



WHY ORGANIZATIONS NEED TO OFFER FLEX TO ALL EMPLOYEES DURING THE PANDEMIC

Before the pandemic, organizations offered very different flexible work benefits based on employee status, responsibilities, and seniority. According to our [2019 Law Firm Flexibility Benchmarking Study](#), almost half of the firms indicated there was no formal flexible work policy for staff whereas nearly all firms (90%) offered formal flexible work policies for attorneys. During the pandemic, organizations have continued to offer disparate benefits for employees as demonstrated by our [Pulse Poll: COVID-19 & Reentry Study](#); nearly 30% of respondents will determine whether to allow remote work based on an employees' function.

Our recommendation has always been for organizations to close the gap between employees with respect to flexible work benefits. This is especially true during the pandemic, where everyone is facing exceptional personal and professional stress. During this time, it's imperative for organizations to offer holistic flex to all employees in order to promote employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention. Holistic flex reflects the myriad of reasons today's professionals want and need flexible work and includes both reduced hours and full-time options such as: telecommuting, flexible start/end times, compressed work schedules, and annualized hours.

1. **Create a Reason Neutral Process for Remote Work.** We strongly encourage organizations to allow employees to continue to work remotely during the pandemic without needing to provide a reason for doing so. This way, organizations support all of their employees as a great deal of chaos still exists for many (i.e. lack of childcare/eldercare; vulnerability of elderly relatives; anxiety over getting sick; public transportation exposure). For employees who traditionally need to be in the office due to their function, organizations should consider reassigning their responsibilities and/or creating groups who can work together. For example, organizations can create administrative pools consisting of some workers in the office and others working remotely. Those who continue to work remotely can take on certain projects such as document processing and answering messages. Those working in the office can take on other projects such as mailings and filings.
2. **Offer Holistic Flexibility to All.** Holistic flexibility can be a lifesaver to employees juggling personal and professional responsibilities, especially during a pandemic. Often more senior professionals have greater access to holistic flexibility, but all employees need it during this time. Even if your standard flexible work policy doesn't apply to all employees, it's important to offer flexible work to everyone now. We recommend that organizations commit to working individually with every employee. A Talent and/or D&I Professional should check-in to discuss flex options (i.e. telecommuting, flexible start-end times, part-time/reduced hours, job sharing, compressed work weeks, and sabbatical

programs), what types of flex makes the most sense given each individual situation, and help navigate this process.

3. **Provide Technology & Other Resources.** What are the necessary resources needed to work flexibly? Make sure to offer these resources to *all* employees, especially those who have not traditionally worked a flexible schedule. Would a legal assistant need a computer, printer, and scanner to work from home? Would a marketing manager need access to CRM? Think through the resources each employee needs and plan how to provide them – can you loan laptops, give technology stipends, provide broader access to necessary applications?
4. **Offer Guidelines, Training & Support.** Guidelines for working flexibly set expectations, parameters, and limits. These guidelines should be separate from any flexible work policy in place as different considerations exist during the pandemic. All employees should be trained on how to successfully work remotely/flexibly, manage remote teams, and address unconscious bias. This is especially important for employees who have not traditionally worked flexibly and leaders who have not managed remote teams. For example, a paralegal manager may benefit from best practices on ways to keep team members connected virtually through employee check-ins, virtual team meetings, and overseeing different schedules through an availability tracker.
5. **Revisit Flex Policies for All Employees After the Pandemic.** While flex benefit discrepancies existed before COVID-19 between employees based upon employee status, function, and seniority, we hope the pandemic will help close this gap. We strongly recommend that organizations collect feedback and success stories on workplace flexibility during the pandemic. Were there any assistants who succeeded working remotely for the first time? What resources helped a talent development administrator work a compressed schedule? How did a paralegal make a flexible start/end schedule effective? By collecting data and trends now, you can help build a foundation for making flexible work continue post-pandemic for all employees.

The Alliance is here to provide you with expert advice about ways to offer flexible work to all employees during the pandemic and beyond . Members can access our [Business Continuity, Success \(and Sanity\) During COVID-19 Telecommuting](#) webinar recording and leverage it for training and successful remote work strategies. Members also have access to several Alliance resources as part of their benefits: the [Resource Library](#), [Strategy Calls](#), [Policy Reviews](#), [Advisory Hours](#) and [Signature Seminars](#). To discuss ways to effectively provide flexibility to all employees during COVID-19 and after, contact [Manar Morales](#).