

FLEXIBLE WORK HOURS POLICY GUIDELINES

“Flexible work hours” include compressed work week schedules and flex-time as defined below. Each offers employees varying times to arrive and depart from work. Flexible work hours can assist state agencies in meeting commute trip reduction (CTR) goals because they can enable employees to take advantage of transit, carpools, and vanpools. Flexing employee work hours is one of the least costly methods for helping state agencies to meet CTR goals.

Executive Order Number 01-03 directs agencies to take a leadership role by adopting a flexible work hours policy. The agency’s policy is to “consider an employee’s request to work flexible work hours in relation to the objectives of the agency’s operating, business, and customer needs.”

The State Legislature supports the Executive Order by acknowledging that flexible work hours alleviate traffic congestion, decrease fuel consumption, provide employees flexibility for child care planning or more time with their families, boost morale, and improve productivity. They specifically state: “Therefore, due to the clear advantages to both agencies and employees, the legislature finds that flexible-time work schedules should be utilized by agencies to the maximum extent possible.”

Definitions

- ◇ “Flexible work hours” includes both the compressed workweek schedule and flex-time.
- ◇ “Compressed workweek” means an alternative work schedule that regularly allows a full-time employee to eliminate at least one work day every two weeks by working longer hours during the remaining days, resulting in fewer commute trips by the employee.
 - ✓ Compressed workweek schedules has the additional benefit of increasing an agency’s accessibility to their customers as well as being a low or no-cost program to implement.
 - ✓ The two most popular compressed work week schedules are working four 10-hour days (typically called “4/10s”) and the fifth day off and working 80 hours in nine days (typically called “9/80”) with the tenth day off. Other schedules include seven days in two weeks and three days a week.
- ◇ “Flex-time” means work schedules that require fixed core hours of work with starting and quitting times other than 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (WAC 356-05-173)
 - ✓ Flex-time is allowable under RCW 41.04.390 and assists state government in meeting the state’s CTR goals, because it enables employees to take advantage of schedule dependent modes such as transit, carpools, and vanpools.

Benefits to Managers

- ◇ Enhanced retention and recruitment
- ◇ Extended hours of service without having to pay overtime
- ◇ Expanded use of equipment
- ◇ Improved scheduling for peak workloads
- ◇ Increased employees’ job knowledge
- ◇ Reduced tardiness and absenteeism

- ◇ Increased employee morale
- ◇ Improved employee performance
- ◇ Promotion of cross training and teamwork producing a more effective workforce
- ◇ Compliance with federal regulations for employees with disabilities
- ◇ Response to natural and unnatural disasters
- ◇ Assists in meeting Washington's Commute Trip Reduction goals

Elements of Flexible Work Hours

- ◇ The agency's mission and the level or quality of service provided to their customers is not to be negatively affected by an agency's flexible work hours policy.
- ◇ Flexible work hours are not an employee entitlement. When participation by the employee is voluntary it may be terminated with reasonable notice by the employee or by the agency.
Note: some positions may have flexible hours that are a condition of employment. In these cases, unilateral termination of the work schedule is not possible.
- ◇ Flex days (the days not worked) can be any day of the week and not limited to a Monday or a Friday. Flex days must take into consideration the work schedules of the working unit.
- ◇ Employees' salaries, benefits, worker's compensation, and other employer insurance coverage do not change due to flexible work hours.
- ◇ Work hours, overtime compensation, and the use of vacation and sick leave for flexible work hours shall conform to applicable state and federal laws and regulations and agency rules and policies.

Process Guidelines

The following process must be addressed in an agency's flexible work hours policy and procedures.

- A. Ensure that all relevant institutional policy, payroll, labor relations, information technology, and risk management considerations are addressed when developing or revising flex-time or compressed workweek schedule policies.
- B. Develop and adopt a flexible work hours policy and procedures that include, but are not limited to:
 1. Statement that the adoption of a flexible work hours program will not diminish the agency's ability to meet its obligations or service to the public.
 2. An explanation of how flex-time or compressed work schedules are established and approved, including any forms that the agency or unit requires to be completed.
 3. A statement of how a flex-time or compressed work schedule may be terminated

Agreements

Agencies are encouraged to have a written, signed, agreement or an approval request form with their employees on flex-time or on a compressed workweek schedule. On-line versions per agency practices are acceptable. A copy of the agreement or approval request form should be kept in the employee's file or database as determined by agency practices.

The agreement or approval request form should not be so cumbersome as to be a disincentive for an employee to work flexible hours. If the agency decides to have such a document, it should include:

- ◇ Compressed workweeks: work hours and days, i.e. 4/10's, 9/80's, 3/12's, etc., including the flex day (day of the week the employee does not work).
- ◇ Flex-time: schedule for beginning, lunch, and ending times
- ◇ Date the agreement goes into effect, when it expires or needs to be renewed, and where a copy(s) will be filed.
- ◇ Process that an employee or agency uses to terminate a flexible work hours agreement.