



Telecommuting Policy

1. Background

Under the [Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984](#), and the [Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996](#), WA Country Health Service (WACHS) has a duty of care to provide a safe working environment. WACHS is committed to ensuring the safety of employees and others in the workplace.

2. Policy Statement

WA Country Health Service (WACHS) is committed to creating a positive work environment that assists employees to balance their work and non-work commitments.

WACHS recognises telecommuting can assist employees by reducing transport costs and commuting time and increase job satisfaction and productivity. WACHS may benefit by attracting high calibre employees who otherwise may not be available, reducing operational costs and enhancing organisational flexibility.

Either an employee or manager can suggest telecommuting as a possible work arrangement.

Permanent, fixed term and employees on secondment to WACHS may apply for a telecommuting arrangement. Applications must consider a number of factors, including organisational flexibility and the principles of procedural fairness.

WACHS's responsibility for providing a quality health service to the community is paramount, and as such, service delivery needs must take priority when considering a request to telecommute and during the term of an approved telecommuting arrangement.

2.1 Telecommuting Arrangements

Employees and managers are encouraged to discuss a proposed telecommuting arrangement before a telecommuting arrangement request is submitted.

Telecommuting arrangements require careful consideration of:

- the operational requirements of the work unit
- the type of work an employee does
- the employee's circumstances
- the impact on the workplace (including client service/patient care)
- applicable technical and Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) requirements.

Typically, appropriate tasks for telecommuting are those that can be completed without face-to-face contact and undertaken with minimal supervision.

All employee requests for a telecommuting arrangement must be made in writing to their manager.

2.2 Assessing a Telecommuting Arrangement

A request for a telecommuting arrangement is to be assessed by the manager, in consultation with the employee. If an employee changes position, the telecommuting arrangement will need to be renegotiated with the new manager. Managers should contact local Human Resources if they require advice regarding a request for a telecommuting arrangement.

A flexible approach should be adopted regarding the negotiation of a request for a telecommuting arrangement to assist both parties to reach an agreed outcome.

The principles of procedural fairness shall apply when making decisions about requests for telecommuting arrangements.

Decisions must:

- ensure service delivery needs take priority when considering telecommuting arrangements
- be made on a case by case basis, following an assessment of the merits of the arrangement
- take into account organisational (e.g. type of role, tasks, financial and work unit) and employee needs
- be impartial, transparent and capable of review
- comply with the employee's industrial instrument
- comply with applicable OSH requirements ensuring the employee is able to safely carry out their work in their home
- comply with applicable technical and software requirements.

Employees who request telecommuting arrangements often do so due to personal circumstances. Employees are required to provide sufficient information to allow a decision to be made for a telecommuting arrangement. Appropriate confidentiality is to be maintained for discussions between the manager and employee regarding a telecommuting arrangement.

In addition, when making a decision, managers should be aware that:

- Telecommuting does not provide for the employee's primary place of work to be moved from the employee's headquarters/work base to the employee's home.
- Telecommuting is not an entitlement, or an obligation.
- WA Health does not permit employees to telecommute for their full contracted hours except in exceptional circumstances. For example, allowing an employee to telecommute for an agreed period to aid recovery from illness/injury. Employees and managers should contact Human Resources for advice and assistance.
- Telecommuting arrangements are not to be used as an alternative to dependent care.

- Generally, the employee is responsible for the establishment, equipment and on-costs associated with the telecommuting arrangement, including internet access.

Prior to any telecommuting arrangement being supported or refused, managers must consult with the delegated authority.

Managers must give a formal written response to a request in a timely manner, stating whether the request has been granted or denied. If a request is refused, the reason/s for this decision must be documented and explained to the employee.

2.3 Documenting a Telecommuting Arrangement

An approved telecommuting arrangement must be documented in the form of a [Telecommuting Agreement](#) between the manager and the employee.

Telecommuting arrangement agreements are required to detail:

- the agreed working terms, start and finish date, communication requirements and an outline of the role and responsibilities of the employee under the telecommuting arrangement with clearly defined objectives and performance indicators
- confirmation that service delivery needs must take precedence during the term of the telecommuting agreement
- agreed review date (arrangements must be reviewed every six months or earlier if the circumstances change for either the employee or employer)
- agreed written notice period for either the employee or employer to withdraw from the telecommuting arrangement
- OSH requirements relevant to telecommuting have been met, including the ability to safely respond to emergencies, a means of communication available and arrangements for regular contact to be made, having access to adequate first aid facilities and having undertaken a [Telecommuting OSH Assessment](#).

The agreement should be signed and dated by both the delegated officer and employee and a copy retained by each party. The manager should store the original agreement on the employee's personal file.

2.4 Emergency Management

In the event of an emergency situation (i.e. pandemics, natural disasters) the minimum requirement to ensure a safe environment is the completion of the OSH Assessment for Telecommuting and documented agreement to the arrangement with the employee and manager.

3. Definitions

Telecommuting	<p>A formal work arrangement in which an employee works from home for a period agreed with the employer. Typically, appropriate tasks for telecommuting are those that can be completed without face-to-face contact and undertaken with minimal supervision.</p> <p>Telecommuting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • does not provide for the employee’s primary place of work to be their home, other than in exceptional circumstances; and • is not to be used as an alternative to dependent care. • Ad hoc or occasional requests to work from home do not constitute a formal telecommuting arrangement.
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4. Roles and Responsibilities

Managers are responsible for:

- working collaboratively with the employee where a telecommuting arrangement request is received
- assessing individual requests on their merits including implications for other employees and service delivery needs
- considering telecommuting arrangements as a possible work arrangement for employees whilst meeting operational requirements.
- complying with the requirements of the appropriate industrial instrument
- ensuring telecommuting employees comply with the applicable OSH and technology and software requirements
- ensuring that approved telecommuting arrangements do not impinge on organisational outcomes, employee or patient safety
- ensuring telecommuting employees are able to participate in career development opportunities as appropriate
- initiating six monthly telecommuting arrangement agreement reviews with the employee.

Employees are responsible for:

- working collaboratively with the manager when requesting a telecommuting arrangement and considering alternatives that may be offered
- maintaining a safe working environment and contacting the OSH department for advice as necessary
- recognising service delivery needs are the priority during the life of an approved telecommuting arrangement
- carrying out the agreed duties and communication protocols as specified in the telecommuting arrangement agreement
- attending workplace meetings where reasonable notice is provided
- complying with applicable OSH and technology and software requirements

- participating in telecommuting arrangement agreement reviews with their manager every six months.

5. Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy may constitute a breach of the WA Health Code of Conduct (Code). The Code is part of the [Integrity Policy Framework](#) issued pursuant to section 26 of the [Health Services Act 2016](#) (WA) and is binding on all WACHS staff which for this purpose includes trainees, students, volunteers, researchers, contractors for service (including all visiting health professionals and agency staff) and persons delivering training or education within WACHS.

WACHS staff are reminded that compliance with all policies is mandatory.

6. Records Management

All WACHS corporate records must be stored in the approved Electronic Documents and Records Management System.

[Records Management Policy](#)

7. Evaluation

Evaluation and review of this policy is to be carried out by the People and Culture Department every two years (or earlier if required).

8. Standards

[National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards](#)

9. Legislation

[Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984](#) (WA)
[Occupational Safety and Health Regulation 1996](#) (WA)

10. References

Nil.

11. Related Forms

[Telecommuting - COVID-19 Requests Guideline](#)
[Telecommuting - Agreement Template](#)
[Telecommuting - OSH Assessment](#)
[Telecommuting - COVID-19 Agreement Template](#)
[Telecommuting - COVID-19 Staff High Risk Category Assessment Form](#)

12. Related Policy Documents

WACHS [Flexible Working Arrangements Policy](#)

13. Related WA Health System Policies

Nil

14. Policy Framework

[WA Health Employment Policy Framework](#)

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability

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