

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Employees on Telework, Benefits, and Pay
for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

April 8, 2020

Introduction

The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) in this document are provided to assist National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) employees with general questions regarding being telework ready in response to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). This document also provides additional FAQs on benefits and pay.

Important: This guidance may change in the future. NASA is waiting on further clarification from the United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to determine if there are additional flexibilities available for employees. As information changes, the date at the top of the document will change as well, so you can know if any updates have occurred since the last time you viewed this document.

This document does not currently contain guidance on the expanded use of paid sick leave as outlined in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. As soon as guidance is received from OPM, this document will be updated to reflect those flexibilities.

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Employees on Telework
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General Telework FAQs

1. What is telework?

Telework is a work flexibility that enables eligible employees to perform their assigned duties and responsibilities at home or at another approved alternative worksite. Employees are expected to communicate with their supervisor any changes that will adversely affect the work performance or working conditions.

2. What is unscheduled telework?

Unscheduled telework allows eligible employees, who do not have work that must be performed at the Center, to perform work at an alternate location such as at home or at another approved alternative worksite with their supervisors' approval.

3. What is mandatory telework?

Mandatory telework is when the Agency directs employees to telework. Mandatory telework is not an option. Mandatory telework is required during an emergency situation that causes a disruption of Government operations, including inclement weather or safety-related events. During an emergency, including a Pandemic Health Crisis, the telework program will play a vital role for the Agency's Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) by preserving essential Agency, Headquarters, and/or Center functions and providing an option for employees to continue working during times when they may be prevented from reporting to their regular worksite.

Note: There may be instances in which an employee's position is not conducive for teleworking or an employee does not have a Government-issued laptop. NASA will determine if weather and safety leave (XLV61) is authorized, or if another type of leave is more appropriate in these instances.

4. What does it mean to be telework eligible?

"Telework eligible" means the work or training can be performed outside of the Center (i.e., the work or training is portable.). Telework eligible employees should have a Telework Agreement in place; however, if they do not, they are still eligible to telework at this time. Employees should use the instructions provided in the FAQs for completing Web-based Time and Attendance Distribution System (WebTADS). Telework eligible employees without a current Telework Agreement should take the required training and establish a Telework Agreement as soon as possible.

5. What does it mean to be telework ineligible?

"Telework ineligible" means the work cannot be performed outside of the Center because it is not portable and no other portable work can be assigned to you. For example, employees working in a wind tunnel with no other work that can be done

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outside of the Center would be considered telework ineligible. If you are prevented from safely traveling to/from the worksite and/or cannot safely perform work at a location approved by the Agency, then weather and safety leave (XLV61) may be granted. Even if you are ineligible, your supervisor can assign other work for you to do at home, as appropriate. Employees should use the instructions provided in the FAQs for completing their timecard in the Web-based Time and Attendance Distribution System (WebTADS).

Telework Eligibility and Training FAQs

1. What is a “telework-ready” employee?

A telework-ready employee is an eligible employee who has completed the required telework training, has an approved Telework Agreement in place, and has the required work necessities (e.g., computer or other equipment) to effectively perform duties at an approved alternate worksite.

2. How do I know if I am telework ready?

You can check your telework eligibility status located in the Web-based Time and Attendance Distribution System (WebTADS) under the **Telework Status** section. Your telework eligibility status is reflected.

3. What if I am not telework ready?

You can review your telework eligibility status located in the Web-based Time and Attendance Distribution System (WebTADS) under the **Telework Status** section. If it reflects you are ineligible, you can take the following steps to become telework eligible:

- Complete the mandatory telework training in the System for Administration, Training, and Educational Resources for NASA (SATERN) and/or other Center-specific training.
- Coordinate with your supervisor to establish a Telework Agreement in WebTADS.

Note: Due to the severity of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), employees who are coded as ineligible for telework will still be allowed to telework if/when mandatory telework and/or the Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) have been implemented.

4. What telework training is required for me to begin teleworking?

If it is determined that telework is a viable option and in the best interest of the Agency, you must complete the required training before initiating a Telework Agreement. The required training courses for employees and supervisors are available via the System for

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Administration, Training, and Educational Resources for NASA (SATERN). Your Center may have additional Center-specific training. The mandatory training courses are:

- Telework Training for Employees (Course HQ-TW-TTEM)
- Telework Training for Managers (Course HQ-TW-TTM)

5. How long does it take for the Web-based Time and Attendance Distribution System (WebTADS) to reflect the telework training?

It will take 48 hours for telework training to be reflected in WebTADS. An approver, such as your supervisor, can manually change the telework training completed field from “N” to “Y” in WebTADS and enter the date the training was completed to avoid the delay in completing the agreement.

6. How do I establish a Telework Agreement?

After completing the required telework training in the System for Administration, Training, and Educational Resources for NASA (SATERN), you can establish a Telework Agreement in the Web-based Time and Attendance Distribution System (WebTADS). Locate instructions for establishing a Telework Agreement by visiting the WebTADS site at <https://webtads.nasa.gov/>. Click the **Online Support** link, click the **Help for Employees** link, then click the **Establish, Modify or Opt-Out a Telework Agreement** link.

7. How do I code telework on my timecard in the Web-based Time and Attendance Distribution System (WebTADS) if I am telework eligible?

Employees must add the telework project code in WebTADS. The telework project code cannot be added if the employee is not currently telework ready, has not completed mandatory telework training, and/or has not obtained supervisory approval to telework. The following is a link to instructions on how to code telework on the timecard: https://nasapeople.nasa.gov/coronavirus/how_to_add_telework_code_to_timecard.pdf.

8. How do I code telework on my timecard in the Web-based Time and Attendance Distribution System (WebTADS) if I am not telework ready or cannot charge to the telework code due to being ineligible under normal situations?

If mandatory telework or the Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) are enacted directing employees to telework, you must add “TW” (telework) in the Remark section when adding a project on the timecard. Please reference the following guidance for additional information: https://nasapeople.nasa.gov/coronavirus/coding_telework_in_webtads.pdf.

Note: The Agency may also waive this requirement for drills.

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Telework Expectations and Work Options

1. Can my supervisor require that I provide a list of work I am performing?

Your supervisor will discuss the expectations for work performance, accessibility, and communication while in a telework status.

2. What are my telework options if the Center is closed?

If you are eligible to telework and telework ready, you should begin to telework. If no work or training can be identified, then you may be entitled to weather and safety leave (XLV61).

Note: Due to the severity of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), employees who are coded in the Web-based Time and Attendance Distribution System (WebTADS) as ineligible for telework will still be allowed to telework if work/training exists that can be completed if/when mandatory telework is implemented and/or the Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) occur.

3. What are my options if the Center remains OPEN with restricted access and mandatory telework has been directed?

If you are eligible to telework, you should begin to telework. If you are coded in the Web-based Time and Attendance Distribution System (WebTADS) as ineligible to telework, your supervisor will determine if telework is an option or if other leave is appropriate.

Note: Due to the severity of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), employees who are coded as ineligible for telework are allowed to telework since mandatory telework has been implemented and/or the Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) occur.

4. When mandatory telework ends, if I want to continue to telework for social distancing, does my supervisor have to approve the request?

Supervisors have been encouraged to extend telework flexibilities more broadly to all eligible employees; however, based on mission requirements, your supervisor does not have to approve the request. It is important to remember telework is not an entitlement.

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5. What if schools or daycares (child/adult) are closed due to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

The presence of a child or adult dependent does not prohibit teleworking; however, employees cannot engage in caregiving while performing work duties. Employees should deduct any time spent providing direct care of a child or dependent from the total hours worked for the day. Employees whose caregiving duties interrupt telework may request up to 20 hours of excused leave (XLV) per pay period. Excused leave is not an entitlement, and each request will be evaluated by supervisors on a case-by case basis. Be sure to discuss flexibilities with your supervisor to include options such as working outside of your normal tour of duty, intermittent telework, working outside core hours, etc.

Note: Direct care of a child, parent, or dependent is the time spent caring for an individual during which the employee cannot be reasonably expected to perform work. Examples of direct care include feeding a child, dressing a parent or child, etc.

6. Can I telework if I am sick with the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

It depends. If you are ill but not fully incapacitated and wish to continue to telework, notify your supervisor. NASA will not require any employee to telework during a period in which they are ill for any reason. However, NASA does understand that some cases of COVID-19 can be mild and employees may want to preserve their sick leave for future use. For this reason, telework can be approved at your request. In no case will a supervisor require you to telework when you are ill with COVID-19.

7. What if I have no paid leave or other paid time off to use and I am sick due to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

Please contact your supervisor as soon as possible to discuss any paid leave or other paid time off options that you may have. If you do exhaust all your paid leave or other paid time off, you can request to be placed in a Leave Without Pay (LWOP) Status. The NASA Shared Services Center (NSSC) Leave Programs Team is dedicated to helping employees navigate additional leave options in this scenario. After your discussion with your supervisor, you may also want to call the NSSC at 1-877-677-2123 and request to speak with a Specialist on the Leave Programs Team.

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Pay FAQs

1. Will my pay change while teleworking?

Your pay will remain the same while teleworking.

- There may be times that you are required to work overtime. If you work overtime, you may receive any of the following:
 - Overtime pay.
The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has detailed information about overtime pay. Information may be found by visiting the [OPM Pay & Leave – Pay Administration page](https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-administration/) at <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-administration/>. Then, click the **Fact Sheets** tab.
 - For general information on overtime pay, click the **Overtime Pay, Title 5** link.
 - For information on computing overtime pay under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), click the **How to Compute FLSA Overtime Pay** link.
 - Compensatory time off.
 - Credit hours.
- If you are required to work on a holiday during your regularly scheduled tour of duty, you may be entitled to receive Holiday pay.
- If you are normally scheduled to work on Sundays, you are entitled to receive Sunday premium pay.
- If you are typically scheduled to work the night shift as part of your normal work schedule, you are entitled to receive night pay for the days you would have otherwise worked the night shift. This is not applicable if you are working night shift hours due to telework flexibilities implemented for the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).
- If you are required to work/telework from home temporarily because of COVID-19, the locality rate or special rate will continue to be determined based on the location of your regular official worksite.

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Benefits FAQs

1. If one of my family members or I lose health, dental, and/or vision insurance coverage, can I elect new coverage or make changes to my current insurance coverage?

If you or an eligible family member lose health, dental, and/or vision insurance coverage for any reason (including a spouse being laid off due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)), that would be considered a Qualifying Life Event (QLE). In this circumstance, you are permitted to elect or change coverage for yourself and eligible family members. For information on eligible family members, refer to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Healthcare Eligibility Web page at <https://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/eligibility>.

Changes to your health insurance coverage through the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program can be made through Employee Express or by submitting a [Standard Form \(SF\) 2809, Health Benefits Election Form](#), to the NSSC. If submitting to the NSSC, you may either fax the completed SF 2809 to 1-866-779-6772 or e-mail it to nssc@nasa.gov (encryption strongly recommended). You may access the SF 2809 at https://www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/sf2809.pdf.

Changes to your dental and/or vision insurance can be made online at www.BENEFEDS.com.

2. Are changes to a Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account (DCFSA) allowed?

As more dependent care providers and schools respond to the call for social distancing, you may feel the need to make a change to your DCFSA election. Changes to a DCFSA election are permitted outside of Open Season, if you experienced a Qualifying Life Event (QLE). Two QLEs that many have experienced recently are:

- A change in employment status for you, your spouse, or dependent.
- A change in cost or coverage of your dependent care services.

The change to an account must be consistent with the reason for the change. For example, if a dependent care provider is no longer providing care (e.g., before/after care/daycare closes, summer day camp cancels, or care is no longer needed), the election can be reduced. Similarly, if you need supplemental child or adult care due to an increase in hours worked, you may increase your election.

If you have experienced a QLE, you may submit a change to DCFSA in your online account at www.FSAFEDS.com or by calling 1-877-FSAFEDS (372-3337). For additional information on QLEs, refer to the Qualified Life Event Enrollment Web page at <https://www.fsafeds.com/enrollment-qle?start>.

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3. Are changes to a Health Care Flexible Spending Account (HCFSA) or a Limited Expense Health Care FSA (LEX HCFSA) allowed if my spouse's employment is terminated?

A change in your spouse's employment status is considered a Qualifying Life Event (QLE). When you experience a QLE, there are changes that may be made to your Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs).

If your spouse experiences a change in employment status and you will no longer be covered by your spouse's insurance or FSA, you may be eligible to enroll in an HCFSA or LEX HCFSA. You may request to enroll in an HCFSA or LEX HCFSA based on a [QLE](#) in your online account at www.FSAFEDS.com or by calling 1-877-FSAFEDS (1-877-372-3337). If you do not have an active Federal Flexible Spending Account (FSAFEDS) Program account, you can create one by visiting <https://www.fsafeds.com/support/newusers>. For additional information on QLEs, refer to the Qualified Life Event Enrollment Web page at <https://www.fsafeds.com/enrollment-ql?start>.

For additional information on QLEs, please reference the [FSAFEDS Qualifying Life Events Quick Reference Guide](#) located on the FSAFEDS Resources Web page at <https://fsafeds.com/support/resources>.

Additional Assistance

1. Who is my Center Telework Coordinator?

To view a list of Center Telework Coordinators, visit the Human Resources Portal Telework page at <https://hr.nasa.gov/telework>. In the Telework Coordinators portlet, click the **View list of Telework Coordinators** link.

2. Who can I contact if I have questions about my benefits?

Please contact the NASA Shared Services Center (NSSC) at 1-877-677-2123 and request to speak with a Benefits Counselor.

3. Who can I contact if I have additional questions?

If you have any additional question, please contact your supervisor and/or Servicing Human Resources Office.