

<b>REMOTE WORK POLICY</b>	
<b>Date of Approval:</b> 19/05/2020	<b>Date Policy is Effective:</b> 04/01/2020
<b>Responsible Person:</b> MIS Director	<b>Author:</b> Barbara Scott
<b>Reference:</b> Remote Work Agreement; Richland County Computer Policy & Social Media Policy	<b>Approved By:</b> Richland County Board
<b>Cross Reference:</b>	

**Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to outline the requirements for approving and administering remote work arrangements.

**Definition**

Working remotely is an alternative work arrangement in which employees conduct their duties from locations other than the office worksite for approved periods. In working remotely, the employee may utilize technology to complete their tasks and communicate with customers, clients, service providers, co-workers, and managers/supervisors. Remote work arrangements are intended to serve as a means of achieving administrative efficiencies, reducing office space congestion, recruiting and retaining a highly qualified workforce by enhancing work/life balance, and mitigating the spread of contagion.

**Policy**

It is the policy of Richland County that approval to work remotely shall be granted on an individual basis by the department head if an employee meets the eligibility criteria, his or her work situation is suited to such an arrangement and it is determined to be a benefit to the county operations.

**Procedure**

1. Types of situations under which a remote work arrangement may be approved include any of the following.
  - a. Work-related circumstances exist in which it is not conducive or efficient for the employee to remain in or return to the office during the work day (e.g. conducting client community visits or attending out-of-area meetings).
  - b. There is a project or task that would best be completed out of the office. The project or task must have clearly defined parameters and result in a deliverable work product.
  - c. A temporary circumstance exists that prevents the employee from being physically present in the office for all or part of a day (inclement weather, caring for a sick child, social distancing during public health threats etc.) and he or she has sufficient work that can be conducted remotely.
  - d. There is routine work that is appropriate to be completed remotely and there is not another need for the employee to remain in the office (e.g. Crisis, Access, supervision, or other office coverage or back-up assistance).
  - e. The Department operates on a non-county but governmental computer system and the host agency is giving policy directives regarding remote work/telecommuting.

## 2. Employee Eligibility Criteria for Remote Work Arrangement

- a. Before approving remote working arrangements, the department head shall assure that there is adequate staffing coverage in the office to meet the program and public needs including the ability to respond to critical or emergency situations.
  - b. The department head shall verify the following and approve the employee to work remotely.
    - i. One or more of the conditions outlined in section 1. exists and warrants the employee working remotely;
    - ii. The employee has the necessary capabilities to work independently and manage the unique requirements of off-site work arrangements;
    - iii. The remote setting has the needed infrastructure and technology capabilities to support the remote work (i.e. county computer, high speed internet connection, and appropriate workspace).
  - c. The remote work arrangement has been documented into an agreement that outlines the timeline, parameters of the arrangement, and expected outcome or deliverable work product.
3. Remote work arrangements may be approved as a single occurrence or as an ongoing arrangement.
- a. **Single Occurrence Remote Work Arrangement.** A single occurrence remote work arrangement involves a solitary or short-term situation. It may not be ongoing.
    - i. Single Occurrence Remote Work Agreement may be documented in an email. The agreement shall include the following headings under which the relevant information so as to assure that all elements have been addressed.
      1. Type and scope of work that will be completed describing the work product or outcome of such work. Examples of completed deliverables may include: completed court report for specified client(s); completed grant application; completed documentation for specified client(s); completed specified project.
      2. The time frame that is approved to work remotely. Examples include: from 9:00 – 3:00 on May 4<sup>th</sup>; full work day on May 4<sup>th</sup>; or up to 10 hours between May 4<sup>th</sup> to May 25<sup>th</sup>.
      3. A final reply to the email from the department head indicating approval and the employee indicating agreement.
  - b. **Ongoing Remote Work Arrangement.** An ongoing Remote Work Arrangement involves a long-term agreement that is open-ended and continuous for a set period of time.
    - i. In order to be approved for an ongoing remote work arrangement, an employee have consistently demonstrated the following capabilities.

1. Comprehensive knowledge of position responsibilities and possesses the skills necessary to independently fulfill those responsibilities;
  2. Time-management and organizational skills with a demonstrated ability to meet program requirements and deadlines;
  3. Dependability in meeting attendance standards and independently following through on projects and work assignments;
  4. Consistent and timely communication with consumers, service providers, co-workers, and supervisors;
  5. Consistent achievement of work productivity requirements and goals;
  6. Strong problem-solving and prioritization abilities;
  7. Effective performance with less structure and more independence and without the need for regular direct supervision;
  8. Demonstrated computer skills sufficient to work independently at an alternate worksite;
- ii. A formal Remote Work Agreement (Remote Work Agreement) is required for remote work arrangements and may specify the following:
1. The understanding that the alternate worksite is considered an extension of the county and that during the hours that the employee is performing work functions all agency policies and procedures are still applicable;
  2. The agreed upon work schedule;
  3. The expectation of availability during work hours;
  4. The expectations for conducting meetings with other employees, professionals, and clients;
  5. The understanding that employees may be required to attend in-office trainings and meetings as determined by the supervisor;
  6. The expectation for maintaining confidential information; and
  7. The expectation to make arrangements to assure that non-work related responsibilities (i.e. childcare or dependent care) do not interfere with work responsibilities during dedicated work hours.
  8. The expectation that employees may be required to perform remote work outside of routine office hours to preserve bandwidth.
- iii. The formal ongoing Remote Work Agreement shall be signed by the employee and the department head; and shall be maintained in the employee's personnel record.

- iv. The department head/supervisor shall regularly review the remote work arrangement in order to determine if it is appropriate and effective to continue.
- v. The Remote Work Agreement shall not extend for longer than the calendar year and if it is to continue may be renewed annually.
- vi. At their sole discretion, the department head/supervisor may terminate the Remote Work Agreement which will result in the employee returning to the routine office worksite arrangement. Such a decision is not considered disciplinary.

#### 4. Work Hours

- a. The department head/supervisor shall approve the number of hours that may be spent working remotely by the employee.
- b. Unless otherwise approved by the department head/supervisor or documented in the remote work agreement, the employee shall be expected to work normal work hours (8:00 AM to 5:00 PM) from the remote location.
  - i. The department head/supervisor may approve the employee to work reduced core hours in which he or she must be available to the manager/supervisor and coworkers. The remaining hours may be worked during nontraditional times of the day or night.
- c. Existing personnel rules regarding leave, hours of work, scheduling work, travel policies, and overtime shall apply to remote working employees.

#### 5. Existing County and departmental personnel rules regarding leave, hours of work, scheduling work, travel policies, and overtime shall apply to working remotely.

- a. Any changes in work hours shall be approved in advance by the department head/supervisor, including requests for flex time, overtime, comp time or other leave time.
- b. If the employee is unable to work due to illness, he or she shall report the need to be absent from work to his or her supervisor and shall use leave time as appropriate.
- c. If the travel begins or ends at the employee's home while working remotely, travel time and mileage shall be calculated from the work site or home, whichever is less.
- d. Employees who are working under a remote work arrangement shall continue to attend required in-office meetings and trainings as determined by the supervisor.

#### 6. Remote Work Setting

- a. The employee shall be responsible for establishing and maintaining a designated, safe, secure and adequate workspace at the alternate worksite that is conducive to meeting his or her position responsibilities.
- b. The employee shall be responsible to maintain a workplace in a professional and secure manner that is free from health or safety hazards.
  - i. The employee shall be required to allow a member of the management staff to inspect the remote worksite with a minimum of a 24-hour notice in order

to ensure adequate health, safety, and security conditions, and to inspect organization equipment.

- c. The employee shall avoid work that is not normally part of the job when working at the alternative worksite (i.e. heavy lifting), and for taking normal precautions to avoid accidents.
- d. The employee shall immediately notify his or her supervisor of any injury while working. After an injury, the supervisor may visit the alternate worksite to ensure it is safe for continued use.
- e. Health or safety hazards at the alternate worksite may result in suspension of the Remote Work Agreement until such issues are addressed.
- f. No employee engaged in a remote work arrangement shall be allowed to hold meetings with consumers, service providers, members of the public, or co-workers at the alternate worksite if such location is in the employee's home.
- g. An employee that works from an alternate worksite shall comply with the County's privacy and security policies; and shall adequately safeguard and dispose of confidential information as described in the department policies and procedures.
- h. Employees shall make arrangements to assure that non-work related responsibilities (i.e. childcare or dependent care) do not interfere with work responsibilities during dedicated work hours.
- i. Employees shall not be reimbursed for office supplies, furniture, equipment, telephone service fees, internet fees, other fees related to infrastructure/technology, or home owner's or rental insurance at the remote setting unless explicitly approved by their department head.

## 7. Communication and Accessibility

- a. Because communication is critical to successful remote work arrangements, employees shall be as accessible as their on-site counterparts during their agreed upon remote work hours, regardless of work location.
  - i. County-owned cell phones shall be tethered as a "soft phone" on the laptop when working remotely and employees are expected to answer/respond to work calls.
  - ii. Employees without county-owned cell phones are not expected to tether personal cellular phones, however are expected to monitor work-related phone messages and return calls as appropriate.
- b. Communication: Employees shall utilize the various technologies available to them (i.e. telephone, email, and video application software) in order to maintain regular effective communication with supervisors, agency staff, other professionals, and clients.
- c. Schedule: Employees shall post and regularly update their work schedule as directed by the unit manager/supervisor either via email communication or on an Outlook calendar which is shared with the department head/supervisor, co-workers, and other relevant staff.

- d. Meetings and Trainings: Employees shall attend required in-office meetings and trainings as determined by the department head/supervisor. If unable to attend in person, the employee shall also be available to remotely attend scheduled meetings when working off site. This may be done via telephone or use of video calling applications such as Webex, Skype, Zoom, etc.
  - e. Leave Time: Employees shall follow the regular practices for notifying department head/supervisors and the office of the need to be absent from work when working remotely.
  - f. Time Sheet: The employee shall document all time spent working remotely in the description field of the Time Sheet noting date(s) and hours worked. In compliance with Federal and State Regulations all hours worked will be recorded and compensated by hourly (non-exempt) employees. Failure to properly work within authorized hours or report all hours worked shall lead to disciplinary action.
8. Supplies
- a. Office supplies necessary to complete work assignments should be obtained during the employee's in-office time. Employees shall not be reimbursed for supplies normally available in the office.
9. Information Technology Requirements and Technical Support
- a. Necessary technical support may be provided by the MIS Department in order to maintain software applications, access email, agency networks, and conferencing in order to conduct work responsibilities.
  - b. The employee shall consult with the MIS Department to address any technology barriers in accomplishing the project or tasks to be completed remotely. Some requests may require advance notice and approval in order to allow time for any necessary or additional programming that may be necessary.
  - c. Some of the equipment and technology that may be provided include:
    - i. Agency Cell Phone
    - ii. Computer/Tablets.
      - 1. All hardware security configurations must be approved by the MIS department to include router assignment if appropriate.
      - 2. Use of the employee's a personal computer is not allowed unless special permission is given by Department Head and MIS Staff.
    - iii. Virtual Private Network (VPN) Connection: Any remote connection that is configured to access the organization's resources shall adhere to the authentication requirements of the MIS Department and must be approved by the department head.
      - 1. VPN access requires approval from the Department Head
      - 2. VPN connection requires a high speed internet connection. Satellite and dial-up are not acceptable forms of connection for this purpose.
      - 3. The VPN shall be disconnected when not in use.

- iv. Video conferencing software applications such as Webex, Skype, Zoom, etc. may be required for communication and meeting participation. Licensing will be paid for by the county.

10. Security and Confidentiality:

- a. Security of client confidential information and documents is an issue whether an employee works remotely or at the office. When the employee possesses confidential information off site, however, there is an even higher level of risk of an unintended or unauthorized breach. The employee must consider other people who may be coming into the remote location to ensure that sensitive information is not disclosed to outsiders in some inadvertent way.
- b. The employee shall comply with all applicable Department and County-wide Information Technology, Security, Privacy, HIPAA, and Confidentiality policies and procedures.
- c. Employees shall maintain the same security procedures at remote location that they employ at the office, including the use of locked cabinets or cases, password maintenance and any other appropriate security measures.

History

Annual Review Date: