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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS GUIDE FOR COUNTY EMPLOYEES

REMOTE WORK/TELEWORK PROGRAM

HUMAN RESOURCES
SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY



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PURPOSE:

The Purpose of the Telework Program is to provide the County with a recruitment and retention tool while maintaining safe and efficient County operations and service to the citizens of our community. San Joaquin County's Telework program is designed to ensure that essential County functions continue at an approved alternate location during business hours. This agreement can be terminated or withdrawn, if deemed necessary, at any time by the Department Head.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Who has the authority to approve telework?

- The Department Head or designee will assess and determine likely candidates to participate in the telework program.
- Approval for any individual employee to engage in the telework program is at the sole discretion of the Department Head or designee.
- Department Heads or designee is responsible for determining the number of days/hours a position can support teleworking.
- Managers and supervisors may make recommendations through appropriate department protocols on the availability and feasibility of remote work.
- The Department Head or designee reserves the right to accept or reject an employee's request to telework based on what is in the best interest of the county and/or the department.
 - Telework requests will not be unreasonably denied
 - If an employee's request to telework is denied, the decision is final and not subject to grievance procedure, complaint, or any other appeal.

2. Is telework mandatory?

- Participation in the telework program is voluntary.
- The Department Head or designee shall determine which employee (and their associated work assignments) are appropriate for the telework program.
- No employee may engage in teleworking without the express written consent of the Department Head or designee.
- Teleworking is not an employee entitlement and the employee, upon notice, may be returned to a non-teleworking arrangement at the will of the Department Head or designee.

3. What is the criteria for determining eligibility to participate?



- Work assignments or job duties that allow the employee to be away from the office, including risk factors associated with performing the job duties from a location separate from the County worksite.
- Have a satisfactory performance evaluation, with no documented performance issues.
- Demonstrate the ability to work independently.
- Demonstrate the ability to manage time effectively as determined by supervisor.
- The nature of the work which will be performed, including the need for, and amount of interaction with the public, co-workers, and subordinates required by the position.
- The ability or lack thereof to measure employee output or work product.
- Work is not created at the office to support the employee telework. For example: employees located on-site will not be required to scan items to the teleworking employee in order to work on them whereas if they were in the office, they would have the paperwork directly.

4. Can I telework from anywhere?

- Those authorized to telework are expected to perform work for the County at the approved teleworking site, typically the employee's residence.
- Teleworkers may only work at an alternate location with pre-approval from their supervisor/manager.

5. What if I refuse to sign the telework agreement?

- Refusal to sign the Telework Agreement will result in automatic denial of a request to telework.

6. Will my salary or benefits change as a result of teleworking?

- An employee's compensation and benefits will not change because of telework. All employee directed salary structure and benefits will remain under the same guidelines as they would if the employee was working in-office following all payroll and compensation rules, County ordinances, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Resolutions, Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) etc.

WORKING CONDITIONS

1. What type of workspace do I need to telework?

- Employees on scheduled teleworking shall designate a safe, professional workspace within the teleworking site.
- The employee shall perform authorized work for the County within the telework workspace.
- Employees are not required to remain in a specific room or area, unless the confidentiality requirements exist due to the job assignment.



- The pathway to and from teleworking locations shall be kept clear and free of obstruction.
- You must identify a set telework location in your approval. In most cases, this is the home of the employee.
- Any alternative telework locations must have approval by the Department Head or designee.

2. What equipment will the County provide?

- Because this program is voluntary, Teleworkers are responsible for providing basic business equipment at the teleworking site. This includes any furniture, fixtures, printer, telephone, internet and telephone access that may be required to perform work while at the teleworking site.
- The cost of providing the basic equipment listed above shall be borne by the Teleworker.
- Department may provide additional selected equipment on an exception basis upon approval of the Department Head or designee.
- Equipment supplied by the County will be maintained by the County.
- The County accepts no responsibility for damage or repairs to telework-owned equipment.
- The Teleworker shall sign an inventory of all County property and agrees to take appropriate action to protect the items from damage or theft.
- Upon termination of employment, all County property will be returned to the County, unless other arrangements have been made.

3. What type of equipment is required to participate in the program?

- At a minimum, the teleworking site must have available, and in good working order:
 - High speed internet connection;
 - A telephone that is available during telework hours;
 - A desk or table suitable for performing assigned tasks;
 - A chair that meets the self-assessment ergonomic requirements of the Teleworker;
 - And any other equipment required to ensure a safe and ergonomically correct workspace
- Employees are encouraged to complete and submit the *“Self-Assessment of Alternative Worksite Health and Safety”* checklist to present to the Department Head or designee to evaluate the prospective teleworking site and workspace.

4. What type of office supplies will the county provide?

- Any County supplies provided to a Teleworker such as paper, pens and letterhead shall only be used for the authorized County work. Unused



quantities must be returned to the department upon completion of the teleworking agreement.

5. Can County staff visit the telework site?

- With a minimum of 48 hours' notice, a representative from the County Human Resources Division may make on-site visits to the teleworking site for the purposes of conducting County business and/or ensuring that the worksite is safe, free of hazards and in compliance with the County Teleworking Policy.
- A representative may also make an on-site visit when appropriate to inspect, retrieve or repair County property.

WORK PRODUCT EXPECTATIONS

All employees conducting work for the County at a teleworking site shall comply with all County ordinances, rules, policies, and procedures, including the Information Security Program Acceptable Use Policy, County's Work Rules, and anti-harassment, discrimination and retaliation policies. Additional requirements may be imposed for Teleworkers as deemed appropriate by the Department Head or designee.

1. Can I care for my child during telework hours?

- Teleworking is not designed to be a replacement for appropriate childcare. Though an employee's individual schedule may be modified to accommodate childcare needs, the focus of the arrangement must remain on job performance and meeting business demands.
- This agreement is separate from an employee who may be approved under the State's guidelines to telework on a short-term basis due to school closures or child's quarantine/isolation caused by a declared public health emergency.

2. Can I handle my household chores during my telework hours?

- Your work schedule should allow for rest and meal periods as outlined in your applicable Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Resolution. Those timeframes are not designated as teleworking time and can be utilized in the manner chosen by the employee.
- On the job teleworking hours should only be used for the purpose of completing job tasks and responsibilities for the County.
- Prospective Teleworkers are encouraged to discuss expectations of teleworking with family members prior to participating in telework.
- Outside influences and distractions should not affect work productivity during established work hours.

3. What are my designated work hours during telework?

- Your work schedule will be determined by your supervisor and telework hours should not affect your ability to perform all expected tasks during those hours designated as telework hours.



- Schedule and work hours while teleworking shall be adhered to consistent with the Ordinance Code, applicable Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) or Resolution, and the provisions of the Fair Labor Stansted's Act (FLSA).
- Teleworking schedules may be subject to revision as deemed appropriate by the department. As an example, if the Teleworkers schedule is 8 am to 5 pm, the Teleworker must work those hours. Any deviation must be preapproved by the supervisor/manager. For example, the Teleworker cannot decide independently to work 5 am to 8 am and then noon to 5 pm.

4. Can I get overtime while teleworking?

- No Teleworker shall incur overtime hours without prior authorization.
- All overtime will be paid through applicable Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) or Resolution, and the provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

5. Will I still get evaluated for my work if I telework?

- Evaluation of telework performance will be consistent with that received by employees working at the office in both content and frequency, including work output and completion of objectives.
- The work output between teleworking and in office work should be seamless.

6. How quickly do I need to respond to requests during my telework hours?

- All Teleworkers shall be available by telephone and/or computer as specified by the Department, with anticipated 15-minute call back times. If required by the Department, Teleworkers will forward their desk phones or use of alternative software, such as Jabber.
- Departments will identify the specified time frame required to respond to voicemails, customers, and clients. This will be consistent with the expectations of employees working on-site at a county location.

7. What happens if my supervisor tells me I need to report to my worksite on my telework day?

- Teleworkers may be required to report to the County worksite when directed by the department.
- If called to report, the employee will be provided 90 minutes to return to the worksite, unless another timeframe is agreed to by the supervisor/manager.

8. Do I get mileage reimbursement if I am asked to return to site on a telework day?

- The requirement to report to a designated worksite during telework hours does not constitute temporary reassignment and is not subject to mileage reimbursement.

9. Do I have to turn on my microphone or camera during meetings while I telework?



- Teleworkers are required to turn on the computer camera during video conference meetings when the video camera is supplied by their department and participation is required.
- Teleworkers may blur or use a supplied background.

10. How do I have to dress when I telework?

- Teleworkers need to adhere to the Department's standards of dress while attending video meetings. Ball caps, logo t-shirts, etc. are not acceptable forms of telework dress.

11. What type of work should I be doing during telework hours?

- The transition back and forth between telework and in-office work should be seamless. Work with your supervisor to determine your workplan for your designated telework hours just as you would during your in-office hours.
- Teleworkers shall perform only County related work as specified by their supervisor during scheduled teleworking hours.

12. What if I have a leave request?

- Requests for leave, (including vacation leave, sick leave, personal leave etc.) shall comply with departmental policy, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Resolutions and county ordinance.
- All requests for leave of absence shall be reviewed in compliance with all local, state and federal laws and guidelines including those under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), California Family Recovery Act (CFRA), Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and all other regulations governing requests for time off.

STAFF MANAGEMENT

1. As a manager/supervisor, do I still have to manage my staff during telework?

- As a manager/supervisor, it is your responsibility to manage staff regardless of their physical work site.
- Whether your staff is working remotely or at the physical worksite, you need to ensure that you are maintaining fair and equitable coaching, disciplinary action, training, and support.

2. What is the best way for me to determine that my staff is doing the work?

- Going from telework to in-office work should be seamless. You should continue to manage your staff's workplan and outcomes whether they are in person or teleworking.

3. How do I discipline staff who are teleworking?

- You should continue to manage and coach staff accordingly regardless of physical workspace. This includes administering disciplinary action.
- The utilization of virtual meetings and telephone conferences should allow you to still connect with your staff on these topics in real-time as you would



if they were in-person. Do not hesitate to connect with your staff or delay the conversations for in-person meetings.

4. Should I wait to do my 1:1 check-in in person?

- Do not delay or reschedule 1:1 check ins to wait for in person. If you have already set times for check-in, the telework process should remain seamless. There are a variety of technology platforms at your disposal to ensure that the conversation and coaching can still be held. This includes but is not limited to Jabber and Microsoft Teams.

5. What tools can I use to ensure that the deliverables are being met?

- The utilization of a work plan or project management plan are great resources to ensure that staff are staying on target. These forms can be used for all staff regardless of physical work location.

6. How do I make sure that my staff members still feel like a team when they aren't onsite?

- Ensure that you engage employees in all aspects of the work by ensuring multiple modalities and offerings for project planning, group work, meetings, and professional development opportunities.
- Scheduled meetings can be hybrid of in-person and virtual. This will allow for full participation and flexibility.

7. What if I have a staff member who is teleworking, but they are out on FMLA?

- You should follow all laws and guidelines around protected time off. Please be sure to connect with Human Resources regarding any questions on protected leaves of absence and time off.

INSURANCE, LIABILITIES, AND INFORMATION SECURITY

1. How is it determined if the workspace is safe?

- Completion and submittal of the *"Self-Assessment of Alternative Worksite Health and Safety"* checklist is encouraged to evaluate the overall safety of the teleworking site and workspace.
- A basic first aid kit is recommended for all Teleworkers.

2. What do I do if I get injured during telework hours while teleworking?

- In the case of a work-related injury or illness, Teleworkers must notify their supervisor immediately and complete all necessary documents regarding the work-related injury/illness.
- The County shall not be held liable for injuries to third parties and/or members of the employee's family that occur on the teleworking site.

3. Who is going to pay for my telework costs?

- The County is not obligated to assume responsibility for operating costs, home maintenance, property, casualty, automobile, or homeowners insurance, or other costs incurred by employees in the use of their homes as Telework



alternative locations, except as otherwise specified in any County policies, procedures or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Resolutions.

4. Who is responsible for damage to the telework site?

- The County is not liable for damage to the employee's teleworking site or real property?

5. Do I have to follow information security protocols while teleworking?

- Employees have the responsibility for the security of the data and other information they handle while teleworking.
- All Teleworkers shall take precautions necessary to secure and protect County information at the teleworking site and to prevent unauthorized access to any County software systems information.
- Teleworkers must comply with all Countywide and departmental information security policies and maintain security of any relevant materials, including files, correspondence, and equipment.

6. What happens if County owned equipment is stolen?

- If County equipment is stolen, the employee must report the incident to their supervisor immediately upon knowledge of said theft (no later than the beginning of the employee's next shift).

7. What happens if Teleworker-owned equipment is stolen or damaged?

- The County accepts no responsibility for loss, damage, or repairs to teleworker-owned equipment.

8. Will I get a tax break from teleworking?

- Responsibilities for fulfilling all obligations regarding tax and other legal implications for the business use of the teleworker's home based Internal Revenue Services (IRS) and state and local government restrictions rests solely with the teleworker.

As a reminder, all County staff are Disaster Service Workers (DSW) and may be required to return to work during a disaster. Employees cannot refuse a DSW assignment and may be activated to support services.