

## **TELECOMMUTING GUIDELINES**

**1. SUBJECT:** Montgomery County Telecommuting Guidelines and Agreement

**2. PURPOSE:** To establish guidelines that Montgomery County (the County) will use to select and manage those employees approved to telecommute.

**3. APPLICABILITY:** All County employees who have been offered and have accepted a remote work environment.

**4. GUIDELINE STATEMENT:**

These guidelines cover approved telecommuting or working remotely, such as working from a home or other off-worksites location, including using electronic communications, such as the internet, to connect with the primary place of employment. Work product, and appropriate equipment used in production thereof, is subject to the Tennessee Public Records Act unless specifically excluded.

**5. REFERENCES:** Employee Personnel Policy Manual

**6. GUIDELINES:**

**a. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION**

The County always strives to provide equal opportunities to all employees when it comes to working situations. In some circumstances, telecommuting is a necessary and expected part of the position. However, telecommuting is not conducive to every employee or position. An employee may request consideration for telecommuting in writing (email is sufficient) to their supervisor. The employee's supervisor, in conjunction with the department head or elected official, will review all reasonable employee requests to telecommute using the following criteria:

- i. Can the duties of the position be successfully fulfilled through telecommuting? Does the position have:
  - A. Measurable work activities
  - B. Little need for in person face-to-face interaction with co-workers and/or the public
  - C. Clearly established goals and objectives
  - D. Duties that can be performed alone and away from a worksite
  - E. Equipment needed is limited and can be easily stored at the off-site location
  
- ii. Are there extenuating circumstances for the request to telecommute? Examples would be:
  - A. Certain states of emergency (i.e. pandemic or other temporarily unsafe conditions)
  - B. Reasonable accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act
  - C. Other valid personal needs that prevent in-person office attendance may be considered on a case-by-case basis

iii. Is the employee a good candidate for telecommuting? Do they possess the following characteristics?

- A. Dependable
- B. Trustworthy
- C. Flexible
- D. Self-motivated
- E. Proven performance
- F. Comprehensive knowledge of position
- G. Good performance and disciplinary history

iv. Barriers and distractions faced by the employee that may inhibit the performance of duties and efforts undertaken by the employee to remove or limit those barriers or distractions to ensure work is performed on time and at acceptable standards of quality.

v. Disruption to County operations and an interest in the maintenance of balance of assigned or expected workloads.

vi. Additional costs to the County to allow remote work.

If the employee is requesting to work remotely outside of the State of Tennessee, the supervisor, in conjunction with the department head or elected official shall consult with Human Resources, Risk Management and Accounts & Budgets to determine any implications that would result from out of state work.

The ability to work remotely is a privilege, and the County reserves the right to deny, limit, or revoke telecommuting privileges at its discretion.

#### **b. EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES**

Position requirements and responsibilities will not change due to telecommuting. Workers face the same expectations in relation to professionalism, timeliness, work output and customer service, regardless of where the work is being performed. The amount of time an employee is expected to work in a given day will not lessen, although the exact scheduling of allotted hours will be left up to the discretion of the employee and the employee's direct supervisor. If an employee's physical presence is required at the employee's primary work location, then they are expected to report in person or use leave time.

All employees working remotely must acknowledge that even though they are not working at their normal workstations, they are still governed by all applicable laws, policies and procedures and any other applicable department policies, the same as if they were working at their normal workstation.

A remote work assignment shall not be used as a substitute for child or dependent care. Employees who work remotely are expected to make dependent and childcare arrangements during their approved remote work schedule.

All employees working remotely must acknowledge that, in the event of the closure of a County facility or facilities, that employee is expected to work remotely or take the appropriate leave time.

#### **c. CONTACT WITH PRIMARY LOCATION**

Employees approved for telecommuting are responsible for maintaining regular contact with their supervisor. The supervisor will act as the employee's primary contact at the County. Both the employee and their supervisor are expected to work together to keep each other informed of any developments that occur during the workday.

Employees must have approval from their supervisor(s) to:

- i. Alter their defined work schedules.
- ii. Move County-owned equipment to a new location.

#### **d. OFF-SITE WORK AREAS**

The County has an on-the-job injury program. The County is responsible only for injuries and illnesses that occur within the course and scope of employment. Such responsibilities may extend only to authorized, off-site work locations during scheduled work time. The County accepts no responsibility for employee personal property.

Employees are responsible for ensuring their work areas comply with the health and safety requirements as directed by their supervisors, department heads or elected official and the Human Resource Department. As the County could foreseeably be held responsible for an injury befalling an employee in their off-site work area, the employee is responsible for providing proof that their off-site work location and equipment is compliant with health and safety requirements. The County reserves the right to physically inspect an off-site work location. Such an inspection will always be planned in advance.

If employees have domestic responsibilities they must attend to during scheduled working hours, they are expected to do so in a reasonable manner that will still allow them to timely and successfully fulfill their job duties.

#### **e. OFF-SITE SECURITY**

While positions that regularly deal with confidentiality and highly sensitive information may not be ideal candidates for off-site work, under certain circumstances such employees may be allowed to telecommute. In these situations, it is up to the employee to enforce a rigorous standard for ensuring the security of all sensitive information entrusted to them. All County policies regarding the use of computers and the internet apply while an employee is telecommuting, regardless of whether the employee is using County-provided or personal equipment. Failure to do so will result in loss of telecommuting privileges and could result in disciplinary action. All employees who work off-site are obligated to provide secure network connections or obtain one through the Information Technology (IT) Department and should refrain from using unsecured WI-FI and hotspots. Secure internet connections are required and can be provided for no cost through the IT Department.

#### **f. EXPENSES**

Working primarily off-site could result in expenses not directly addressed by these guidelines. If such expenses are necessary for their official duties as prescribed and benefit the sole interests of the County, then the County may choose to reimburse the employee for pre-authorized expenses. Since reimbursement is subject to management approval and is not guaranteed, potential expenditures shall always be approved by the supervisor prior to the transaction being made.

**g. EQUIPMENT**

The appropriate equipment needs for each telecommuting arrangement will be determined by the supervisor with information supplied by the employee. The Human Resources and IT Departments will serve as resources in determining appropriate equipment needs. It must be kept in mind that:

i. All equipment purchased by the County remains the property of the County. All equipment is to be returned in a timely fashion should the employee cease telecommuting operations for any reason.

ii. Hardware is only to be modified or serviced by parties approved by the County.

iii. Software provided by the County is to be used only for its intended purpose and should not be duplicated without consent.

iv. Any equipment provided by the County for off-site use is intended for legitimate business use only.

v. All hardware and software should be secured against unauthorized access. A secure router or hotspot may be required if one is not already in place at the off-site work location.

vi. Employees will be held accountable for any County property used/assigned for the purpose of working remotely.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:**

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## Employee Acknowledgment and Acceptance of Agreement

I acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the Telecommuting Guidelines for the County. I agree to follow the guidelines, to protect the County equipment and information, and to perform the responsibilities of my position, as determined by my supervisor. I understand that failure to comply with the guidelines could result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor Name and Title (please print)