

Flexible Work Arrangements Policy Manager Toolkit

Introduction

Baystate Health recognizes that sustaining a flexible workplace is critical to business success. Flexible work arrangements can be a powerful tool to accomplish work more efficiently while caring for the needs of employees and bringing strategic value to the organization. When implemented effectively, flexibility becomes an everyday part of the organization's culture where employees and managers discover a variety of creative ways to schedule and accomplish work.

Flexibility can help employees better manage a wide range of personal responsibilities such as attending college, caring for loved ones, volunteering in the community, caring for elderly parents and pursuing professional and personal interests. Flexibility also can help employees gradually transition to retirement, ease a long commute and enable work to be done when employees can be most productive.

Baystate Health is implementing a Flexible Work Arrangements Policy designed to allow employees to be considered for flexible schedules to accommodate business needs, work/life issues, and diversity of work style. The policy establishes formal written guidelines and procedures for these arrangements.

This policy makes our overall employment policy more contemporary while constituting a significant culture change for employees and managers. Research shows this policy can improve employee engagement, enhance job satisfaction and help attract and retain a quality workforce. Flexible work arrangements are more and more common in the workplace and this policy will help keep us competitive and support the strategic goal to be the workplace of choice.

Criteria for consideration

Baystate Health employees at all levels are eligible for consideration. Meeting patient care and business needs are the health system's first priorities and must be considered for any flexible arrangement. To be considered, the employee must have a proficient or better performance rating at the time of the request and maintain it during the time the agreement is in place. Employees in the process of corrective action are not eligible.

This toolkit can help you understand the policy, evaluate business implications and work with employees interested in a flexible work arrangement.

Highlights of policy

Following are some quick highlights of the different arrangements available for consideration.

- *Flexible start and end times:* Employees work the same number of hours with a non-traditional start and end time. The new schedule is determined in advance and entered in Kronos. For example, an employee may want to work 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. for two days per week and 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. three days per week. This option can begin or be discontinued at any time.
- *Compressed workweek:* This allows the employee to perform the job based on the current FTE (full time status), but in fewer days. (Options available to exempt and non-exempt employee may differ to remain compliant with the Fair Labor Standards Act and avoid overtime pay.) This option can begin and/or be discontinued at any time.

For non-exempt employees, this means working the regular number of scheduled hours per week in fewer days. For example, an employee may work 40 hours in four days rather than five. Note: To avoid overtime pay, non-exempt employees cannot be scheduled to work more than 40 hours within one pay week.

For exempt employees, this means performing the same job with the same FTE status in fewer days. For example, an employee may work longer days to handle a full workload, but over four days instead of five during one pay week *or* over nine days instead of ten over two pay weeks.

- *Partial telecommuting:* This allows the employee to work from home or another location for a portion of the regular workweek. If accepted, this option can begin and/or be discontinued at any time.

Guiding principles for these arrangements

Flexible work arrangements must follow these guiding principles:

- The needs of our patients and business are our first priority. Some flexible work arrangements may require a team approach due to potential impacts to the department.
- Flexible work arrangements must be budget neutral or contribute to cost savings. Any expenses incurred as a result of these arrangements such as equipment or software (i.e., gotomypc.com) must be absorbed by departmental budgets. Implementation of a flexible arrangement should not necessitate additional staff to cover.
- Flexible work arrangements must not compromise leadership visibility. Management visibility is an important part of the work culture at Baystate Health and can contribute to effective employee communication, strong employee relations and quality care for patients and their families.
- One-size does not fit all. Flexible work arrangements may work in some departments and not others based on the nature of business. Likewise, some individuals may be better suited to flexible work arrangements than others.
- Flexible work arrangements requested must fit one or more of the three options outlined in the policy.

Checklists to review before making a request

If you have an employee interested in a flexible work arrangement, you and the employee should review the following checklists (also shown in the Appendix of the policy).

Employee checklist...

1. Consider how well you meet eligibility requirements and if your performance level is proficient or better.
2. Think about how the business needs will be met by the new work arrangement.
3. Think about the qualities you have to make the new work arrangement successful.
4. Consider the potential impact on your pay and benefits, if any.
5. Consider the potential impact of the new work arrangement on your ability to manage demands of your work and personal life.
6. If requesting partial telecommuting, consider how you will arrange the alternate work location so that it is conducive to productive work and free of distraction from other family members and home activities. Partial telecommuting is not an alternative for daycare or eldercare.
7. Consider the impact of your new work arrangement on your department, customers and patients.

8. Anticipate your manager's considerations and concerns and identify strategies to address them.
9. Consider how you and your manager can measure your performance and the success of the new work arrangement.

We suggest the employee meet with their manager to discuss the feasibility of a flexible work arrangement before completing and submitting a written request.

Manager checklist...

1. Determine if job requirements can be met by the proposed new work arrangement.
2. Consider whether the employee meets all eligibility requirements and if job performance level is proficient or better.
3. Assess if the proposed work arrangement will impact patient care and customer service, considering both internal and external customers.
4. Assess the potential impact of the proposed work arrangement on the unit work flow, budget and productivity.
5. Consider potential impact of the proposed work arrangement on the morale, communication and teamwork of other employees in your unit.
6. Consider ways to collaborate with other team members to reach mutually satisfactory arrangements and solutions.
7. Assess if the employee requesting the flexible work arrangement has sufficiently demonstrated qualities that will enable them to be successful and productive.

The employee and manager should meet to discuss potential impact to the work unit, customers and patients. The manager may also consider discussing the request and potential impact with the team, if appropriate.

Making a request

The employee must complete a written request (form available through eWorkplace, the HR Service Center, an HR satellite office, or their manager), complete the first section of the form, and submit it to their manager for review.

The manager discusses the request with the director or VP and recommends whether to accept or deny the request. **The final decision is made at the director level or above.**

If accepted, the manager and employee sign the request form and complete section II, The Agreement for Flexible Work Arrangements which describes the flexible work arrangement in detail and outlines any special terms, conditions, and performance expectations and identifies target date(s) for periodic review.

Make sure the employee understands all of the expectations of this arrangement, how performance will be measured going forward, and the agreement may be terminated by the employee or the manager by providing written notice and 30-day advance notice. Reasons for

termination may vary and include a change in business or employee needs, employee status or job performance.

Please note: Whether the request is accepted or declined, a copy must be sent to the HR Service Center at your location.

Once the agreement is signed by the manager and employee, the manager should coordinate with the timekeeper to enter the new work schedule in Kronos. Please note that if the number of maximum number of hours scheduled for work in any one day (“daily hours” as applicable in the PeopleSoft system) changes, this should be noted on the request form.

If the request for a flexible work arrangement is declined, the decision is not disputable.

Contact your HR consultant if you need assistance with the request or communicating the decision.

Entering revised schedules in Kronos

Here are some basic instructions to enter revised schedules in Kronos. Please make sure your Kronos timekeeper is aware of the change.

Option A: Flexible start and end time-- Start and end times for each shift will need to be updated. Updates to start and end times ensure Kronos will accurately calculate hours worked.

Example: An employee who normally works Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. changes to 6:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

- Using the scheduler for the employee, enter the start and end times for the shift for each day the change is applicable. For this example, it would be every day, Monday through Friday.
- Also, you can use the Pattern Editor in the Scheduler if the new start and end times are consistent from week to week. For this example, you could create a new schedule pattern for 6:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. that will run for any period of time.

Option B: Compressed workweek -- Schedules for employees who elect a compressed workweek need to be updated. Start and end times will need to be entered for each day the employee is scheduled to work.

Example 1: A 40-hour per week employee changes from a five-day schedule to a four-day schedule.

- Once the Request for Flexible Work Arrangement form is processed with HR, the Kronos Work Rule will change automatically to a 10-hour rule based on the employee’s PeopleSoft record.

- Using the scheduler, enter the start and end times for each day the employee will be working. Do not enter anything on days the employee is not working (unless that day happens to be for paid time off such as personal or holiday).

Example 2: A 40-hour per week exempt (salaried) employee changes from 10 days per schedule period to nine days per schedule period.

- Once the Request for Flexible Work Arrangement form is processed with HR, the Kronos Work Rule will change automatically to a 10-hour rule based on the employee's PeopleSoft record.
- Using the scheduler, enter the start and end times for each day the employee will be working. Do not enter anything on the days the employee is not working (unless that day happens to be for paid time off such as personal or holiday).
- Kronos will calculate 80 hours REG as long as there are nine in-punches for the employee during the schedule period.

Option C: Partial Telecommuting -- A new Kronos pay code has been created to accommodate this. Use Pay Code 'REG –Telecommute' for each pay period on the days the employee telecommutes.

Example: An employee telecommutes every Friday.

- Using either the timecard or scheduler, enter Pay Code 'REG – Telecommute' along with the number of hours on each Friday.

Contact Payroll at 413-794-3310 before entering information for a flexible work arrangement in Kronos for the first time to ensure accuracy.

Follow-up

Monitor the new arrangement to ensure a smooth transition. Schedule ongoing meetings with the employee to assess how the new arrangement is working.

If performance or coverage issues arise, set up a meeting to discuss and address them early so the issue doesn't escalate.

HR consultant support

Your HR consultant can help facilitate conversations, answer any questions and address any special circumstances.

Frequently asked questions

1. Why flexible work options?

National surveys show employees look for flexibility in the workplace as a key response to competing demands in their lives. A recent study found that the number one work factor determining employee commitment and loyalty was recognition by the employer of the importance of personal and family life.

2. How will productivity be measured for those who telecommute?

Productivity will be measured the same way it's always measured. The employee's job description, responsibilities or performance should not be impacted by the arrangement. Expectations should continue to be clear in terms of work and projects, and the employee should be accessible during the work day – by telephone and online as appropriate.

3. Will flexibility create "hourly" mentality for exempt (salaried) workers?

Studies show that the addition of a flexible policy generally has the opposite effect, especially in telecommuting situations. Generally, these arrangements have been shown to increase productivity and total number of hours worked. The difference is the number of hours worked may not be within the typical work schedule.

4. What if several staff request to participate in a flexible work arrangement? How do I choose?

Each request should be looked at separately considering overall performance of the employee, current schedule, coverage and back up. Not all requests may work initially and the decision is up to the manager and director. Performance and schedule should be considered. In some cases, schedules may be adjusted to allow several staff members to participate. Keep in mind traditional schedules generally meet the needs of most people. Some staff members may request slight changes in their daily arrival and departure times, changes that pose the least challenges. Consider the business needs prior to approving a flexible work arrangement.

5. Should each employee request be reviewed with the entire unit before giving approval?

This will depend on the impact of the arrangement. If one staff member will have to cover telephones or provide other back up, then other people may need to be part of the discussion process. However, only the director or other senior leader can make the final decision.

6. What if an employee has not been performing at his/her best? Can he/she participate?

If there are performance issues, employees should not be considered.

7. What happens if employee is granted a flexible work arrangement and performance declines?

Flexible work arrangements can be discontinued at any time at the manager's discretion – with the exception of the voluntary hours reduction. For voluntary hours reduction, the employee chooses this arrangement for a 12-month period and may not be allowed to request this arrangement for the following year due to performance issues.

8. When can an employee begin a flexible work arrangement?

With the exception of the voluntary hours reduction, all other arrangements can be implemented at any time with the director's approval.

9. Can an employee request more than one option?

Yes, subject to the manager's discretion and director's approval.

10. How will this policy impact visibility of managers?

This depends on the manager's position and the arrangement chosen. If the manager needs to be hands on and visible to patients, families or other employees, then certain arrangements may not be appropriate as they will not meet business needs. In some cases, managers can continue to work as before with some flexibility and maximum accessibility.

11. What if there is a meeting on a day that an employee is scheduled to be off or telecommuting?

Then, some accommodation must be made by the employee for this issue. Employees with flexible work schedules need to continue to be flexible enough to come in as needed or attend meetings by telephone. Expectations should be clearly defined in the Agreement for Flexible Work Arrangements.

12. Does the employee need to provide a reason for the flexible work arrangement?

No. Flexible work arrangements should be evaluated based on how business needs will be met and the employee's current performance and likelihood of success with the arrangement. A reason for requesting an alternative schedule is not a required part of the proposal. However, the reason can help the manager better assess the request, consider priorities of multiple requests, or plan when additional workplace changes would be necessary to accommodate the request. However, requests should not be denied based solely on the reason for the request.

13. Should employees be reimbursed for incidental expenses such as long distance telephone calls, cell phone use or supplies?

The Flexible Work Arrangements Policy is designed and intended to be budget neutral. If questions arise around incidental expenses, these should be discussed with the director and/or vice president as appropriate and decided on a case by case basis considering budget and equity issues.

14. I currently have an employee working a flexible arrangement. Does she/he need to reapply or do we need to formalize the process?

No, it is not required to formalize the process if the arrangement was in place prior to the policy. However, it may be a good opportunity to review the arrangement to confirm it is working well for the employee and the team or make adjustments if needed.

15. If, after thoughtful consideration my staff member's application is not approved, do I need to provide the employee with a reason for the decision?

No, it is not required. If possible, you should discuss the considerations that went into the decision and what may need to change for future consideration.

The fact sheet on the following page can be shared with employees wanting more information.

Flexible Work Arrangements Fact Sheet

Flexible Work Arrangement Options

- *Flexible start and end times:* Employees work the same number of hours with a non-traditional start and end time.
- *Compressed workweek:* This allows the employee to perform the job based on the current FTE (full time status), but in fewer days.
- *Partial telecommuting:* This allows the employee to work from home or another location for a portion of the regular workweek.
- *Voluntary reduction in hours:* This allows a full-time employee to work six months at full-time status and six months at .8 FTE status, averaging .9 FTE over a 12-month period. Health and dental benefits are maintained as they would be as a full-time employee. This option results in a corresponding reduction in pay. The six-month periods run from April to September and from October to March.

Things to consider

- Think about how the business needs will be met by the new work arrangement.
- Think about the qualities needed to make the new work arrangement successful.
- Consider the potential impact on your pay. (Voluntary hours reduction only)
- Consider the potential impact of the new work arrangement on your ability to manage demands of your work and personal life.
- If requesting partial telecommuting, consider how you will arrange your offsite work location so that it is conducive to productive work and free of distraction from family members and home activities. (Partial telecommuting is not an alternative to daycare or eldercare.)
- Consider the impact of your new work arrangement on your department, customers and patients.
- Anticipate your manager's considerations and concerns and identify strategies to address them.
- Consider how you and your manager can measure your performance and the success of the new work arrangement.

How to make a request

The employee must complete a request form (available through eWorkplace, an HR satellite office or his/her manager) and submit it to the manager for review. If accepted, the manager and employee sign the request form, complete the agreement, and submit it to the HR Service Center at you location. The agreement describes the flexible work arrangement in detail and outlines any special terms, conditions, and performance expectations and identifies target dates for periodic review.

Refer to the full policy BH-HR-307, available on eWorkplace for more information.