

Title: Telecommuting	Policy Number: POL 120.003
Reference(s):	Effective Date: March 5, 2020 Supersedes:
Approved By: Stephanie Wright, Chair, Board of Health,	Revised Date:

PURPOSE:

This policy is to establish uniform standards for implementation, selection, supervision, and evaluation of employees who are authorized to telecommute.

PHILOSOPHY:

As an employer, Snohomish Health District (District) has developed a policy for telecommuting. Certain guidelines and requirements for all telecommuting arrangements are set forth in this policy and are intended to ensure that all applicable laws as well as data and network security are adhered to. The intent of this policy is to allow District programs and their supervisors discretion in designing telecommuting arrangements that support or enhance District operations.

DEFINITIONS:

Telecommuting is the ability for an employee to work from home (within reasonable commuting distance), making use of the internet, email and telephone.

POLICY:

Telecommuting is an alternative method of meeting the needs of citizens and Snohomish County when the duties of the position allow. No employee is entitled to, or guaranteed the opportunity to telecommute, there must be a formal request and approval in place.

The District has the right to refuse a request and to terminate the arrangement at any time. Telecommuting may be discontinued with one weeks' notice by the supervisor but may be discontinued immediately based on the business needs of the District, if an employee's work performance does not meet standards, and/or an employee receives an unsatisfactory performance review.

Telecommuting may be approved by the Assistant Division Director or Division Director or Administrative Officer, if they, in their discretion, find that doing so will not negatively impact service delivery, customer service, or the overall functions of the work unit. The Assistant Division Director or Division Director or Administrative Officer may create telecommuting opportunities to enhance efficiency and service delivery.

All employees who are eligible for telecommuting, must complete the attached "Telecommuting Work Agreement". In addition, Supervisors and Assistant Division Directors and Division Directors and Administrative Officer will be responsible for reviewing these agreements on a periodic basis to ensure that each arrangement continues to be in the best interests of the District.

- 1) Eligible employees. Employees are eligible to telecommute if they:

- a. Have successfully completed their trial service period, unless mutually agreed upon by the employee and supervisor, and approved by the assistant director or director. **Those that are required to telecommute are not subject to this.**
 - b. Have job duties that are not required to be performed at the District's office.
 - c. They are available by telephone/email during all telecommuting hours.
 - d. Receive approval via the District's Telecommuting Work Agreement.
- 2) Employee Responsibility. Eligible employees may make a request to telecommute to their supervisor. The application must be submitted using the Telecommuting Work Agreement (120.003.00.01). The application must include:
 - a. Proposed telecommuting day(s) requested.
 - b. Proposed hours for days requested.
 - c. Tasks the employee proposes performing when telecommuting.
 - d. How performance will be assessed for work performed while not on site.
 - e. Impacts on the employee's work unit. Among other issues, the application should address how a telecommuting arrangement will not impose additional burdens on the employee's co-workers who are physically working in the District's offices. **Employee in positions required to telecommute are not subject to this request requirement.**
- 3) Supervisor Responsibility. The supervisor who receives a request to telecommute will consider the application based on the following process and principles.
 - a. Meet with the employee to establish a Telecommuting Agreement detailing the expectation for both quality and quantity of work to be performed.
 - b. Review employee's work relative to the agreement, making adjustments as needed.
 - c. Supervisor should consider the following factors when reviewing the request. Supervisor will complete a Position and Employee Telecommute Review Checklist (120.003.00.02) when considering the employees telecommuting agreement.
 - i. Nature of employee's position and extent to which duties can be performed effectively while working remotely.
 - ii. Operational needs, including the impact of the arrangement on other staff member.
 - iii. Equipment needs.
 - iv. Home workspace conditions, including those affecting safety and security, and potential distractions in the home environment.
 - v. Other factors relevant to a particular situation.
 - d. Recommend approval or denial to the Assistant Director or Director.

Regulations: Whether permitted or required to telecommute, all employees must understand and agree to the following rules related to telecommuting.

- 1) The duties, obligations, responsibilities and conditions of employment are not changed by telecommuting.
- 2) Telecommuting employees remain obligated to comply with all District policies and procedures. Violations may result in discontinuance of the employee's telecommuting privileges and/or disciplinary action.
- 3) Work hours, overtime compensation, and vacation schedules will conform to District procedures. Adjustment to assigned work hours require prior supervisor approval. The employee's compensation, benefits, work status and work responsibilities will not change as a result of telecommuting. In addition, the amount of time the employee is

expected to work per day or week will not change as a result of participation in the Telecommuting program.

- 4) Employees will work in a designated location during hours agreed upon and will not work anywhere else unless prior approval is obtained by the employee's supervisor. Telecommuting employees must attend in-person meetings or events at District offices or other locations as directed by their supervisor. Telecommuting employees may also be required to perform work in the District office as needed, in which case the District will provide a temporary workspace in the District office.
- 5) Employees agree not to conduct unauthorized employment when telecommuting.
- 6) Employees are not to have citizens, vendors, or other customers/clients visit the employee at the telecommuting site for District business.
- 7) The District will determine the appropriate equipment needs for each remote working arrangement. If an employee is authorized to take District equipment home to facilitate remote work, the employee is responsible for ensuring that the equipment is secured and used in an appropriate manner to prevent damage and misuse. District equipment may only be used for District business. The District has no obligation to provide other equipment or IT support at the telecommuter's home. Employees are entirely responsible for providing a safe and productive office environment. This includes, but is not limited to, a highspeed internet connection so that they can communicate effectively.
- 8) No District work product of any kind shall be stored on personal equipment/in personal accounts due to public records considerations. All District policies governing IT and the use of technology will apply to the employee who is telecommuting. Protecting District data is a primary requirement. The District prohibits storing work files on local hard drives at work and at home. The default is to store business data on District network drives, OneDrive or Microsoft Teams, where it can be kept safe and backed up.
- 9) Telecommuting employees are still subject to the rules of confidentiality and HIPAA. Information and documents must be kept secure from family members and others who may access the telecommuting site. Employees are prohibited from sharing information, documents and/or work product.
- 10) Consistent with the organization's expectations of information security for employees working at the office, telecommuting employees will be expected to ensure the protections of proprietary and/or confidential District information accessible from their home office. Steps include the use of locked file cabinets and desks, regular password maintenance, and any other measures appropriate for the job and the environment.
- 11) Employees are expected to be at their desks and available in the same way as their main place of work. They should be available to take phone calls and complete tasks as set forth in their telecommuting agreement.
- 12) The employee is entirely responsible for all costs associated with working remotely, including the highspeed internet connection. Out of pocket expenses for office supplies will not be reimbursed unless by prior approval of the employee's supervisor.
- 13) The District has the right to make on site visits to the remote work location for the purposes of determining that the site is safe and free from hazards, while telecommuting agreement is in place.
- 14) Employees who regularly work in the field (away from District office) may, with their supervisor's approval, park a Health District vehicle overnight at their residence. Health District vehicles must be locked and parked in a safe location when not in use, with no personal or District property within view from the outside. Documents with HIPAA protected information may not be stored in a locked vehicle. They must be stored in a locked bag or filing cabinet in the home.

Administration

- 15) The employee must arrange proper child, dependent and/or elder care services so as not to interfere with the performance of job duties.
- 16) Telecommuting employees who are non-exempt from the overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act will be required to accurately record all hours worked using the District's time-keeping system. Hours worked in excess of those scheduled per day and per work week require the advance approval of the telecommuter's supervisor. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in the immediate termination of the telecommuting agreement. Non-exempt telecommuting employees must also observe meal and break periods per District policy.