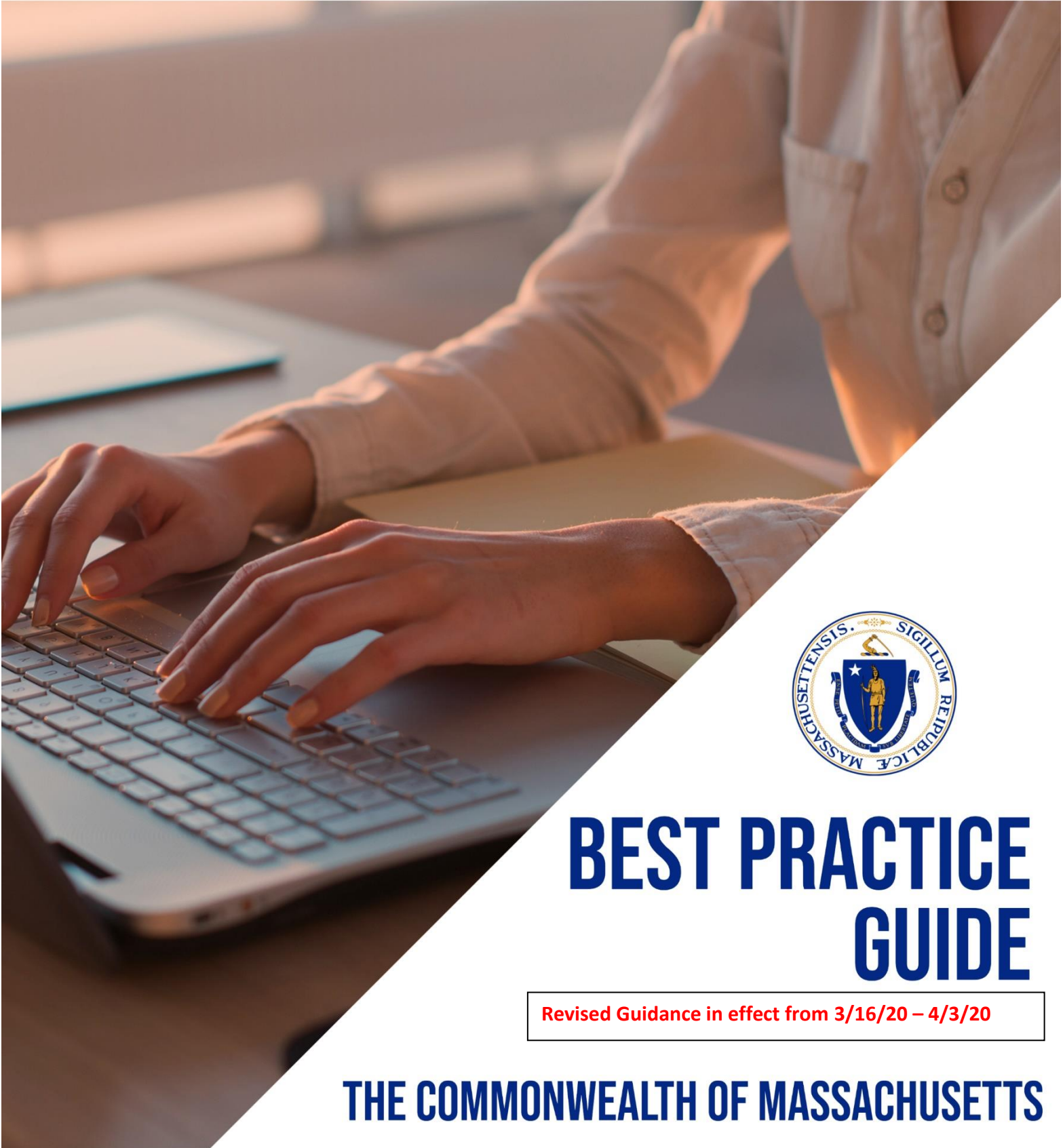


# TELEWORK



## BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

Revised Guidance in effect from 3/16/20 – 4/3/20

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

# Telework Best Practices Guide

---

## Best Practices for Telework Management

### 1: Set Clear Expectations

Be sure to lay out clear expectations around job performance and responsiveness.

- Be specific.** Employees should fully understand what is expected of them when they telework. Outline communication and system tools and expectations (such as open calendars with banner notices including telephone numbers) to deliver on work and projects in the same way that you require when the employee is onsite.
- Agree on expectations.** Ask the employee to reflect what they understand as telework expectations to ensure your agreement and alignment.

### 2: Plan Ahead

There are several issues—workspace, work hours, expected productivity, IT support, among others—that need to be decided and discussed with teleworkers to ensure a positive start to a telework program or arrangement.

- Designate “office” space.** Encourage teleworkers to create a quiet place to get their work done. While it need not be an elaborate set-up, a dedicated area helps teleworkers concentrate on their work, minimize distractions, and ensure that phone calls and videoconferences are effective.
- Reinforce expectations around work hours.** As part of the telework arrangement, be clear about when teleworkers are expected to be completing tasks and when they should be responsive to incoming calls or emails.
- Establish communication guidelines.** Set up guidelines around responsiveness. For example, you may establish the expectation that emails be responded to before the end of the work day, and any missed calls should be returned within two hours. These guidelines should be clearly communicated and should be compatible with the operational needs of the agency and the work that employees are expected to complete.
- Get IT support.** Teleworkers are dependent on fast, reliable, consistent connections. Work with your IT group to ensure the provided technology is effective, efficient, and operates consistently. Ensure that teleworkers have email and phone numbers to contact IT in case of questions or emergencies.

### 3: Communicate Regularly

Effective teleworker management requires strong communication and collaboration practices. Set guidelines regarding response times, shared calendars and documents, and preferred communication methods for various situations.

- Engage your teleworkers daily** through some kind of communication. Regular interaction and engagement provides opportunities for managers to clarify expectations about the

# Telework Best Practices Guide

---

work to be done, helping to ensure that the time working away from the office is productive.

- Use reliable technology tools.** If teleworkers can't access files or struggle to make themselves heard on a conference call, the telework arrangement will hinder the employee's productivity. Make sure teleworkers have access to reliable tools to make collaboration possible.
- Establish a virtual presence.** Transparent communication tools and team norms like shared calendars can be useful. One tip is to require that teleworkers' calendars indicate they are working from home and show a phone number where they can be reached.
- Be available to teleworkers.** You don't want to micromanage teleworkers, but you do want to be available and supportive, track progress, and keep them in the loop. The same goes for employees working in the office—make sure they are available to collaborate and communicate with teleworkers as needed.

## 4: Foster Effective Teamwork

If more than one employee is working remotely, treat telework as a team activity rather than an individual one. Develop a team schedule and a teleworking system that is consistent with the needs of your agency.

- Establish strong relationships with teleworkers.** Check in as needed using collaboration tools, shared docs and spreadsheets, phone calls, chat, and video. Invest in your professional relationship by showing you are supportive of their success and want to help them achieve their goals rather than just check on their progress and numbers.
- Build effective project management practices.** Organization is critical for teams that mix teleworkers and office workers. If available, it's a good idea to use cloud-based tools so that everyone can access the files and information they need at any time. These tools also offer efficient ways to communicate, organize projects across teams and set deadline reminders.
- Help teleworkers avoid multi-tasking.** With your teleworkers, figure out ways to avoid multi-tasking. Video conferences instead of phone conferences work well. Encourage people to stay in working mode and off email back-and-forth as much as is feasible while still ensuring agency operational goals are met.

## 5: Reflect and Adjust

Over time, you are likely to face challenges related to managing teleworkers. It is important to build in time to have open and honest discussions with employees regarding telework and work performance. Solution-oriented discussions can help ensure the sustained success of telework programs and arrangements.

- Establish regular check-ins.** Set aside time on a regular cadence (e.g. monthly, quarterly) to discuss telework. Discuss what is working well with the current arrangement and what could be improved. Brainstorm changes to address any issues and follow up at the next check-in to see if those changes have led to improvement.

# Telework Best Practices Guide

---

## Additional Resources on Best Practices

- Resources for managing teleworkers:  
<https://www.gsa.gov/governmentwide-initiatives/telework/telework-initiatives-at-gsa/resources-for-managing-teleworkers>
- Telework and Performance Management Webcast Trainings:  
<https://telework.gov/training-resources/telework-training/telework-and-performance-management-webcast-trainings/>
- Telework.gov Newsletters and Articles:  
<https://www.telework.gov/training-resources/federal-resources/newsletters-articles/>

## Additional Technology Resources

- EOTSS Employee Technology Resources page:  
<https://www.mass.gov/eotss-employee-resources>
- Get help with a computer issue:  
<https://www.mass.gov/how-to/request-help-with-a-computer-problem>
- Enter your time and attendance through HR/CMS:  
<https://www.mass.gov/employee-self-service>

**Visit [mass.gov/telework](https://www.mass.gov/telework) for more information on telework.**