checking in on employees who are telecommuting;
- Managing the performance of employees while they are in the office and telecommuting;
- Addressing concerns regarding telecommuting arrangements and adjusting when necessary;
- Ending the ad hoc telecommuting arrangement with the employee if it is deemed to be unsuitable, despite efforts to make it work.