

AP 799 WORKING FROM HOME DURING A PANDEMIC

Background

In response to the provincial government calling a state of emergency and mandating working from home the Division seeks to set clear expectations to enable affected employees of the Division to continue to perform their work to the best of their ability, to protect the confidentiality of information within the Division, and to care holistically for all staff and students as much as possible for a temporary finite period of time.

This administrative procedure will be in effect beginning March 30, 2020 and will continue in effect until the state of emergency is lifted or until schools open for regular class instruction again. In the event of a continuation of the state of emergency past June 30, 2020, or a new state of emergency, this administrative procedure will be revisited and revised as necessary. This administrative procedure does not set a precedent for any job position or any time period outside of a state of emergency.

Procedures

Temporary

1. Working from home will be permitted, and may be mandated in some situations, for a temporary period only. This temporary period is limited to the time period described above. Employees who work year-round will be expected to resume their normal duties in the building to which they are assigned as soon as the state of emergency is lifted without regard to whether regular in-school classes have resumed.
2. Essential service employees will continue to work in the location deemed necessary and at the hours deemed necessary by the Director.

Pay and Benefits

3. The pay and benefits of all employees faithfully working from home will not change due to working from home.
4. The amount of time spent working and the amount of work completed will not change as a result of working from home.

Eligibility for Leaves

5. The rules and requirements for leaves outlined in agreements and contracts will continue to apply, with the following exceptions:
 - a. In an effort to not overload the health care system, sick leaves will no longer require a doctor's note or Form 7-1 while working from home during a pandemic. Employees working from home will not be expected to work during a sick day which is entered into Aesop.
 - b. Limits to the number of days of unpaid leave are temporarily revoked.
 - c. Rules with regard to not taking more than six consecutive days of leave are also temporarily revoked.

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6. Personal leave, personal leave at half pay, and special leave balances will not be carried forward into the next school year even if classes do not begin again until the fall. Employees are encouraged to use these days before June 30.
7. Rules regarding payout and the limitation of carryover of EDO's will remain as in a regular school year.

Hours of Work

8. Every employee working from home will be expected to be available during their regular working hours. It is understood that in some circumstances the employee may be temporarily drawn away from their work due to childcare concerns etc., but the expectation of the Division is that they will still be available during working hours should a parent, supervisor or fellow employee need their help and that they will make up any time lost due to childcare etc. on the same day whenever possible.
9. Each employee working from home is expected to check their email once a day at the very least. Principals/supervisors may stipulate checking email on a more frequent basis depending on the work assigned. Recognizing that communication is doubly important when face-to-face meetings are not possible, employees are expected to respond to any emails, voice messages or phone calls in a timely manner.

Productivity

10. Principals, superintendents, consultants and supervisors will work collaboratively to ensure work is defined and available. Methods of measuring productivity will be set in place and principals/supervisors will be responsible to ensure all employees are given work equitably and fairly.
11. Principals will be responsible for regularly checking in with their staff to ensure their work is being completed, there are no questions which have arisen, and any health issues have been addressed. Staff meetings may be held using technology during working hours.
12. Employees who have completed the work they have been assigned are responsible for checking with their principal or supervisor to obtain more work.
13. When work is not available employees are strongly encouraged to use vacation time, banked time, EDO's or personal days. All such leaves must be entered into Aesop.

Work space

14. The Division has no control over the choice of workspace in the employee's home however it is the expectation of the Division that the employee shall maintain this workspace in a safe condition, free from hazards and other dangers to the employee and/or the Division's equipment. Any Division materials taken home should be kept in the designated workspace of the employee's home and not made accessible to others. If an employee is working from home during regular working hours and has ensured they have created and are working in a safe designated workspace in their home the employee may be covered by Workers Compensation. The eligibility of Workers Compensation claims is decided on a case-by-case basis.
15. The Division is not liable for loss, destruction, or injury that may occur in or to the employee's home. This includes family members, visitors, or others that may become injured within or around the employee's home.

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16. It will be the employee's responsibility to determine any income tax implications of maintaining a designated workspace in their home. The Division will not provide tax guidance nor will the Division assume any additional tax liabilities. Employees are encouraged to consult with a qualified tax professional to discuss income tax implications if this is a concern.

Equipment and Supplies

17. The Division will supply all tools and equipment deemed necessary by the principal or supervisor in order for the employee to complete their assigned job. The use of equipment, software, data supplies and furniture when provided by the Division for use in the designated workspace at the employee's home is limited to authorized persons and for purposes relating to Division business.
18. The Division will provide supplies which are normally obtained from the school in order for the employee to complete their assigned work but will not be responsible for delivering these to the employee's home. Arrangements should be made with the principal or supervisor for picking these up.
19. The Division is not liable for payment of internet services at the employee's home. If an employee does not have access to the internet and the work they have been given requires access to the internet, the employee should check with their principal/supervisor so that a solution can be found.
20. The Division will continue to repair faulty equipment belonging to the Division and will continue to provide IT service for Division purposes. However, the Division will not send IT to an employee's home for repairs or service. Should the employee require the services of IT the computer or printer etc. must be brought to a Division facility to be looked at if a remote solution cannot be found.

Security and Confidentiality

21. Employees working from home should ensure any sensitive information they deal with is not accessible to others. Confidentiality requirements are heightened when working from home due to the proximity of family and friends. Every precaution should be taken to guard confidentiality. Please see the Division's administrative procedures regarding Privacy and Data on our website.
22. It is the expectation of the Division that Division business is not carried out in an environment where sensitive information can be heard or seen by unauthorized individuals. Secure networks should be used.

Wellness

23. Employees working from home are encouraged to seek help in dealing with possible anxiety and stress related to changes in working conditions. Principals, supervisors, superintendents and human resources are all available to help. Teaching staff can also obtain counselling services by phoning 1-800-665-5594 or 1-306-373-8388. Support staff can obtain counselling services by phoning Resilience Services at 1-866-644-0326 and stating the employee is with the Saskatchewan School Boards Association. It is the desire of the Division for all our employees to continue to feel cared for even when they are not physically present in Division buildings.