

# Tips for Employees Working From Home

Working from home will be an adjustment for many people, and flexibility will be essential as we adjust to working in different at-home environments and with varying at-home schedules. The following tips may be helpful for employees to navigate the changes and challenges associated with working from a home environment:

## **Communicate with your manager and team members**

Establishing clear communication with your manager, and knowing exactly what is expected of you, is essential when working from home. Ask your manager to have regular check-in's, such as a morning tele-meeting to start the day, and establish weekly check-in's with your team members to ensure everyone is coping with the new work arrangement, and to ensure that necessary work is being completed.

## **Create a workspace**

While most employees will not have access to a home office, if possible, create a space designated for work at your home where you can concentrate. Having a designated work space may also help create balance, and separate work and home/family time. Likewise, having an ergonomic arrangement of your chair, table/desk, phone and computer may also help prevent repetitive injuries and contribute to a more productive work environment.

*Please contact your manager if you require specific software or equipment (ie, an extra computer monitor) to perform your work in your home environment.*

## **Create a routine**

Working from home allows you the flexibility to manage your day according to your personal/childcare needs. However, starting your day as you normally would (getting up at your regular time, taking a shower, eating breakfast, making a tea or coffee, etc.) can help you adjust to a regular work routine from home, and help you set boundaries between your work and home life. Throughout the day, ensure you take appropriate breaks, as you normally would in the regular office environment, and try and create a consistent schedule that works for you and your family.

*It is recognized that employees may be working non-standard hours while working from home to accommodate personal/childcare needs. If you are working non-standard hours from home, please be mindful of communicating with managers or team members very early in the morning or late at night.*

## **Avoid feeling isolated**

Working from home can feel unstructured and isolating. In addition to establishing regular communication with your manager and team members regarding work activities, translating in-office social activities to an online setting may also help alleviate feelings of stress and isolation, and help maintain team comradery during this time. This can be done by having virtual "coffee chats", or virtually celebrating birthdays or other celebrations with team members.

## **Practice self-care**

Self-care is essential for both mental and physical wellbeing. As we all navigate our at-home work environments, it is important that we create a positive space in our day for self-care. Listening to uplifting music, eating a nourishing snack, taking a few moments to practice deep breath or meditation, or going outside for fresh air will help reduce stress, and will help make for a more positive and productive at-home work experience.

*If you are struggling through this time of uncertainty, the GNWT has supports in place for you through the [Employee Family Assistance Program](#). For immediate and confidential assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, call 1-844-880-9142 or visit [workhealthlife.com](http://workhealthlife.com).*

## **Be flexible and patient**

During this time, managers and supervisors will appreciate that home arrangements will differ for employees in terms of available resources, differing schedules to accommodate family or childcare, in addition to the stress and anxiety of dealing with an exceptional situation. As we all navigate this process together, it is important to remember to be flexible, patient and kind to each other.

## **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Leave Provisions**

We can assure you that all employees will continue to be paid through regular time, or through a form of paid leave, which include:

- Special Leave - if caring for an ill dependent or self-isolating
- or Sick Leave - if ill

If you are entering sick leave, please use the code 'Covid 19', and if you are entering special leave, please use the code 'Self-Isolation'. Should you feel sick unrelated to coronavirus (COVID-19), and are unable to work, standard Sick Leave provisions will apply.

If you are unable to work for any reason, please speak with your manager or supervisor.

As is standard practice, Exception Time Reporters will not have to enter their regular time in Self-Service, whereas Positive Time Reporters will still be responsible for entering their time.

*Employees who have been asked to work from home, but who need to visit their office for computer or equipment, should work with their manager or supervisor to arrange a time that it is appropriate to do so, as long as they are not self-isolating.*

### **Information Security**

We recognize that this transition will take time, and we are asking employees to be patient as we work through all the logistics related to setting up remote work arrangements.

DIIMS access has been temporarily made available for employees working remotely. Please refer to the *DIIMS External Access Guide* on how to log-in to DIIMS externally.

Employees must exercise caution when accessing DIIMS. As always, employees have an obligation to protect government information, and will adhere to the following policies when using DIIMS External:

- [Electronic Information Security – 6003.00.26](#)
- [Management of Electronic Information – 6003.00.20](#)

Please keep security at top of mind, especially when using non-GNWT networks and non-GNWT owned or personal devices.

Check the Technology Service Centre's website [IT Resources for Working Remotely](#) regularly for updates.

# COVID-19 and Mental Health at Work

**In distress? Contact your Employee Family Assistance Provider or call 9-1-1\***

Employees may be experiencing a high degree of uncertainty, anxiety, stress, and worry about the health and safety of their family members, and how COVID-19 (coronavirus) may disrupt their personal lives and worker. It is important for all of us to acknowledge these impacts and to engage in open communication about them, including on ways to maintain and support our mental health. It is particularly important to recognize and support those who may be more directly involved in the management of the situation, and those who have been instructed to self-isolate or who may be suffering from symptoms of COVID-19.

**\*9-1-1 for medical emergencies only. If you are in distress about potential exposure to COVID-19, call your local health authority.**

## SEEK HELP

### Managers/Supervisors

Employees may wish to speak to their managers/supervisors, who will be able to advise them on what services are available to them, as well ongoing discussions while working from home.

### Confidential short-term or crisis counselling

You can access confidential, short-term or crisis counselling 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. The Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP) offers services by phone, in-person, mobile app, and through e-counselling.

### Employee Family Assistance Program

For each concern you are experiencing, you can receive a series of private sessions with an expert. You can also take advantage of online tools to help manage your and your family's health. You'll get practical and fast support in a way that is most suited to your preferences, learning preference and lifestyle.

For immediate assistance, contact EFAP at **1-844-880-9142** or visit [workhealthlife.com](http://workhealthlife.com)

### Access Health Care

Your Public Service Health Care Plan (PSHCP) covers some prescription and medical expenses, including psychological services. Enrollment, coverage information and more is available on the [PSHCP website](#) or through [SunLife Financial](#) directly.

## STAY INFORMED

You should follow the advice provided by the Government of Canada to the general population. Information specific to the Northwest Territories, including frequently asked questions, is also available on the [Health and Social Services website](#). Unionized employees may also consult their union representative as needed.

### TIPS TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

- Get information from reliable sources, such as [Canada.ca/coronavirus](http://Canada.ca/coronavirus)
- Stay informed but follow news coverage about COVID-19 in moderation. Take breaks from watching, listening, reading to news stories. It can be upsetting to hear about the crisis and see images repeatedly.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch or practice meditation. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, and get plenty of sleep.
- Make time to step back and consider how to take advantage of unexpected flexibility in your daily routine.
- Stay connected. Talk to friends or family about your feelings and concerns.
- Maintain healthy relationships and respect other people's feelings and decisions.
- Show support and empathy to those dealing with difficult decisions.
- Identify what is within your control and try to direct your energy towards what most worries you within your own control.

*\*adapted from [Centre of Expertise on Mental Health in the workplace](#).*