

WORKING FROM HOME GUIDANCE
HUMAN RESOURCES
EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

EKU's Office of Human Resources is here to support you! Though we too will be limiting our on-campus presence where possible, we are still open (unless otherwise announced) and available. Contact information for the Human Resources team is available at our website, <https://hr.eku.edu/>. You can also reach out directly to the Human Resources Business Partner assigned to your area (check the listing at <https://hr.eku.edu/hr-business-partners>). Not sure who to call? You can email questions to our general email address, Human.Resources@eku.edu.

Here is some helpful guidance for working from home!

1. Create a communication plan!

Unless announced otherwise, the University is open. Employees need to know how everyone can be reached, and constituents need to know who to contact and how to get information. We recommend:

- Establish **a simple and effective communication plan**. How will your department ensure that incoming questions, issues, documents, etc., will receive a timely and effective response? How will you and your employees communicate with each other? Who will be in the office and when? Who will only have access to email?
- Consider identifying a **key contact person** for your constituents in the same manner that a person at the front desk of your office fields incoming constituents. This can help keep incoming requests and questions better managed.
- Review your website. Even if employees are working from home, is it **clear from the website how your constituents can reach you** with questions, concerns, and/or other issues? If not, you may need to provide a temporary note about communication.
- If you set up an **automatic reply** on your email or voicemail, please ensure that your department is being consistent in messaging; and ensure that any/all relevant information is included.
- If needed, make sure you have **forwarded your phone** to a good number at which you can be reached. ECU Information Technology has created some helpful Skype guidance at <https://it.eku.edu/skype>. **HELPFUL TIP!** You can forward your office phone to your cell phone or home phone.

2. What are the expectations of employees working from home?

During this difficult time it remains essential that our employees continue to produce timely and exemplary work so that the University can continue its operations effectively

and without undue delay. We must work through this situation together. Employees working from home will be held to the following:

- Employees will be accountable for the quality and timeliness of their work in the same manner they would be accountable if working in the office.
- If an employee is unable to perform an essential task from home, the employee is required to notify their supervisor in a timely manner so that appropriate arrangements can be made.
- Employees working from home will be on duty during their regular business hours, though some supervisors may make exceptions where possible due to the need for flexibility during this difficult time. Exceptions must be approved by the employee's supervisor.
- Employees must respond to all phone calls and communications in a timely manner, just as they would be required to do if working in the office.
- Employees must stay in frequent contact with their supervisors.
- Employees will be required to use vacation/sick/leave time for periods in which they are not on duty, just as they would be required to do so if working in the office.
- Employees must make their supervisors aware of any expected time away from their duties, just as they would be required to do so if working in the office.
- Supervisors have discretion to permit or deny leave time requests just as they ordinarily do.

3. Tips for employees working from home...

Below are some suggestions to help an employee's working from home be a productive and successful experience:

- **Set up a reliable home office** — Make sure you have a dedicated space to get work done, and you have access to a room with a closed-door if you need to make phone calls.
- **Support security** — Phishing scams and cyber-attacks targeting coronavirus fears are on the rise. Be cautious of clickable links and attachments. Never give out your password. Be careful about sharing personal information.
- **Ensure strong internet access** — Check to make sure your internet speed is fast enough to have a video call. For example, Zoom, Skype, a video conferencing app, recommends you have a connection of 1.5 Mbps up and down. If you have a video streaming service like Netflix and it works ok, you should be good. If you are not sure, you can check www.speedtest.net. In areas with less internet connectivity, utilize standard conference calls. Many video conferencing tools will allow you to call in without video, even if your team is using the video conferencing capability.

- **Minimize distractions** — There are different types of distractions at home, even if you are the only one there. Make sure you have some headphones to zone into your work. Also, it might be tempting to do things like cook, clean, or do laundry. Try and make sure you push chores to either end of your workday.
- **Be a proactive communicator** — Make sure you are proactively reaching out to people if you have questions, ideas, or want further clarification on a task. It is especially important to reach out if you are facing a roadblock either because you are waiting on someone else or are feeling stuck.
- **Set clear communication guidelines** — Make sure direct reports can differentiate between things that are urgent and need an immediate response versus items that can wait. Together, decide what communication channels are the right ones to use. For example, for urgent things, you will send an instant message, and for something that can wait, you will send an email. Whatever it is, make sure you all agree on it together and leave in some room for it to evolve and settle naturally.
- **Be accountable** — Working from home requires trust. Being an employee who is responsible for their responsibilities will build trust.
- **Hold Successful Remote Meetings** — Remote meetings are different than in-person meetings. Make sure everyone knows what tech they should be using and have tested it before the meeting starts. It is also a good idea to have one person lead the meeting who has an agenda with a clear goal to accomplish.
- **Manage conflict** — Conflict can come up no matter what your work situation is. Still, when working remotely, the majority of communication is done digitally, which means you need to be extra careful when crafting the tone of your emails and messages. It is easy to misinterpret digital communications. If you ever feel there is confusion or question up over digital communication, this is the time to talk to the person on the phone or by video chat to clarify.

4. **Employees remain accountable for their actions and the quality of their work.**

Employees who are working from home must still abide by all University policies, including, but not limited to, the [Progressive Disciplinary Action Policy](#) (8.3.4R), the [Policy on Discrimination and Harassment](#) (1.4.1P), the [Staff Handbook](#), and the [Faculty Handbook](#).

5. **Where can employees get technological assistance for working from home?**

EKU Information Technology has created a great webpage with information about IT Resources for Working Remotely. That page can be accessed from either the Human Resources homepage at <https://hr.eku.edu>, or by direct link at <https://hr.eku.edu/it-resources-working-remotely>.

6. Are there counseling or other types of services available to employees at this time?

Yes — University employees may find the following programs beneficial:

- The **Employee Assistance Program**, or EAP, is an important and helpful benefit provided to employees by ECU. Among many other services, the EAP provides free and confidential counseling to employees going through a difficult period. It might be because of personal stress, relationship issues, financial problems, conflict, anger issues, parenting, etc. Information about the EAP can be found online at <https://hr.ecu.edu/employee-assistance-program>.
- ECU Employees have access to **LiveHealth Online**, which allows employees to interact with a physician online and/or via app 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Information about LiveHealth Online can be found at <https://hr.ecu.edu/insidelook/live-health-online>.

If you would like more information about the services above or other services available to you, or if you have questions, **please reach out to the HR Benefits at 859-622-5094, option 5.**