Interim Flexible/Virtual Work Guidelines during COVID

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Canadian Blood Services

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Context

As with many organizations worldwide, Canadian Blood Services is continuing to adapt and adjust to the new and unpredictable circumstances that Covid19 has thrust upon us. While many employees continued to work onsite throughout, many have experienced significant change, including;

- The public health necessity for some employees to work from home and quickly acquire the new skills, behaviours and mindsets required to work effectively in a virtual way.

- The need to adapt to new situations in their personal lives (children out of school, new and unforeseen care-giving responsibilities, other challenges of working where one lives, social isolation from co-workers, etc.) while balancing work commitments.

The purpose of this document is to define and clarify flexible work guidelines (specifically for Phase 1 and 2 of the Return to Office plan) to ensure that the subset of employees who need to work from home are enabled to deliver consistent performance and feel supported and successful in their efforts to achieve their work.

As we progress through Phase 1 (essential need to return) and on into Phases 2 (those who wish to return) and 3 (workplace of the future) of the return to office plan, these interim guidelines may be updated based on both employee input and evolving organizational requirements.

Diagram: Phase of Return to Office

The following guiding principles inform how we define flexible work as we adapt to the conditions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- *Safety of employees and our communities will guide our decisions.*

- *We cannot introduce risk to our core operations or our organization that is not minimized and mitigated.*

- *We are planning for the organization and including processes to meet individual needs on a case by case basis.*

- *A successful flexible work arrangement is a shared responsibility and open communication between leaders and employees is necessary to ensure ongoing engagement, consistent performance, and continued success.*

These interim flexible work guidelines will be updated and replaced once our response to the pandemic has normalized and we define our new normal. Those guidelines may be slightly or significantly different from these interim ones.

Where and **when** we work

In response to the pandemic, a more flexible work environment is required. A **flexible work environment**, for the purpose of this document, consists of:

- Virtual work
- Flex-time

The following sections outline the interim guidelines that will guide virtual work and help shape the parameters for flexible work schedules.

Note: these arrangements are not a substitute for, or part of, accommodation. If an employee requires virtual work, or flexible hours for medical reasons or to accommodate a disability, Canadian Blood Services has a duty to accommodate to the point of undue hardship. Please contact your People, Culture, and Performance Business Partner and OHS/EHS to discuss accommodation options.

Virtual work – where we work

Virtual work is more than being able to work from home. It encompasses all work performed outside the designated workspace, often at a time of the employee's choosing, to support work/life balance and, in our current context, to adhere to public health guidelines.

Useful definitions include:

- **Virtual work:** *a work arrangement where employees carry out some or all work away from a traditional office location.*
- **Designated work location***: the employee's traditional office location, where they would work if there were no virtual work arrangements.*
- **Virtual workspace:** *the physical workspace where the employee carries out work outside of the designated work location.*

As some employees begin a safe, gradual and coordinated return to the office in Phases 1 and 2, arrangements may be made, under the guidance of managers, facilities, and these guidelines, for a combination of virtual work and work from office or working virtually most of the time.

Interim virtual work guidelines

Applicability	The interim guidelines for working virtually apply to all employees in roles which do not absolutely depend on being physically present at a Canadian Blood Services site or facility to fulfil their duties 100 per cent of the time. These include:
	• Employees who must, and whose role enables them to, work remotely to maintain safety and wellness during the pandemic.
	• Employees who have been asked to, or been given permission to return to the office, but cannot return due to health concerns or choose to remain virtually on either a full-time or part-time basis.
	Positions such as administrative, professional, or similar information-based positions are most suitable for ongoing virtual work.
	Virtual work has been a significant part of our pandemic response. All employees are strongly encouraged to work virtually, to the greatest extent possible, unless they have an essential need to work otherwise. We anticipate this will continue for some time. For any clarification, employees are advised to consult directly with their leader.
	The pandemic has led us to consider whether, in the future, more virtual work will become the norm for Canadian Blood Services. However, no decisions in this regard have been made or will be for some time. While many employees work virtually now, this may not be the case going forward, especially for roles traditionally performed onsite.
	Any employee considering relocation is strongly encouraged to consider that their role may have a requirement to be onsite on either a part or full-time basis. Employees should discuss relocation with their leader, prior to making any plans.

Accountability	Employees working virtually are responsible for: • Ensuring they have a suitable space to work to the best of their ability. • Respecting relevant terms and conditions of employment and/or collective agreements, legislation, and organizational policies. • Using Canadian Blood Services' supplies, equipment and networks in accordance with the IT acceptable use policy. Leaders/Managers are responsible for: • Ensuring employees are aware of the virtual work guidelines. • Enabling employees to have access to the necessary equipment and network resources to perform their functions remotely (in compliance with the "Equipment and expenses" guidelines in this document). • Reviewing and discussing tips and tools to set up workspaces to improve health, safety, and productivity. • Adapting assigned tasks as necessary when required virtual work prevents or delays the completion of work assignments. • Ensure new applicants have a rewarding interview and onboarding experience by leveraging tools that support virtual interviewing, utilizing MS Teams for recruitment, and virtual onboarding.
Maintaining connections	There is potential for isolation when working entirely remotely. These and other considerations require discussion and agreement between leaders and employees including, but not limited to: • Regular connection via individual and team meetings. • Frequent and varied methods of communication to ensure virtual employees maintain regular contact and feel connected to their team. • What hours employees will be available. • How overtime will be managed (if applicable). Finally, all communication regarding virtual work must be sensitive to employees who are not eligible and must continue to work at our sites and facilities, along with those who may to prefer to work onsite but are required to work virtually.

| Health and safety | Canadian Blood Services is committed to creating a healthy and safe work environment for all employees, regardless of where they work. Ensuring an appropriate, comfortable and ergonomically safe work-space is critical to physical and mental health.

Employees working virtually have the same access to wellness programming and support as those working on site.

All employees working virtually:

- Use the tools and guides on the OHS/EHS Connect page to ensure they have an appropriate and safe workspace.

- Request an ergonomic assessment from OHS/EHS if they are not able achieve the comfort they seek or have any concerns about possible ergonomic-related safety. Assessments are conducted remotely through photos, video and phone/MS Teams conversations. and phone/MS Teams conversations.

  - The ergonomic assessment may point to the need for specialized equipment which is reviewed and approved by the Manager OHS/EHS

  - The assessment may also point to the need for frequent breaks or flextime arrangements (see Flextime Guidelines on p. 10).

Consider your work life integration threshold:

- Balance the feeling to be available all the time with being able to 'turn work off' when working virtually.
- Try to follow a consistent schedule and take breaks through the day
- Make a 'to do' list and check your accomplishments at the end of the day.
- Stick to deadlines.
- Take advantage of the supports available through your benefits plan, EAP, and pandemic-related leaves of absence as applicable.
- Be mindful of the need to be safe and well in all aspects of life.
- Since there may no longer be a 'break' between waking up and going to work, you may want to leave the house and walk around the block, or do something similar, before starting work. You might also end the day the same way. |

Virtual work expenses	**Equipment an employee identifies as being necessary**
	
	Cost of equipment an employee identifies as being necessary (including but not limited to, office style chairs, working desks/tables, lighting, keyboards, mice and headsets) may be expensed up to a cumulative maximum of $200 through the standard expense approval process, with the following stipulations:
	
	• These items would not be expected to be returned to CBS.
	• Equipment purchased should be necessary only to address operational or health and safety needs.
	• Responsibility for ordering, receiving or maintaining these items is vested in the employee with the following supports in place:
	  o CBS has arrangement with Staples where employees can order items online, at a discounted price, pay for them by credit card, and have them delivered to home. Receipts would be submitted through Concur for reimbursement.
	  o New employees are also eligible.
	• Amounts used to purchase non-computer equipment is considered a taxable benefit by the CRA and will be included on the employees T4 at year end. Computer related equipment purchased within the $200 is considered non-taxable.
	
	Equipment identified in an ergonomic assessment conducted by OH&S.
	
	The cost of equipment recommended as a result of an ergonomic assessment (including but not limited to monitor arms, keyboards, trays, specialty mouse, stands, document holders, footrests, risers, wrist and mouse pad rests, back rests & lumbar supports) will be fully-funded by CBS with the following stipulations:
	
	• These items will be purchased by OHS-EHS from a standard catalogue of items and sent to the employees home directly based on availability and would be returned to the office if/when the employee returns
	
	Deductions for Home Office Expenses
	
	The CRA (Canadian Revenue Agency) allows for personal tax deductions related to specific expenses for some Canadians who work from home. CBS is monitoring the regulations and guidance as it may be adjusted throughout the year and will comply with any requirements. Please visit the CRA Website for more information.

IT Services	Canadian Blood Services technology enables the same employee experience for virtual work as work performed in a CBS facility.
	Many virtual employees can complete their work without needing to connect to the VPN service; however, some enterprise applications require that the employee's laptop be connected to the VPN to access from a non-CBS location.
	The table below provides an overview of some of the IT applications which require VPN and those that do not.

Applications **accessible without the CBS VPN**	Applications that **require CBS VPN**
Connect (connect.blood.ca)	ePROGESA
Office 365 (including Outlook email, Teams, OneDrive, Sharepoint)	SAP (via SAP GUI)
Employee Self Service (EDA.blood.ca) (MEDA.blood.ca)	Documentum
EtQ Reliance	ESS (Event Scheduling System)
SAP successfactors (learning mgmt.)	CDI (Controlled Document Index)
Ariba	Workcycle/Automated Invoice Processing
IT Helps	Network drives (e.g. P:\ drive)
Concur Travel and Expense	BI Warehouse and Reports
	TM1

In you require support, please visit the IT Helps service request portal, alternatively, you can contact the National Service Desk at 1-877-389-2500.

The National Service Desk is open Monday through Friday from 6 a.m.–9 p.m. EDT. If you have an <u>urgent</u> issue outside of those hours, simply leave a message and you will receive a call back within thirty minutes.

Cyber-security	Working virtually provides flexibility and convenience. However, virtual work can put the organization at risk if precautions are not taken. By following these guidelines, employees can ensure they are practicing good cyber-hygiene when working virtually.
	Secure your home network
	When working from your home, you should take steps to protect your own Wi-Fi network. Be sure to change the default password that was given to you by your service provider, and make sure that you are using a passphrase or a strong password that is difficult to guess and that your router is setup with encryption according to manufacturer instructions.
	Keep work data on work computers
	Canadian Blood Services computers are regularly kept up to date and protected with technical controls such as antivirus software, and other malware detection solutions which scans and blocks malicious files and sites. Your personal computer may not be safe for work without these additional controls in place.
	Avoid oversharing your screen
	During online meetings, be cautious when sharing your screen. If possible, don't leave any windows open that you don't want to share. Accidents do happen, and sometimes you might share something that you didn't mean to. While it can be awkward, it's also a privacy issue. You might be oversharing content that is not meant to be viewed by others.
	Keep your devices in sight
	Don't leave your devices unattended when you're working in a public location outside your home and report a lost or stolen device immediately to the National Service desk.
	Beware of COVID-19 related scams and other phishing emails
	Internet criminals have widely exploited the COVID-19 outbreaks. It has been the topic of numerous international and national phishing and scam campaigns and some of these scams and phishing were detected in CBS email. Please exercise caution in handling any email with a COVID-19-related subject line, attachment, or hyperlink, and be wary of social media pleas, texts, or calls related to COVID-19.
	For more information and tips please visit our cyber awareness page on the intranet, Cyber Awareness
	If you have any cyber security specific questions, please contact the IT Security team at CBS.Information.Security@blood.ca.

Flex-time – when we work

The traditional model of fixed start and end times for the workday may not lend itself to the COVID-19 pandemic reality. Balancing performance at work with demands at home requires flexibility from both employees and leaders.

Flex-time is when the the start and end times of an employees' working day are altered and some, or all of their work is performed outside of traditional hours.

- Flex-time does not alter the standard number of hours for the role*.*

    o *Employees who may not be able to work all their standard hours due to COVID-related circumstances are encouraged to discuss this with their Leader.*

- Arrangements can be for some or all days in a work week, either on a regular basis, as an ad hoc, or temporary arrangement.

- Fair, equitable, and transparent discussion and agreement on flex-time between leaders and employees is required.

- The combination of virtual work and flex-time can make the delineation between work and home unclear. It is important for employees and leaders to regularly discuss available hours and set boundaries.

- All communication regarding flex-time must be sensitive to employees who are not eligible.

Interim flex-time guidelines

Applicability	During the pandemic employees are encouraged to talk to their manager about flex-time **to accommodate individual requirements**. **It is important that employees are enabled to balance both work and home commitments.** • While all employees have the right to request flex-time, the decision is based on operational requirements and performance. • Some roles may require employees to retain core hours during specific parts of the day **or adhere to a predetermined schedule.** Positions with a high level of autonomy are most suitable for flex-time. These include administrative, professional, or similar information-based positions.
Accountability	A successful flex-time arrangement is a shared accountability. Employees are responsible for: • Adhering to agreed-to flex-time agreements with their leader. • Meeting deadlines and performance expectations. • Informing their leader and colleagues of their availability. • Adapting agreed upon flex-time schedule to accommodate specific operational requirements. Leaders are responsible for: • Balancing head and heart in supporting flexible work arrangements, considering individual circumstances and needs as well as operational requirements. • Ensuring clarity in performance expectations. • Maintaining an ongoing dialogue with the employee to clarify expectations and provide feedback on performance. • Remaining flexible and expecting ongoing adjustments.

	• Holding regular check-in and feedback conversations to provide an opportunity to evaluate productivity and performance.
Operational Considerations	Open communication between leaders and employees is required to ensure engagement, performance, and success. Considerations include, but are not limited to: • Implications of having elements of the role unavailable at times, such as shifting responsibility or creating delays. • Impact on clients or colleague's ability to complete job functions. • How flex-time will affect performance. • How effectively flex-time satisfies operational requirements. • Implications for safety if an employee is at work earlier or later than others. For questions, please reach out to your PCP Business Partner. They are happy to help.

For further resources to support you, please refer to:
- FAQ
- Resources page on connect
- Tips for leading remotely
- Virtual onboarding
- Virtual recruitment
- Wellness portal