



United States Department of Agriculture
Rural Development
Pennsylvania

PN 328 (2045-A)
February 6, 2012

**SUBJECT: Telecommuting (Flexiplace/Telework) Supplemental Guidance
To RD Instruction 2045-A**

**TO: All Employees
Rural Development, Pennsylvania**

PURPOSE/INTENDED OUTCOME:

This notice provides PA Rural Development (RD) employees guidance on the implementation, responsibilities and management of the Telecommuting Program. It does not replace or supersede the requirements of RD Instruction 2045-A. This notice shall be attached to each Form AD-3018, USDA Telework Agreement, as a means of ensuring the program is consistent to the maximum extent possible throughout PA RD. Additional guidance can be located throughout RD Instruction 2045-A and Exhibit A of the Instruction.

IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. *General* – PA RD agrees telework is a valuable management tool designed to improve an employee’s quality of life, employee productivity and moral, the balance of work/personal life, the environment, energy utilization and other socio-economic conditions while enhancing workplace flexibility. Many employees can perform their work from an alternative site such as their home or satellite office. PA RD agrees, to the maximum extent allowable, to consider all viewpoints regarding the impact and implementation of any future changes to established Telework programs. Section 359 of Public Law No. 106-346 requires each Executive Agency to establish a policy under which eligible employees may participate in telework to the maximum extent possible without diminishing employee performance. RD policies are designed to actively promote telework in the agency. Section 359 of Public Law No. 106-346, RD Instruction 2045-A, Departmental Regulation 4080-811-002 and this memorandum provide guidance for the implementation and management of this program.
2. *Definitions* – Definitions are explained in RD Instruction 2045-A, § 2045.2

**FILING INSTRUCTIONS:
Preceding Instruction 2045-A**

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3. *Eligibility* – In order for an employee to participate in the Telework Program, both the employee and the position occupied by the employee must be deemed suitable for teleworking. The employer will make a determination as to whether the position and the employee are suitable for the telework. It is PA RD's policy that to be considered eligible for telework, an employee will have a proven or expected minimum performance rating of Fully Successful or equivalent rating and has not been officially disciplined in regards to performance within the previous 12 months. A new employee to PA RD may negotiate with their immediate supervisor at the employee's first appraisal after the probationary period is completed. An internal transfer employee, where a probationary period is still required, may negotiate with the immediate supervisor prior to the completion of the probationary period. Additional information is available in RD Instruction 2045-A, § 2045.3.
4. *Participation* – Telecommuting is a mutual agreement between the employee and management. Involvement in the Telework Program is voluntary and may be discontinued by the employee at any time or by the supervisor with appropriate justification and notice (normally two weeks). Participation in the program requires an approved, written agreement (Form AD-3018, USDA Telework Agreement) signed by the employee, the supervisor and the Program Coordinator (or alternate). (§ 2045.3)
5. *Scheduled Duty Hours* – Telework is a program to be utilized in conjunction with all available resources and schedules in order to more effectively complete job duties while assisting in a better work-life balance for employees. Telework employees should not be prevented from participating in alternate work schedules such as maxiflex and compressed. Duty hours and schedules will be negotiated between the employee and the supervisor. These duty hours and schedules will be recorded in the telework agreement signed by the employee and the supervisor. Refer to RD Instruction 2045-A, §2045.4, for additional information on early dismissals and weather related closures.
6. *Office Coverage* – Telework removes the work one performs out of the traditional office setting; therefore, office coverage will need to be considered differently as well.
 - A. Under normal teleworking schedules, the office must be physically open between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. This may allow for only one person to telecommute on a given day to allow for at least one physical presence in the office.
 - B. Unless there is an official weather or other emergency declaration declared/approved, an "all telework day" has been endorsed, or other necessary and approved office closure, an entire PA RD office shall not telecommute on any given day.
7. *Equipment and Supplies and Information* – Government-furnished equipment (GFE) is to be used for official business only. GFE, including but not limited to computers and other telecommuting equipment, telephone cards, and supplies may be provided to employees participating in the Telework Program following the guidelines below. The Government is responsible for maintenance, repair (where the issue is not negligent), maintenance and replacement of GFE. Refer to RD Instruction 2045-A, § 2045-7 for further information.
 - A. Employees are responsible for the security of all information (files, dockets, etc.) and GFE throughout transportation and while at an alternate work site (home or alternate office) during telework status. Employees must be familiar with existing procedures regarding the safeguarding and tracking of all data and equipment. GFE and files must be accounted for at all times.
 - 1) Attachment A is the existing method used for signing out GFE;

- 2) Attachment B provides the method used to track the movement of files during telework status.
- B. GFE for use at an alternative worksite is not guaranteed and may be provided *subject to funds availability and the following*:
- 1) If a Telework Agreement is for adhoc, situational or one to two days per pay period, the employee uses the assigned laptop. No additional GFE will be provided.
 - 2) If the Telework Agreement is for three to five days per pay period, the employee uses the assigned laptop. The employee *may* be provided a monitor, keyboard and/or mouse for use at the alternate worksite for the performance of official duties only.
 - 3) If the Telework Agreement is for six or more days per pay period, the employee uses the assigned laptop. The employee *may* be provided additional GFE, such as but not limited to a monitor (i.e. the item in use at the current official duty station), etc. to be stationed at the alternate worksite for the performance of official duties only.
 - 4) Excess printers may be assigned to the alternate worksite for the performance of official duties only. The assignment of printers is not guaranteed.
- C. Non-GFE for use at an alternative worksite is not approved at the current time. Should non-GFE be permitted, the use of such equipment will be negotiated between the employee, supervisor, Administrative Officer, IT Staff or other appropriate agency official(s).
- D. No office furniture shall be provided. Employees are responsible for furnishing, at their own expense, an appropriate working space for the approval of a Telework Agreement.
- 1) All Sensitive But Unclassified (SBU) and Personally Identifiable Information (PII) must be kept in a secure area at the alternate worksite when not in use (i.e. a locking cabinet).
 - 2) All SBU and PII must be secured from non-USDA PA RD personnel while at an alternate site.
 - 3) Classified documents can never be taken to an alternate site under any circumstances.
- E. Internet and broadband services of any kind shall not be provided; all costs are born by the teleworker. Blackberries or any similar phone and/or PDA shall not be provided.
- F. Government-provided calling cards may be available for use while at the alternative worksite for the performance of official duties only. Calling cards, however, are expected to be unnecessary as alternative calling methods are likely available at no increased cost to the teleworker or Government.
- G. Laptops, printers and other GFE must be inventoried on an annual basis. All teleworkers may be required to have the assigned GFE available at a designated RD office during an inventory review period.
8. *Home Inspections* – Alternate worksites must meet acceptable standards for the safety of the teleworker and the security of the data and any GFE. In accordance with RD Instruction 2045-A, PA RD reserves the right to schedule an inspection, with a minimum of 24 hours advance notice, to ensure the alternate worksite meets the requirements. (§ 2045-9)

9. *Responsibilities* – Employee and supervisor responsibilities are outlined in RD Instruction 2045-A, § 2045.10.
10. *Human Resources* – The Human Resources Staff will provide the terms of the Telecommuting (Flexiplace/Telework) Program, and maintain a log of all participants and official records on each teleworker. This record *may* include Form AD-3018, USDA Telework Agreement, Form RD 2045-6, Telecommuting Application, Form RD 2045-7, Telecommuting Employee/Supervisor Agreement, Form RD 2045-10, Telecommuting Annual Re-Certification, information relating to denials and/or terminations, and any other pertinent data related to the teleworker and associated Telework Agreement.
11. *Position Description and Performance Standard* – Position description and performance standards information is provided in RD Instruction 2045-A, § 2045.11.
12. *Liability* – The teleworker is responsible for meeting any homeowners, renters and/or homeowners association liability insurance coverage and related requirements. The employee understands the Government is not liable for damages to personal property such as, but not limited to carpet, furniture, house, automobile, while the employee is working at the approved alternate worksite unless it is determined that such damage is the result of defective GFE. The employee understands he/she is liable for any occupant within the household, regardless of age, for unauthorized access to GFE or information. The employee agrees to safeguard and protect Government and Agency records from unauthorized disclosure and/or damage and will comply with the Privacy Act of 1974, Title 5 U.S.C., § 552a.
13. *Dependent Care* – The teleworker understands telecommuting is not a substitute for family care. Teleworkers are responsible for ensuring appropriate arrangements for the care of dependents at home if the home is the telework location. That is, employees may not use telework to personally care for a dependent; however, this does not preclude a teleworker from having a caregiver working in the home providing care to the dependent(s) while he/she teleworks. Management may request documentation from the teleworker to substantiate a caregiver is providing on-site or off-site care during the teleworker's scheduled work.
14. *References*
 - A. Office of Personnel Management Website:
 - 1) http://www.opm.gov/employment_and_benefits/worklife/workplaceflexibilities/telework/index.asp
 - 2) http://www.opm.gov/Employment_and_Benefits/WorkLife/index.asp
 - B. U.S. Department of Agriculture Family-Friendly Workplace Guide is available at the following address: <http://www.dm.usda.gov/shmd/guide.html>
 - C. Departmental Regulation 4080-811-002
 - D. Form AD 3018 (2/11), USDA Telework Agreement

THOMAS P. WILLIAMS
State Director

Attachments

ATTACHMENT A

