



Loudoun County Government Administrative Policies and Procedures

Title: Telework Procedural Guidelines	Effective Date: 6/06/06
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Telework Procedural Guidelines (reference *HR Policy 4.3-Telework Policy*)

I. Criteria for Participating:

- (A) **Eligibility Requirements:** Telework arrangements can be initiated by the employee or the supervisor. It may be available as an option for full-time, part-time, regular or temporary positions within the County. However, there are many factors which must be considered in determining whether telework is suitable for the work to be performed and the employee. Selection is based upon review of the work, the worker and the work unit as suitable for telework. Telework is not an employee entitlement nor should it be construed as a reasonable accommodation for the purposes of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Rehabilitation Act or any other federal, state or local regulation. Approval for the telework arrangement rests with department management.

Telework may be discontinued or temporarily suspended at any time at the discretion of the employee's department head. The employee may also request termination of the telework agreement.

- (B) **Identifying Suitable Positions and Tasks:** The nature of the tasks, in terms of work performed and services provided, is the initial consideration in determining whether telework is a possibility for a particular position. No specific positions are excluded from the telework program, however, the following factors related to the nature and function of the job must be considered:

- 1) Some or all of the work activities are portable and can be performed effectively while working away from the official work site. The defined tasks do not require access to equipment or to materials that cannot be moved from the official work site and they do not require the presence of supervision.
- 2) The employee's participation in the telework program will not adversely affect the department's ability to meet and/or exceed customers' needs.
- 3) The position does not require daily unscheduled face-to-face contact with other employees or the public at the primary work location. Many positions include some

duties which involve autonomous and independent tasks. Some positions may involve a high frequency of field work which can be performed while teleworking.

- 4) The position includes activities that will benefit from quiet or uninterrupted time.
 - 5) The technology needed to perform the tasks is available.
 - 6) Clear work objectives have been identified for the job, and are defined in the employee's Performance Plan.
- (C) **Determining Employee's Suitability:** To be successful as a teleworker, employees need to possess several attributes which indicate they can work well with this type of arrangement. Employees who are considered good candidates for a telework arrangement should possess or exhibit the following characteristics:
- 1) Be able to work independently without close supervision.
 - 2) Have the ability to prioritize work effectively and utilize good time management skills.
 - 3) Be effective at meeting deadlines and possess proactive communication and planning skills.
 - 4) Be disciplined, reliable, professionally motivated, and show a high sense of responsibility in accomplishing work assignments.
 - 5) Be employed by Loudoun County no less than three months or have a previous record of successfully teleworking.
 - 6) Have a current Employee Performance Plan in place for this position.
 - 7) If employed by the County for more than a year, have recent Fully Successful performance appraisal(s) on file.
- (D) **Equipment and Supplies:** Employees and supervisors should discuss equipment, supplies or support needs prior to initiating an Agreement. The County purchase of new equipment or support items is at the discretion of the department head and contingent upon the availability of department funding to support the request.
- 1) As a general rule, the County will provide portable computer equipment, basic office supplies (pens, paper, pencils) and reimbursement or payment for any work-related long distance calls while teleworking. The employee will be responsible for transporting and installing the equipment at the alternate work site, and bringing the

County equipment to the office for service or repairs. The County will repair equipment that is damaged in the normal course of work. Intentional damage or the loss of the equipment will be the responsibility of the employee.

County equipment must be used for official business only. Any equipment provided remains the property of the County and is to be returned when the Telework arrangement is terminated. If leaving employment with Loudoun County, employees are required to return all County property and equipment within three business days of the last date of active work. Failure to do so may result in the County taking action against the individual to regain, or receive the value of, the property.

2) As a general rule, if working from home, the employee will pay the cost of obtaining internet service, preferably broadband service where available, and basic telephone service. It is expected that the employee can be reached by telephone at the remote site if necessary. Should there be a telephone or an internet service outage at either the remote or primary office location while teleworking during the expected work hours, the employee should contact his/her supervisor as soon as possible to discuss most appropriate course of action. If a wireless home network is used for internet service, the employee must ensure proper security devices are in place which enables encryption to protect the security of County files and information.

3) Other potential support needs may be identified as necessary to perform the tasks, such a printer or a file cabinet to store confidential records or documents. These items may be provided by the County at the discretion of the Department Head based on the merits of individual situations.

(E) Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). Telework is an essential part of the County's COOP, a plan to ensure that the functions of the County become operational within 12 hours of any emergency activation. Situations which might require an emergency plan to be implemented could include the introduction or spread of influenza in the region; natural disasters, caused by weather or other acts of nature; the threat or the occurrence of a terrorist attack or any situation which prevents employees from accessing their primary workplace.

A fully implemented telework program within a department provides a cost effective and reliable COOP capability. It also offers the added benefits of being routinely exercised, already integrated into the existing IT infrastructure and part of normal employee operations.

While establishing a home office workstation or one at a Telework Center is not inherently difficult, they need to be established before a crisis requires them. Affected personnel need to be practiced at operating from their alternative sites and be familiar with remote access security procedures.

Department Heads should prepare for emergency situations by:

- 1) Identifying essential functions that essential or key personnel can perform from a telework location. These employees should be familiar and comfortable in working from remote locations.
- 2) Planning normal operations with telework in mind by organizing work to facilitate electronic communication and eliminating paper-based processes whenever possible.
- 3) Permitting essential personnel to work off-site at home or at a designated telework site on a monthly basis to test the worksite.
- 4) Identifying problems and develop new processes for accomplishing regular tasks from remote locations.
- 5) Working through IT issues that may arise from dealing with a variety of remote locations with a variety of equipment.
- 6) Developing emergency training and exercises for essential "telework" personnel.
- 7) Including the department's Office Automation Coordinator in the department's disaster planning.
- 8) Helping supervisors understand that telework is an important County program, not just a "nice to have" flexibility for employees. Educate supervisors on the advantages of telework and how it would be beneficial in their department emergency planning.

II. Work Guidelines for Telework

- (A) **Authorized Workweek:** The total number of authorized hours that an employee works in a workweek is not affected by teleworking, i.e. the employee will work the same total number of hours in a week that would be worked at his/her standard County worksite. County policy and Federal law regarding overtime is also not affected by teleworking. For FLSA non-exempt employees, hours of work beyond the authorized workweek require prior supervisory approval and must be compensated appropriately. Employees may be approved both to telework and to work a flexible schedule by their Supervisor.
- (B) **Work Hours:** A schedule of work hours must be negotiated in advance between the employee and the supervisor and must be put in writing. Unless otherwise agreed upon, the employee is to be accessible by phone or email to his/her supervisor, other staff as needed, and internal and external customers during work hours.

- (C) **County Closure and Unscheduled Leave:** When the County is closed due to severe weather, holiday or any other reason, the employee should not work (unless specifically authorized by the Department Head), as no additional compensation will be provided. Unscheduled leave status may or may not apply, depending on the status of the position (i.e., essential, non-essential, etc.). Work schedule on unscheduled leave days should be discussed and decided upon in advance.
- (D) **Telephone or Internet Service Outage:** In the event of a service outage of either telephone or internet services at the remote or primary office location, the employee should contact his/her supervisor to discuss whether to report to the primary office location, work on assignments which are not impacted by loss of service, or to take Leave. In these circumstances, Leave is available to teleworkers who may experience difficulty in reporting to work and who choose to stay home in lieu of reporting to their primary office. The employee may use their own accumulated annual or exchange time or take leave without pay (sick leave cannot be used unless the employee is already on approved sick leave).
- (E) **Compensation, Benefits and Taxes:** Compensation and benefits are not affected by telework arrangements. An employee will be paid at the same rate of pay and will receive the same fringe benefits as if he/she were working at his/her standard County worksite. The employee is responsible for determining if there are federal, state or local tax implications which may result from the telework arrangement.
- (F) **Safety Checklist:** The employee is responsible for designating a work space if the remote work location is the employee's home. The work space must be sufficient for the placement of equipment and supplies and the employee will maintain the work space in a safe condition, free from possible hazards. An employee who is approved to telework from a home location must complete and sign the Self-Certification Home Safety Checklist, found in Addendum 1, and include it with the Telework Agreement.
- (G) **Liability:** Compensability for employee injuries or occupational diseases will be determined by Workers' Compensation as in any other off-site incident. In the event of a job-related accident at the remote workplace, the teleworker must immediately report the incident to his/her supervisor. The County is not liable for any third-party (family, visitors, etc.) injuries which may occur at a home work location. Employees are liable and financially responsible for such occurrences and may want to consider alternate insurance coverage.
- (H) **Vehicles:** The County may provide a County vehicle or vehicles to an employee or group of employees to be used for work-related travel, and to

facilitate teleworking in conjunction with performing work in the field. It is also possible for a group of employees to share use of vehicles.

- (I) **Mileage:** Any mileage incurred from use of the employee's personal vehicle for work-related travel will be reimbursed at the standard County rate. However, mileage incurred through travel from and to the remote work location and the standard County worksite is not reimbursable.
- (J) **Confidentiality:** The employee must maintain appropriate confidentiality of all work-related information, including written documents, electronic files, and verbal transactions. Written information must be maintained in a file box or cabinet and the employee is responsible for maintaining security of automated data. Any verbal transactions, including phone conversations will be conducted in a private area. The employee is responsible for ensuring that third-parties do not have access to any confidential, client-related information.

All workforce members employed by a department defined as a covered entity per the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) must take extra precautions to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of its protected health information (PHI). An employee working in these departments is required to complete and sign the Privacy and Security Agreement (Addendum 2) as part of the Telework Agreement. In the event of an investigation concerning a HIPAA Privacy and/or Security complaint, Loudoun County reserves the right, with prior notice to the employee, to conduct a home inspection

- (K) **Communication:** The supervisor and teleworking employee should establish a plan which details the required frequency and types of communication. This should include expectations related to: work schedules and locations, voicemail messages, attendance at meetings, and telephone contact with the standard County worksite.
- (L) **Dependent Care:** Telework is not a substitute for childcare or other dependent care responsibilities. If a child or dependent is present during scheduled work hours, the employee agrees to make arrangements for the care of that child or dependent. If a child or dependent is home ill, with supervisor approval, the employee may provide limited care for that child or dependent while teleworking or use leave pursuant to the provisions set forth in the County policies and subject to the approval of the employee's supervisor.
- (M) **Job Performance:** The employee and supervisor should discuss how job performance will be monitored. Supervisors are expected to monitor job performance and the related degree of success of the telework arrangement. A revision of the employee's performance plan, with a focus on outcomes and objectives, may be advisable.

- (N) **Consistent Customer Service:** The employee is expected to provide the same high level of prompt, courteous and dependable service to both internal and external customers while teleworking. Days spent and work accomplished from a remote location should appear seamless to the public.

- (O) **Modifying, Renewing and Terminating the Agreement:** The supervisor may modify any portion of the telework agreement if necessary. Each agreement needs to be reviewed/renewed annually to ensure there is continued benefit to both the e County and the employee. It is also recommended that telework agreements be reviewed by the employee and the supervisor in situations where the work assignments or the employee's supervisor has changed. Either the employee or the Department Head may terminate the telework agreement at any time without cause. The employee, supervisor and department head should jointly determine a schedule for the employee to return to working at a regular workstation at their primary office location.

III. The Application Process

Enrollment in the Telework Program occurs when the Telework Agreement has been signed by the employee, the supervisor and the Department Head and copies have been sent to the Telework Coordinator and Human Resources. The recommended steps to initiating the arrangement include the following:

Step 1: Evaluate the Situation

Either the employee may approach his/her direct supervisor or the supervisor may approach the employee regarding a telework arrangement. It will be helpful to review the *Teleworker Checklist* and the *Supervisor Checklist* beforehand when evaluating the situation and suitability for a telework arrangement.

Step 2: Discuss the Request Together

The employee and the supervisor should look at the criteria and eligibility of the position together; paying particular attention to identifying tasks which are both part of the employee's Performance Plan and has clear objectives. Discuss whether the work style and remote environment of the employee is conducive to teleworking successfully.

Step 3: Agree Upon the Work Arrangement

If it is determined the tasks and the employee meet the eligibility criteria, the employee and supervisor should agree upon the days and work hours, productivity measures, the designated location, communication plan and equipment requirements for teleworking. Many of these elements must be specified in the Telework Agreement.

Step 4: Complete the Telework Agreement

The Telework Agreement found in Appendix A, must be signed by the employee and supervisor, and must also include the Self-Certification Safety Checklist (Addendum 1) if the remote location is the employee's home. If the employee works in a department defined as a covered entity by HIPAA, the employee must also complete and sign the Privacy and Security Agreement (Addendum 2). Final signature of the Agreement must be obtained from the Department Head. Copies are maintained by the supervisor and employee, and are distributed to the Telework Coordinator and Human Resources (for inclusion in the employee's Official Personnel file).

Step 5: Order Equipment and/or Remote Access to Computer Systems:

- a) If a laptop is required to support the teleworker, coordinate the request to purchase the needed equipment through the department's Office Automation Coordinator.
- b) If the employee plans to access the County computer systems and applications other than through the County website (Loudoun.gov), the employee will need to fill out and submit a VPN Remote Access Request which can be found on the iForms website under Information Technology, Dept/Div. forms.
- c) Determine how telephone communication will be supported. Requests to forward the employee's County telephone extension to a remote location should be coordinated through the department's Telecommunications Coordinator. Department approved cellular phones or pre-paid calling cards can also be requested through the department's Telephone Coordinator upon proper management authorization.

Step 6: Attend Training

The Department of Information Technology (DIT) will notify the teleworker when his/her equipment and remote services are ready. The teleworker needs to schedule the following training:

- a) VPN Readiness Training (scheduled through iForms, Information Technology Training, Computer Training)
- b) Best Practices for Teleworking (scheduled through iForms, HR Training).

Responsible Department: Mgmt. & Fin. Svcs., Human Resources/County Administration