University of Maine System Telecommuting Guidance
Intended for use during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Telecommuting Guidelines
Please see the following details to assist managers/supervisors and employees with the implementation of telecommuting options as appropriate to University of Maine System operations and individual needs and circumstances:

Eligibility
Telecommuting is available to regular employees seeking to balance professional obligations with their own personal circumstances. Under certain circumstances, working remotely may be required. Employees should have:

- Work responsibilities that can be performed at home or remote while maintaining quality of the work, productivity, and meeting the needs of the University, and
- Ongoing access to telephone and internet at home or an alternate location.

Employees may request to work remotely. Management has sole authority to consider such requests and approve or deny as appropriate. During this time of extenuating circumstances, it is recommended that a flexible approach be taken to these requests. If a request is denied, the employee does have the ability to request a review from UMS Human Resources which will work to develop a resolution that is acceptable to both the supervisor and employee.

Criteria
As one can readily understand, telecommuting is not always suitable or practical for all descriptions of work or for all positions. However, if an employee does possess the proper technology and their work is compatible with the operations of their unit or office, it is encouraged for managers and supervisors to consider requests for telecommuting.

Conditions
1. The following recommendations are made for the implementation of a telecommuting arrangement between a manager/supervisor and employee:

   a. To promote clarity of understanding and expectation for both the manager/supervisor and employee, it is advised that agreement regarding the work to be performed from home or a remote location be outlined in advance and regularly scheduled meetings put in place to ensure adequate flow of communications, satisfactory completion of work and meeting of mutually understood deadlines.

   b. For continuity and access, it is further advised that a core set of hours be established during which the employee will be available to supervisors, co-workers, and others.

   c. A telecommuting arrangement places responsibility upon the manager/supervisor to ensure that productivity, quality, and service expectations are understood and maintained at appropriate levels.
d. Recognizing the challenges associated with a telecommuting arrangement, advance agreement about how phone calls to the employee’s University office and access for other employees on telecommuting days will be addressed is recommended.

e. While not every eventuality can be anticipated in implementing a telecommuting arrangement, there may be some specific work-related expenses incurred by the employee. Such expenses should be approved in advance. Please understand it is not possible for the University to pay utility costs associated with telecommuting, including phone or Internet service.

f. For hourly employees, it is extremely important to secure supervisor approval for working more than forty (40) hours in a week, (Sunday to Saturday) in advance.

2. All University and departmental policies, procedures, and standards of conduct that apply to employees working on campus apply when an employee telecommutes.

3. A telecommuting arrangement should heighten the employee’s awareness of and responsibility for ensuring the confidentiality of University data, records, and other information used, stored, or accessed at home. To ensure the protection of data, please review the Administrative Practice Letter (APL VI-C) – Employee Protection of Data. Click Here to access the APL.

4. Unless the employee has use of a UMS issued laptop, the employee is normally expected to provide his/her own equipment for work performed at home. The University is not responsible for damage, repairs, or maintenance to equipment owned by the employee.

5. Any University equipment provided for an employee’s home use should be documented as University property and will be returned by the employee when the telecommuting arrangement concludes or the employee leaves University employment. The employee will bring University provided equipment to a University-designated location for maintenance and repairs.

6. The University will provide supplies for the employee’s use while working from home consistent with supplies provided to other employees.

7. Nonexempt (hourly) employees working remote should report work, sick and vacation time in MaineStreet as normal. Exempt employees should report sick and vacation time as normal.

8. During these challenging times, it is understood that telecommuting may be an option for those employees seeking to balance professional responsibilities and obligations to family brought about by school closings or care giving. Such competing priorities can present significant challenges to maintaining high productivity and for tips on how to effectively meet the demands of a successful telecommuting arrangement, we suggest referencing the Employee Assistance Program offered through Cigna.
9. It is not uncommon that establishing a work space for telecommuting can present some specific challenges. The employee is responsible for maintaining an appropriate, safe work area at home for his or her use. A checklist to assist is attached.

10. When telecommuting, an injury that arises out of and in the course of University approved work an employees will continue to have statutory Workers’ Compensation insurance coverage. Any employee suffering a work-related injury must report it immediately to the supervisor and other designated officials responsible for Workers’ Compensation claims. The University has the right to inspect the site of the injury if a work-related injury is reported.

11. The University cannot be responsible for damage to employees or third party property unless such damage is the result of negligence or omissions on the part of the University.

In considering a telecommuting arrangement or responding to a request for telecommuting, please remember that communication with your manager or supervisor is the absolute best way to set everyone up for success. Should you have any additional questions about these guidelines, you are encouraged to contact your campus Human Resources Office.