"While the number of transcription teleworkers is small, we consider it an important step. Eighteen transcriptionists save over 350 miles daily in traffic commuting while remaining productive and providing cost savings for our facility."
—Kevin Burns, Chief Financial Officer, University Medical Center

Why did University Medical Center (UMC) begin a TeleWork Program?
The UMC telework program began in 1999 with the concept of "Tele-Transcription." The decision to start a telework program helped to keep qualified people working at the site. The program consists of 26 staff, 18 working at home full-time. This allowed flexibility and better coverage, increased morale and improved retention rates. At present, Transcription is the only department assigned to telework. UMC is looking at other departments to expand its TeleWork Program.

What are University Medical Center’s selection criteria for teleworkers?
Any UMC transcriptionist may telework once the following conditions have been met to satisfy the transcription manager:

1. Must be able to meet mandatory department standards for productivity and quality at all times.
2. Must be able to operate the system computer independently.
3. Must be competent using UMC Outlook e-mail.
4. Must have a secure work location at home.

What tasks are performed by University Medical Center’s teleworkers?
UMC tele-transcriptionists type medical reports from dictation including radiology, operations/procedures, admissions/discharges, clinic notes, emergency room notes and other medical specialties. The transcriptionists must work a schedule of 40 hours within 7 days. Communication with staff is primarily by e-mail.

What are the elements of the program?
Tele-transcriptionists are UMC employees with benefits and must comply with all departmental and hospital policies and procedures. This specifically includes but is not limited to:

1. Must Maintain confidentiality regarding medical information as mandated by UMC, HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) and JCAHO (Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations).
2. Must meet mandatory department standards for quality and quantity.
3. Must uphold all UMC PRIDE values which are based on JCAHO guidelines.
4. Must have a regular working schedule agreed upon with the transcription manager.
5. Must attend all scheduled staff meetings and other meetings as mandated by UMC.
6. Must be responsible for the care of all equipment provided by UMC. Tele-transcriptionists must not load any personal software into the UMC PC and must upgrade the PC as directed by UMC Information System Services.

How did University Medical Center implement a TeleWork Program?
About six years ago, UMC was looking for ways to compete in the transcription marketplace. UMC started to experiment with telework with five staff from the Transcription Department in February 1999. UMC provided the following:

1. Dedicated PC (with monitor, keyboard and mouse) to be used for UMC business only. This means no other person, family member, friend, etc., can use the PC for any reason.
2. A dedicated phone to receive the dictation.
The transcription employees will provide the following:
1. High-speed Internet connection with modem.
2. Phone line to be used with the transcription phone.
3. Desk, chair and any other equipment/furnishings that are needed to provide an adequate work environment.

What effects has the telework program had on the...

Organization: Better able to retain key employees, save money and increased productivity.
Teleworker: Higher morale, flexible hours, better work-life balance, less business interruptions, especially good with small children or care giver to parents or dependent spouse.
Coworkers: Less physical interaction with teleworker; not mandatory to work at home.
Management: Employee can work at home and maintain workload; not hard to manage.
Customers: Work is completed in a timely manner with one- to two-day turnaround time; communication is via e-mail or phone.

Is there a steering committee? If yes, from what departments?
UMC has no Telework steering committee at this time.

What equipment is used by teleworkers?
- Dedicated PC and phone that are used for UMC business only. This means no other person, family member, friend, etc., can use the equipment.
- A Dictaphone C-phone with foot pedal and headset.
- Monitor, keyboard and mouse if needed.

What were the benefits of starting a TeleWork Program at University Medical Center?
The benefits for starting a TeleWork program at UMC include happier employees and improved efficiency. This makes doctors and staff happier also. By working at home 5 days per week, for one year, the 18 Transcription employees have saved UMC the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Miles</th>
<th>182,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gallons of Gasoline</td>
<td>9,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dollars</td>
<td>$ 67,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pounds of Pollution</td>
<td>5,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How has the program changed since the beginning?
What started as an experiment six years ago just to see if it could work, has proven to be a successful program for both UMC and the employees. Flexible schedules allow for better coverage of the workload and better integration of the employees’ work and home lives. The TeleWork Program has enabled UMC to maintain experienced transcriptionists which improves the work flow. Only one TeleWork transcriptionist has left UMC since the beginning of the program almost 6 years ago for personal reasons.

What challenges arose along the way?
The main challenge was to allow the transcriptionists fast and reliable access to hospital records while maintaining confidentiality. This meant having a fail-safe firewall. The original dial-up connections were problematic because of the slow speeds of the connections through the firewalls. With new technology, namely high-speed Internet and VPN (Virtual Private Network) access, this has improved dramatically and the TeleWork transcriptionists now have access that is comparable to the direct network connections of the in-house transcriptionists.

What successful program tips would University Medical Center offer?
Telework is not for everyone. Some employees feel very isolated and some are unable to separate work from the demands of home. We have had some employees who returned to the office after trying to work at home. In order to remain successful, equipment must be maintained and upgraded and new technologies installed. It is essential that the home worker have a home office that will allow them the comfort and privacy to work successfully.