

Alternative Work Location Guidelines: Phase I Implementation

Approved by Leadership Team

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Employees in good standing and whose job duties are suitable for an alternate work location (AWL) arrangement can perform assigned duties through a partial AWL arrangement. Positions eligible for an alternate work location are computer-based, not dependent on continual physical presence or face-to-face customer interactions, and largely self-directed. AWL in the School of Education (SEHD) is designed to allow our staff a better work-life balance. These expectations, best practices, and arrangements are centered around staff directly reporting to SEHD. Centralized staff assigned to the School of Education, such as Technology Services – Education, HROE, Division of Finance and Business Services, Marketing and Communications (MarComm), and Facility Services shall consult with their divisions directly on this opportunity.

The expectations and best practices for SEHD staff are presented below. Please first read through the [University's AWL guidelines](#) to understand the foundational rules, responsibilities, and expectations of every Texas A&M employee, in addition to the following:

Phase I Implementation Expectations:

- AWL opportunities are not automatic and must be approved.
 - Annual evaluations must show at least a score of 'meeting expectations' to be considered for this opportunity.
- Supervisors are required to verify that employees have completed AWL training and all required Train Traq trainings are maintained up to date.
- Supervisors must also complete all required training prior to approving the request in Workday.
- AWL opportunities must not affect your office's campus hours.
 - i.e., Units must stagger their AWL so that potential walk-in opportunities do not go unmet.
- Lines of communication must remain open. During work hours, make sure you have a way to be accessible by phone and instant communication.
 - IT support staff can assist you with transferring your phone line to your work computer and setting up/training on Microsoft Teams.
- SEHD expectations for phone and instant messaging communications are that responses should occur within 15 minutes of your stakeholder's initial communication, should your calendar show you are free.



- Sharing your calendar with supervisor (and team) will be required to ensure critical conversations are not delayed. Sharing levels can be discussed with your supervisor.
- Whatever day you choose must remain consistent. AWL participants cannot adjust the day should there be a holiday or other events that come up.
 - If there are personal changes to a participant's work week, they must take regular time off requested through Workday rather than adjust their stated AWL day. AWL days are not entitlements, do not accrue, nor are they to be made up if not taken on the regularly agreed upon day.
 - Should there be a retreat, presentation, or other event that requires your presence, staff will not be able to utilize AWL during those times.
 - Peak times in offices and campus needs, such as the week preceding and the first week of each semester, are not eligible for AWL opportunities.
 - The Dean of the School of Education and Human Development reserves the option to terminate or pause AWL at any time.

Best Practices:

- The SEHD leadership encourages each person approved for AWL to include a line in your email signature so that colleagues can familiarize themselves with your preferred communication method, opportunities to connect, and days participants will not be available to speak in person.
- Microsoft Teams will be the official communication platform for SEHD staff. This also allows immediate video communication or calling if needed.
- Contact IT to set up a 20–30-minute training appointment on Microsoft Teams and phone transfer.
- Unit collaboration is crucial to the success of this privilege.
 - Monthly planning of AWL days should be incorporated into each unit, discussing peak busy times when AWL cannot be used and other discussion surrounding this opportunity and maintaining high quality of service and workflow.
 - Monthly one-on-one meetings between staff and supervisors should also allow critical conversations to occur, if needed. Talking points are included in the *Additional Flex Days* section of this document.
- Supervisors should consider including these recommendations and expectations in hiring and interview discussion to ensure clarity on this opportunity.

The university also provides some tips and best practices [available here](#).

Examples of Mistreating AWL:

- Not responding to instant communications or calls without response within the 15-minute allotment.
- Consistent delays in task deadlines.
- Working on non-position-related activities, running businesses, assuming childcare responsibilities or any other activities that would otherwise result in an employee being required to take leave.
- Adjusting AWL days without two weeks' notice to your unit.

An AWL arrangement may be terminated by the manager or the employee at any time. Reasons for termination may include circumstances where the arrangement is no longer conducive to the business needs of the organization, the employee's performance diminishes, or the employee no longer wants to work from the approved AWL.

Phase II Implementation: Additional Flex Days (Phase II, Pending Further Guidance, and Implementation)

SEHD is interested in allowing two additional AWL days per month. This will be developed as we learn more about the initial roll out (Phase I Implementation) and approval of AWL, closer to the end of the Summer 2023 semester. Here are some of the Expectations of that opportunity.

- Only considered for staff in 'meeting expectations' status on annual evaluations.
- Monthly one-on-one meetings/check-ins with supervisors to assess productivity or changes in AWL are required. These meetings will help supervisors assess whether AWL will be a sustainable practice for the unit.
 - Talking points for those meetings are suggested below:
 - Check in: *What's your favorite part about working remote?*
 - Are AWL employee's needs met while working remotely?
 - I.e., Equipment, environment, internet connectivity
 - *What is your setup like for working?*
 - Are AWL expectations being met?
 - Allow employees to answer this question.
 - Allow supervisor to answer this question.
 - *How do you manage distractions during the day? Is it a challenge for you?*
 - How are productivity levels while utilizing AWL?
 - *What is your daily routine like for working?*



- *Do you feel like you are working more/less than before? The same as before?*
- How are communication levels while utilizing AWL?
 - *Do you feel included in our team decisions?*
 - *How has your response rate been with our stakeholders? (Faculty, Students, Staff)*
 - *When you have a creative idea or epiphany, what do you do with it? (The kinds of things that would get openly discussed in an office could be missing for them)*
 - *Do you feel like you have opportunities for "water-cooler" type discussions with the team to help you spur on ideas? What ideas do you have for how we could create more of them?*
- Supervisors: Are there any inconsistencies with their work that need to be addressed to continue the AWL opportunity?