



# ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

<b>SECTION:</b> 300 – Human Resources	<b>PROCEDURE #:</b> 311–A
<b>TITLE:</b> Telecommuting / Remote Work Procedure	<b>IMPLEMENTS POLICY #:</b> 311
<b>SPONSORING DEPARTMENT/DIV:</b> Support Services/Human Resources	
<b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b>	<b>REVIEWED:</b>

**OBJECTIVE:** To establish procedures for administering telecommuting agreements on an ongoing/recurring basis or ad hoc/occasional basis. This procedure supports departments in the ability to support the County’s sustainability efforts including reduced commuting miles, resource conservation, and supporting a healthy environment.

**AUTHORITY:** The authority to issue or revise these procedures is reserved to the County Administrator or their designee. The Appointing Authority or designee is responsible for the fair, equitable and inclusive application of this policy within their department.

## DEFINITIONS:

**Active engagement:** Consistent focus and effort being applied to achieve employer-driven deliverables and goals.

**Ad Hoc/Occasional Telecommuting:** A pre-approved telecommuting arrangement for the ability to work in a home office in lieu of traveling to a central County workplace for an occasional, non-recurring, one-time, irregular, or emergency basis.

**Appointing Authority:** A Department Head (elected or appointed) or designee with the authority of appointment for any County position within their department.

**Employee eligibility:** An individual employee of the County whose performance and eligibility for telecommuting is assessed without regard to their position.

**Position eligibility:** A role at Washington County which is assigned tasks and evaluated for telecommuting eligibility without regard to the employee.

**Productivity:** A performance standard of work product expectations applied equally among staff in positions of comparable character. This measure is not dependent upon work location or reasonable accommodation.

**Reasonable efforts:** Actions that do not impose an undue hardship on the operation of Washington County.

**Regular and recurring telecommuting:** A pre-approved standing schedule and agreement where eligible employees may regularly work from home or another off-site location in a repeating and predictable pattern.

**Telecommuting or Remote Work:** The practice of working in a home office in lieu of traveling to a central County workplace.

**Telecommuting Agreement:** A document signed by the employee, supervisor and Appointing Authority that describes the conditions of each telecommuting arrangement.

**Undue hardship:** Significant difficulty, expense, or impact on services or operational needs.

**PROCEDURES:**

1. Establishing Department Participation:
  - 1.1. Appointing Authorities or designees retain the right to set the components of telecommuting agreements in their department as set forth in this policy.
  - 1.2. A regular telecommuting agreement should be reviewed and reassessed at least every six (6) months or at regular intervals as determined by the department, not to exceed twelve (12) months.
  - 1.3. An employee's telecommuting schedule will be outlined in the Telecommuting Agreement Form and kept on file in the Department.
  - 1.4. Departments may be required to provide information periodically regarding their participation to comply with State-mandated sustainability reporting requirements.
  
2. Establishment of a Standard Workweek:
  - 2.1. Employees will be expected to maintain regular and predictable attendance whether on-site or telecommuting, as described in the Personnel Rules and Regulations, specifically Article 6: Attendance.
  - 2.2. Paid leave (i.e. sick, vacation, admin, and comp) shall be utilized on remote days in the same manner as leave is utilized on non-remote days.
  - 2.3. Requests for a telecommuting schedule for the purposes of accommodating a medical condition or disability must be evaluated by Human Resources through an ADA compliant interactive process prior to approval.
  
3. Eligibility:

Both the employee's position and the employee must meet the eligibility below for a telecommuting agreement to be authorized.

  - 3.1. The position requires minimal direct supervision and physical interaction or face-to-face contact or contact that can be scheduled.

- 3.2. The position tasks and responsibilities can be accomplished without being on County premises and are not location dependent.
- 3.3. The position responsibilities and deliverables can be clearly defined and could be verified if needed while working at a remote location.
- 3.4. Position eligibility requirements must be applied equitably throughout the department, division, or team.
- 3.5. Employee eligibility: An employee must meet the following criteria to be allowed to participate in the telecommuting program:
  - 3.5.1. Demonstrated dependability, responsibility, self-motivation, satisfactory attendance record, and acceptable organizational and time management skills with the ability to work independently and prioritize effectively.
  - 3.5.2. Effective communication with supervisors, co-workers, and clients/customers.
  - 3.5.3. Consistent acceptable rate of productivity, skill, and knowledge of their position.
  - 3.5.4. Any additional departmental employee eligibility requirements, so long as they are applied equitably throughout the department, division, or team to which they apply.
- 3.6. Additional criteria that should also be considered by the department when determining an individual's eligibility may include:
  - 3.6.1. Impact on the operational needs, customer service level, or productivity goals of the department or team.
  - 3.6.2. Any current performance or behavior concerns which are unable to be effectively monitored while telecommuting.
  - 3.6.3. Departments may stipulate a mandatory waiting period before an employee is eligible for telecommuting.
  - 3.6.4. For employees in a new position or new hires, managers should have confidence that the employee has received sufficient training in their new role to perform their job effectively and with relative independence; or, the employee is effectively able to be trained via screensharing, technology platforms, or other means of instruction.
4. Telecommute Workday Expectations:
  - 4.1. Employees who are telecommuting will have the same expectations as on-site workdays including, but not limited to, workload size and management, work quality, professional communications, schedule adherence (scheduled start time, break, meal periods, ending time), overtime pre-authorization, and use sick, vacation or other leaves.
  - 4.2. When telecommuting, employees must be available via computer and phone (if applicable) and provide a contact phone number where they can easily and readily be reached during their regular workday.

- 4.3. County-issued laptop computers must be connected to the County network so employees have access to all drives and internal County web resources necessary to complete the work, unless pre-approved by specific exception.
  - 4.4. Telecommuting employees must remain available to come onsite as soon as possible if requested by a supervisor, unless there is a pre-approval from the supervisor not to come into the office. Time taken to come into the work place is not considered time worked.
  - 4.5. Participating employees commit to active engagement in work activities for the full equivalent of a regular workday. Being 'available if needed' is not equivalent to 'active engagement'.
  - 4.6. Employees must attend all scheduled meetings using remote tools with full participation, including use of cameras for online meetings when possible.
  - 4.7. All employees who are telecommuting will adhere to their approved teleworking schedule, however, it is understood that emergencies and unplanned appointments or conflicts may arise. Occasional requests by an employee to change their regularly scheduled telecommute day may be accommodated by the supervisor if practical and consistent with operational requirements.
5. Components of Telecommuting Agreements:
    - 5.1. Each Telecommuting Agreement must describe terms of the arrangement, at minimum including the specific days for which the employee may work remotely; anticipated workday start and end time; duration of their meal period; and overall hours expectation which correlates with an employee's FTE.
    - 5.2. Telecommuting Agreements may also include any information to assist in successful management of responsibilities, such as the specific time period for an employee's meal break, to assure uninterrupted service to the community or any other coordinated operational needs.
    - 5.3. Productivity and communication expectations should be clearly documented to ensure understanding between both employee and supervisor. Regular supervisory check-ins should occur to maintain the ongoing success of the arrangement.
  6. Child and Elderly Care:
    - 6.1. A telecommuter will not provide primary care for a child, or for an elderly adult that would otherwise require direct supervision, interaction, or the care of a nurse, while working at home. Telecommuters must make or maintain childcare arrangements to permit concentration on work assignments at home.
    - 6.2. If a child is ill, the employee may, on a temporary basis, provide primary care for that child, subject to the approval of the employee's supervisor.
  7. Equipment:

- 7.1. The County will provide a laptop computer at the discretion of the telecommuter's supervisor and manager. The Support Services Information Technology Services (ITS) Division can provide instructions for the data communications setup through the employee's internet connection.
  - 7.2. The employee has the same responsibility for taking appropriate steps to minimize damage to County property used at a home office as would exist at the regular worksite. Employees are responsible for obtaining and maintaining an appropriate internet connection, desk, chair, monitor, or other home office equipment at their own expense.
8. Workers' Compensation Injuries:
- 8.1. The County will have the same responsibility for job related accidents or injuries as it does at a County location. Employees are expected to follow safety guidelines when telecommuting as are expected in a County location.
  - 8.2. Workers' Compensation will apply to job-related injuries that might occur in the home.
  - 8.3. The County does not assume responsibility for injury to any persons, beyond the employee, while the employee is telecommuting.
9. Request and Approval:
- 9.1. Employees are not authorized to telecommute without prior supervisory approval.
  - 9.2. Telecommuting Agreements can be required and placed on file for occasional telecommuting at the request of the supervisor or Appointing Authority.
  - 9.3. Employees and/or supervisors will propose a Telecommuting Agreement via the County's approved form.
  - 9.4. An Alternative Work Schedule and Telecommuting Agreement can be in place concurrently so long as they have been agreed to after an evaluation considering their compound impact and not without consideration of the other.
  - 9.5. Telecommuting Agreement Request Workflow;
    - 9.5.1. Requests will be proposed on the Telecommuting Agreement Request Form and submitted to the Supervisor.
    - 9.5.2. The request will be reviewed by the Supervisor and Appointing Authority.
    - 9.5.3. The final decision will be provided in writing to the employee within a reasonable timeframe (after approximately fourteen (14) days of submission).
    - 9.5.4. The final form will be saved in the department's employee file.
  - 9.6. The Appointing Authority or designee may allow for an initial trial period of the requested schedule to determine if it is reasonable for the department.
10. Modifications, Suspension, or Dissolution of Telecommuting Agreements:
- 10.1. Telecommuting Agreements may be modified, suspended, or ended at any time for a temporary period or permanent basis for an individual or section of the department based on management's discretion.

- 10.2. Ongoing modification of a regular and recurring telecommuting agreement requires submission of a new Telecommuting Agreement Request Form which then supersedes all prior submissions. A revision request is subject to the same approval/denial timelines as the original request.
- 10.3. Employees may be required by their supervisor to adjust or forego their telecommuting day when needed on-site for business, operational, or other needs as determined by their supervisor. Rescheduling a cancelled telecommute day is at the discretion of the supervisor.
- 10.4. The Telecommuting Agreement may be revoked at any time by either the supervisor or the employee so long as there is adequate workspace available for the employee to return to a full on-site schedule at the traditional workplace.
- 10.5. An employee found to be failing to adhere to their agreements shall lose their eligibility to participate in the telecommuting program for a period to be determined by the Appointing Authority and may be subject to discipline up to and including termination of their employment.
- 10.6. It is expected that discussions regarding technical difficulties, conflicts, and modifications be communicated in a timely and professional manner. Short-term technical difficulties should be handled in the following manner:
  - 10.6.1. Step 1: The employee shall troubleshoot the issues and assess their personal internet services. They will communicate with their supervisor in the manner that was originally agreed to, i.e. notification of the problem and update of the status.
  - 10.6.2. Step 2: If technical difficulties persist and are not resolved within a half hour, the employee must contact and request assistance from the County's IT Help Desk. Employees should continue to update their supervisor as directed.
  - 10.6.3. Step 3: If technical difficulties are not resolved within a short and reasonable timeframe, the employee will contact their supervisor and discuss the productivity options for the remainder of the workday. For example, if technical difficulties prevent work from being performed after Steps 1 and 2 have been exhausted by 10:00 am, the employee should proceed to commute to the regular worksite OR if technical difficulties occur toward the end of the workday, an employee may be permitted to take the last hour or two as vacation time after speaking with and gaining the approval from their supervisor or their designee.