

Working Remotely during a Pandemic

Creating a dynamic and agile workplace

Volume 1 – September 2020

Introduction

At Holland Bloorview, our Thrive Together people strategy recognizes that our human resources (people and teams) have the greatest potential to impact the achievement of our goals and therefore, strives to ensure the right people, systems, environment, and structures are in place to achieve our strategic objectives. Divided into three priority areas (*health and wellness, growth and development, and attraction and retention*), working remotely has the potential to positively impact each area.

Within the *growth and development* priority, the strategy aims to optimize workspaces to increase client and collaborative space, create more shared and bookable space, and improve staff mobility through greater use of technology. The onset of the pandemic required staff mobility in ways we were not previously accustomed to, and as we continue to evolve and learn our goal is being realized.

This guide has been developed for both employees and leaders and contains practical information in relation to working remotely at this time, during a pandemic. It is intended to support the creation of a dynamic and agile work place in a consistent and transparent manner across all areas of the organization. **This document, and the contents therein are as of September 2020 and will continue to evolve over time.**

It has become clear that COVID-19 will remain a presence in our society for the foreseeable future. It continues to impact each of us, personally and professionally. We have and will always be fully committed to ensuring a safe place of work for our employees and our clients and families

Working Remotely: Benefits and Challenges

With the onset of the pandemic came the requirement for much of the workforce to work remotely. Remote access to servers and systems, mobile platforms and videoconferencing have made remote work possible. Much knowledge about working remotely has been gained since the onset of COVID-19 and working remotely presents both benefits and challenges, some of which are highlighted below:

Benefits

- Supports employees in balancing work and personal priorities
- Eliminates workplace distractions when focused work is required
- Enhances employee engagement (supported by research)
- Supports organizational strategy to reduce parking utilization during peak hours
- Optimize [work space utilization](#) within Holland Bloorview
- Minimizes impact to screening requirements and resources
- Enhances our recruitment and retention abilities
- Supports our ability to maintain physical distancing requirements during the pandemic
- May enhance (for some) the client and family experience (e.g. eliminates travel, waiting, parking costs, lost work hours, physical distancing requirements...)

Challenges

- Creates challenges for some in delineation between work and home
- Requires new or different approaches to performance management
- Generates questions for some around fairness when some employees can work remotely while others cannot.
- Cost implications associated with working remotely
- Requires attention to new and different health and safety requirements for employees working remotely
- Creates concerns for some around limited social interaction and related isolation

Guiding Principles

1. Employees working remotely are expected to meet the same performance standards as they did previously, and leaders will be expected to use the same measurement criteria to review performance.
2. Working remotely must not negatively impact an employee's ability to be present at onsite meetings, events, client meetings/clinical care, symposiums, presentations, or, when in-person attendance is required based on their role/position.
3. Working remotely is subject to ongoing review and may be terminated or altered at any time at the leader or employee's discretion, given cause, or when business needs dictate. .
4. During Phases I and II, or until further notified, working remotely may or may not be approved on a full-time basis (i.e. 100% of an employee's guaranteed FTE) at the discretion of the employee's manager.
5. Working remotely may result in the temporary re-assignment or sharing of workspaces and equipment (desktop computer, telephone...) at Holland Bloorview. Appropriate cleaning protocols to occur between use.

6. The process for recording work hours/timesheets will remain unchanged except that the earning code REGTELC(080) is to be used for all regular hours worked remotely.

Assumptions

- As per the hospital's pandemic recovery planning process and **at management's discretion**¹ based on operational requirements, until further notice, and in alignment with the guiding principles outlined above, working from home should be maximized
- **At management's discretion**¹ based on operational requirements all employees whose job duties, in whole or in part, can be carried out effectively by working remotely, including those requiring special accommodations, will continue to work remotely.
- Collaboratively, managers and employees will determine reasonable and necessary home workspace equipment (e.g. equipment already purchased for hospital use, monitors, footrests) and supplies as part of the process to support employees to be effective in working remotely including stable and reliable internet services. Higher-speed internet service, computer monitors, ergonomic desks and chairs, printers...are not considered reasonable equipment. See [Working from home ergonomics guide](#).
- Equipment purchased for use on Holland Bloorview property (i.e. office chairs, desks, printers...) shall not be permitted for home use due to best practices in infection prevention. Office supplies (i.e. pens, paper) required to perform the duties of a position when working remotely will be provided.
- As often as possible, documents should be printed using HB printers, and printed onsite.
- Employees may be entitled to a T2200 Declaration of Conditions of Employment form if they work remotely greater than 50% of their guaranteed hours as outlined in their employment agreement.
 - A T2200, Declaration of Conditions of Employment form, is a Canada Revenue Agency form will be provided by the Hospital.
 - T2200's are used by employees who work from home and/or results in them incurring expenses that are not covered by the Hospital. The employee may be able to claim these expenses when they file their personal tax return.

¹Management discretion in decision making

- Managers will ensure the working remotely situation supports the program/service/department's goals, including productivity and providing care to our clients.
- In alignment with the guiding principles, and in collaboration with Directors/Sr. Directors/VP's, managers will determine the best strategy for working remotely for their program/service/department
- Fair does not mean equal – working remotely is not a 'one size' fits all strategy, and decisions should be made based on operational requirements.

Frequently asked questions and responses:

1. **Can I purchase items such as mouse pads, footrests for my home office and charge back to Holland Bloorview?**

No, however, if operationally feasible and with manager approval, some items may be taken off-site for use in home offices (monitors, mouse pads, foot rests). However, working remotely may result in assigned workspaces and equipment (desktop computer, telephone...) at Holland Bloorview being eligible for reassignment or sharing, therefore, the removal of equipment/items from the workplace should not inhibit the ability of other employees who are working onsite and who may be using a shared workspace to successfully perform the duties of his/her position. Tracking of items for use when working remotely will be the responsibility of the department.

2. **What is the process if a Holland Bloorview issued IMT device (e.g. laptop/PC, phone) is broken and needs to be replaced?**

If IMT equipment is broken or needs to be replaced, the employee must discuss with his/her leader and may include contacting the Help Desk for information and direction. Employees are required to bring computer equipment requiring repair onsite for assessment by an IMT representative.

3. **Will Holland Bloorview reimburse me for cell phone and internet overage charges resulting from work related responsibilities incurred while working from home?**

Where possible and where the privacy of employees can be maintained (e.g. phone number blocking option), landlines should be used to prevent overage charges. However, during this time of pandemic, when employees have been exclusively working remotely, Holland Bloorview will reimburse for overages resulting from work related calls and internet fees. Employees will be required to provide an expense report including the rationale for reimbursement of expenses to their leader for approval.

- a. During the pandemic, such expenses may be charged to the pandemic contingency account

4. **Will my parking fees be reduced if I continue to work remotely?**

No, there is no reduced parking fee for employees who are working remotely, however employees who currently have parking at the main site have the option to transfer to the Donwood site or may cancel their parking privileges. Please note that employees who choose to move or cancel their parking privileges at the main site will not be given priority on the main site waiting list should their working remotely situation change.

5. **Can a manager change an employee's work schedule once it has been approved?**

Yes, a manager may require an employee to temporarily or permanently change their working remotely arrangement when new business conditions arise. Continued arrangements for working remotely is at the manager's discretion. As much as possible, managers will provide sufficient notice of a change in work arrangement.

Tools and Resources:

- Working remotely may be a new way of working for you and your team members. Regular check-ins are a good idea to see how things are working. Recommended Zoom meetings for gatherings of 3 or more persons.
- Some questions that may guide you in the discussion may include:
 - How has this change impacted your work?
 - Can you give me some examples of where/when working remotely has been particularly beneficial to your work?
 - What has been most beneficial to you? To others?
 - What has happened that you weren't expecting?
 - What has been challenging?
 - Tell me about any frustrations you have been experiencing while working remotely?
 - What would you say is a key insight for you so far?
 - Is there anything we might want to do differently to support you in working remotely?

Defining Deliverables

- Defining deliverables for employees working remotely is a great opportunity to set specific goals, objectives, deliverables, tasks, timeframes, success measures AND discuss any support and/or direction the employee needs from you as their manager.

Key Project/Initiative/	Major Deliverables	Significant Milestones	Timeframe	Measure of Success	Status

One-on-One updates

- One-on-one updates should be held regularly. These updates are an opportunity for you and your employees to update on the status of key deliverables/clinical care provided, challenges faced, resources needed and any modifications to deliverables and timeframes. This is also an opportunity to connect with your employees about how they're feeling about the work, their frustration, improvement opportunities and to celebrate accomplishments.
- Be sure to set aside uninterrupted time and choose a location where you won't be interrupted by the phone or "drop-ins".
- You may want to use the template below as a basis for the discussion.

Working remotely One on One Update Meetings	
Employee Name:	Date:
Accomplishments:	Challenges
Items of Concern:	Commitments/Output for the next month: