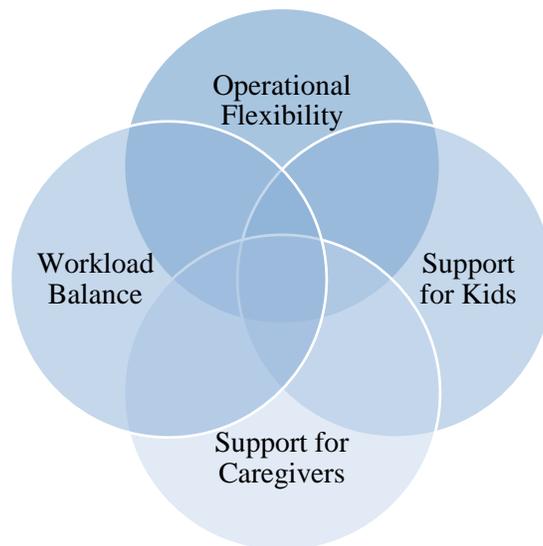


## WORK/LIFE BALANCE DURING COVID-19

This information helps organizations navigate issues related to novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and its impact on school closures and other factors impacting employees that care for children or other dependents. We hope this resource helps you make sound decisions in the workplace. This guidance applies to general government employers. Higher education employers may choose to follow this guidance.

*Please note: We will adjust these guidelines as we learn more about the spread and impacts of the virus.*



The continued spread of the virus and the pace of vaccine development tell us we still have a long way to go before things return to normal. We already know most schools will start remotely and need to prepare for school to be disrupted throughout the upcoming school year. Even if schools shift to in-person classes, it is likely to be with hybrid schedules and with the potential of temporary closures due to outbreaks. We know this creates stress and anxiety for employees who are parents and caregivers.

We will likely need to prepare to continue working remotely through the summer of 2021. While circumstances may change, we should prepare for a longer duration. Agencies will need to get work done while allowing as much flexibility as possible. This won't be easy but supporting those that serve the State of Washington in this challenging time is the socially responsible thing to do and will yield benefits for recruitment and retention for years to come.

Agencies may need to adjust how they deliver their services, when they deliver them, and, in some cases, might have to stop certain work.

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### Action not Perfection

Many of the options set forth below are unprecedented and untested in Washington State government operations. We must be willing to take well considered risks to provide needed flexibility to staff, meet the needs of our customers and the most underserved populations in Washington. Agencies should use their values, COVID response priorities and continuity of operations plans to help guide decisions on how to shift their work. Agencies will need to be prepared to:

- Try something. Take a risk and you can make adjustments if it doesn't work.
- Be honest about what won't get done so there is visibility and resource discussions.
- Begin with the assumption that you will be able to make it work when supporting schedule flexibility.
- Remember we are in this together; supervisors should not shoulder these hard decisions alone. Supervisors, agencies and the statewide community will work together to find our way through these difficult issues. Agencies should consider specific steps they can take to provide support for supervisors who are directly navigating these options with employees.
- Get curious – ask questions to understand the needs of individual employees and involve them in coming to a solution.

We need to accommodate parents and other caregivers to make it possible for them to remain in the workforce and thrive – that will require organizational flexibility during this challenging moment in time.

### A message to employees

- **Agencies must send a communication out to their staff indicating how the agency will be supporting scheduling flexibility and how staff can access that flexibility.**

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- Agencies should also consider including a commitment to their staff that this extended flexibility will remain at least through the end of the 20-21 school year.

### Operational Flexibility

#### Extension of full-time telework

- Agencies should make every effort to continue to accommodate full-time telework arrangements for caregivers while schools and care centers continue to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Agencies should allow for flexibility in response time to work assignments and other requests. Parents and caregivers may not be as responsive as normal while supporting online learning.
- **Agencies will continue to waive policy requirements for alternate child care arrangements for teleworking employees.**

#### Considerations:

- Availability of IT systems, phone systems, facilities and security
- Inequities for staff depending on the flexibility or lack of flexibility of their particular job duties
- Allowing those employees that can care for children in their home to continue to do so may ensure there is space within available childcare facilities for employees who cannot telework and need childcare access
- Employees may still be required to take leave if child care prevents them from working.

#### Extension of daily work hours

- **Agencies must provide more expansive work hours for those that need non-traditional schedules while schools are participating in remote learning.**
- Allow staff and supervisors to consider schedules between the hours of 5:30am-10:30pm.
- Allow the use of split shifts so that employees can have core learning hours available to work with their children.

#### Considerations:

- Availability of IT systems, phone systems, facilities and security
- Communicating to the public/customers on impacts of different or expanded business hours
- Impact on teams to work together during similar business hours
- Inequities for staff depending on the flexibility or lack of flexibility of their particular job duties
- For employee initiated schedule changes, notice may not be required; however, if the change creates a change in working conditions for others, union notice may be necessary. It is recommended that agencies work with OFM Labor Relations on this issue.

#### Flexible work hours

- **Agencies must offer OT Eligible employees the ability to work flexible hours during the day, within the limitations of 8 hours per day, during the agency's new expanded work hours.**
- **Agencies must offer OT Exempt employees the ability to work flexible hours during the day, within the limitations of 40 hours per week, during the agency's new expanded work hours.**

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- Supervisors and employees should work together to agree on flexible start and stop windows and a documentation process to report work hours appropriately.
- Allow staff to adjust each day to the needs of remote learning and caretaking within the requirements identified.
- Agencies may, but are not required, to approve flexible or alternate schedules that result in shift premium or other forms of additional compensation.
  - Shift premiums are waived by MOU for WFSE-represented employees who request an alternate schedule that extends beyond the 6 am to 6 pm window. This MOU is in effect until November 30, 2020 and may be extended.
  - Shift premiums may be waived for non-represented employees who request an alternate schedule that extends beyond the 6 am to 6 pm window if the employee signs a waiver in accordance with WAC 357-28-190(8).

### Considerations:

- Availability of IT systems, phone systems, facilities and security
- Communicating to the public/customers on impacts of different or expanded business hours
- Inequities for staff depending on the flexibility or lack of flexibility of their particular job duties
- This may require more effort to track hours and document hours worked
- For employee initiated schedule changes, notice may not be required; however, if the change creates a change in working conditions for others, union notice may be necessary. It is recommended that agencies work with OFM Labor Relations on this issue.

### Extension of Work Week

- Agencies should consider providing more expansive work week options for staff that need non-traditional schedules while participating in remote learning.
- Allow staff and supervisors to consider schedules that include working 6 or 7 days a week at the request of the employee, or working alternate days – including weekend days – during the week.
- This could reduce the number of hours worked each day and give caregivers more time to work with kids during M-F school days.

### Considerations:

- Availability of IT systems, phone systems, facilities and security
- Communicating to the public/customers on impacts of different core business hours
- Impact on teams to work together during similar business hours
- Inequities for staff depending on the flexibility or lack of flexibility of their particular job duties
- Clarity on how to report hours within the week if employees work extended or alternate days

### Use of Leave

- Employees may be eligible for a number of different leave types. **Agencies should proactively provide information about available leave types and their eligibility criteria to employees**
- Employees may be eligible for shared leave in certain situations
- Employees may be eligible for FMLA if they are caring for a child or dependent with a disability or other serious health condition

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- Employees may be eligible for the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) leave benefit. This leave type expires December 31, 2020. FFCRA leave is applicable if the, "Employee cannot work because their child's school is closed and/or their child care provider is unavailable due to COVID-19."
- Employees can consider whether taking additional voluntary furlough days may help

### Considerations:

- Potential retirement impacts for employee if taking leave without pay
- Benefits impacts to employee if taking leave without pay
- Ability to fill role on a temporary basis to address business needs

### Temporary Leave of Absence

- Agencies should consider allowing staff members to take a leave of absence from their position.
- Staff member would use leave without pay during this time.
- Supervisor would need to assess business needs for the team.
- The agency would allow the employee to return to their previous position.

### Considerations:

- Retirement impacts for employee
- Benefits impacts to employee
- Ability to fill role on a temporary basis to address business needs

### Support Reduction in Work Hours

- Agencies should consider allowing staff to reduce their work hours temporarily.
- Give staff the flexibility to work between 20-40 hours to maintain benefits.
- Support job share opportunities where available
- Offering schedule flexibility and job sharing may benefit agency recruitment and retention
- Employees may use available leave benefits like the [FFCRA](#) and other leave types.

### Offer Staff More Flexible Position Opportunities

- Agencies should consider working with staff to determine needs and collaborate with agency leadership to find options for staff to move to other positions that allow for needed flexibility.
- Consider allowing staff to move from positions that limit schedule flexibility into positions that are remote and allow more flexibility as options become available.

### Considerations:

- Salary impacts
- Probationary/Trial Service/Review Period
- Impacts to other staff
- Labor relations impacts for bargaining unit positions

### Support Staff to Create Pods

- Agencies should consider allow staff to work with co-workers to create pods (families joining together to help team teach and watch kids).
- Partner with supervisors to offer available flexibility to support staff joining pods and allow staff to adjust schedules to allow for sharing the burden.

## WORK/LIFE BALANCE DURING COVID-19

Considerations:

- Availability of IT systems, phone systems, facilities and security
- Communicating to the public/customers on impacts of different core business hours
- Impact on teams to work together during similar business hours
- Inequities for staff depending on the flexibility or lack of flexibility of their particular job duties

### Workload Balance

#### For Agencies

**Agency leadership should work with their teams to discuss operational priorities and give guidance to help supervisors balance priorities, employee flexibility options and workloads.**

- Workload concerns and work stoppages should be shared with appropriate agency leadership for awareness, problem-solving and support.
- We do not encourage that staff without caregiver responsibilities be tasked with additional work, however we do anticipate teams will need to shift some work and work hours around between members of the team that are caregiving and those that aren't.

Agency leadership will identify service level and customer impacts and communicate externally about changes.

- Consider communicating changes in service delivery hours with notice to customers.
- Consider options for access to campus if needed for those required to work on-site.
- Consider supporting different ways of service delivery or expanded customer service hours to allow for more flexibility for staff.
- Your goal should be to provide as much flexibility as your business needs allow during this time.

#### For Supervisors

Supervisors can discuss workload issues with their teams and individually with staff to help with workload issues as caregivers balance the demands of care giving and work. Supervisors should consider meeting with their staff to review job duties, help set reasonable expectations and adjust performance standards if necessary.

- Consider priority of work, who is impacted by your work, most impactful areas of focus.
- Supervisors and staff should be regularly to check in on workload issues during this time.

#### For Employees

Employees should raise any concerns they may have about their workload with their supervisor and review the agency's options for flexibility. Any necessary request for approval should be submitted through their agency's internal approval process.

- Consider responsibilities and demands of both work and home life.
- Don't be afraid to ask for flexibility if you need it.
- Use the resources available to you.

### Support for Caregivers

Link to ESD's Workforce Development resources page: [Workforce Support During Extraordinary Times](#)

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## WORK/LIFE BALANCE DURING COVID-19

- Articles
- Videos
- Other resources

Link to EAP resources page: [Employee Assistance Program Resource Page](#)

- COVID support
- Counseling referrals
- Webinars
- Work/Life resources

Link to WA State COVID page: [You and Your Family](#)

- Mental Health Support
- Resiliency

### Support for Kids

Link to EAP resources page: [Employee Assistance Program Resource Page](#)

- Parent/caregiver webinar
- Family/Parenting resources

Link to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction resources page: [OSPI Parents & Families Page](#)

- Resources for Continuous Learning During School Closures
- Resources to Support Student Well-Being During School Closures
- Student Support Programs

### Resource Links

- [Leave Laws and How They Apply to State Employees](#)
- [PEBB – How to Determine Eligibility](#)

### Additional Reading on Coronavirus Impacts to Working Parents and Caregivers

- [Why Is Mommy So Stressed? Estimating the Immediate Impact of the COVID-19 Shock on Parental Attachment to the Labor Market and the Double Bind of Mothers](#)
- [The Atlantic: This Isn't Sustainable for Working Parents](#)
- [U.S. Census: Working Moms Bear Brunt of Home Schooling While Working During COVID-19](#)
- [COVID-19 and the gender gap in work hours](#)

### Sample Flexible Work Hours Agreement

This flexible work hours agreement is established between [Agency name] and [Employee name].

This agreement is effective as of [date] and will remain in effect indefinitely unless modified or terminated by [Agency name] or the employee. If either the company or the employee intends to terminate this agreement, a minimum of four-weeks written notice will be provided. This agreement may be reviewed at any time if requested by either party.

The agreed upon flexible work arrangements are described as follows:

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Regular Work Schedule: \_\_\_\_\_

Flexible Start Window: 5:30am

Flexible Stop Window: 10:30pm

Other Conditions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

This agreement is subject to the employee satisfying the following conditions on a continuing basis:

- The employee shall perform all job duties at a satisfactory performance level.
- The employee's work schedule does not eliminate the ability to have interactions with their supervisor, co-workers or customers.
- The employee's work schedule does not eliminate the ability of other company employees to perform their jobs.
- The employee will remain reasonably accessible to co-workers scheduled to work during the employee's regularly scheduled hours.
- The employee's paid leave will be earned and used in the same manner as prior to this flexible work arrangement agreement and be subject to all other applicable agency leave policies.
- All of the employee's obligations and responsibilities, and terms and conditions of employment with the agency remain unchanged, except those specifically changed by this agreement. Any noncompliance with this agreement by the employee may result in modification or termination of the flexible work arrangement established by this agreement.

I have read and understand this agreement and all its provisions. By signing below, I agree to be bound by its terms and conditions.

Employee signature:

Date:

Supervisor signature:

Date: