



Title: TELECOMMUTING POLICY	
Subject: HUMAN RESOURCES & LEGAL AFFAIRS	Page: 1 of 19
Category: DISTRICTWIDE POLICY	Approval Date: 09/30/2021
	Policy Number: 07.20.00
	Last Revised Date: 06/30/2022

POLICY STATEMENT:

Telecommuting is a work arrangement in which employees are allowed to work remotely, at an Alternate Worksite, for all or part of their workweek. The Forest Preserve District of Cook County (the “District”) considers telecommuting to be a practical, flexible work option when both the employee and their position duties are suited to such an arrangement. The work schedule also supports the District’s position on reducing its carbon footprint on the environment. Telecommuting reduces the overall greenhouse gas emissions and in turn, decreases air pollution in Cook County. Telecommuting aligns with Cook County’s Policy Roadmap’s goal to attract and support a diverse, high-quality workforce, and to improve service. This policy also aligns with the Cook County Telecommuting Policy.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to authorize employees to Telecommute and perform their work duties during any part of their regularly scheduled work hours at an approved Alternate Worksite. The District has the right to require or allow the use of Telecommuting to: **(1)** ensure its operations; **(2)** pursuant to a state of emergency being declared by a governmental agency that impacts the District and/or its employees; and/or **(3)** as a work accommodation request. Additionally, the District has the right to refuse to make Telecommuting available, subject to applicable law/collective bargaining agreements.

This policy is intended to be interpreted consistent with and subject to applicable law. It supersedes all earlier policies and/or memoranda that may have been issued from time-to-time on subjects covered in this policy.

This policy is not intended to supersede or limit the District from enforcing programs or provisions in any applicable collective bargaining agreement. Should any provision in this policy conflict with a specific provision(s) in the Cook County Personnel Rules & Cook County Time and Attendance Policy, the provision(s) in this policy shall take precedence.

AFFECTED AREAS:

This policy applies to all District employees.

DEFINITIONS:

Alternative Worksite: An employee’s work location other than the employee’s Official Worksite in Cook County.

Cook County Time System: The time and attendance system to which County and District employees gain access through Time clocks, an IVR Clock, or the web-based Dashboard.

Cook County Time and Attendance Policy: Policy that details the rules and procedures to be followed by employees regarding the recording of hours worked and attendance.



Title: TELECOMMUTING POLICY		
Subject: HUMAN RESOURCES & LEGAL AFFAIRS	Page: 2 of 19	Policy Number: 07.20.00
Category: DISTRICTWIDE POLICY	Approval Date: 09/30/2021	Last Revised Date: 06/30/2022

Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA): Any current collective bargaining agreement between the District and any legally recognized collective bargaining employees of the District.

Confidential: The act of or the duty of an individual to refrain from sharing other's information except with the expressed consent of the other party.

Emergency Telecommuting: A short term telecommuting schedule approved on a case-by-case basis. Usually used to address inclement weather, special projects, special circumstances or national, State and/or local emergencies. To the extent possible, approved Emergency Telecommuting shall include the dates and hours of Telecommuting and the reason for Telecommuting schedule. Should a state of emergency be declared due to natural disaster or outbreak of illness, the rules of this policy may be suspended, and employees may be required to Telecommute at the direction of the President and/or the General Superintendent (or Designee).

Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) Exempt: Salaried employees who, because of their compensation and duties, are not subject to the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act, 29 USC 201, et seq., as determined by the Department of Human Resources.

Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) Non-Exempt: Employees who are subject to the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act, 29 USC 201, et seq., as determined by the Department of Human Resources.

Non-Discrimination: The District prohibits the discriminatory application, implementation, or enforcement of any provision of this policy based on race, color, sex, age, religion, disability, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, pregnancy, military discharge status, source of income, gender identity or housing status, or any other protected category established by law, statute, or ordinance.

Personally, Identifiable Information: Any information that enables the user to identify an individual, directly, or indirectly, by reference to an identifier such as their name, identification number, location data, online identifier or one or more factors specific to that individual. It includes "sensitive Personal Information" and "pseudonymized Personal Information" but excludes anonymous information or information that has had the identity of an individual permanently removed.

Routine Telecommuting: Part of an ongoing arrangement with prescribed schedule days of the week, hours work and official worksite.

Telecommute or Telecommuting: Refers to a flexible work arrangement whereby an employee performs the duties and responsibilities of their position, and other authorized activities from an approved Alternate Worksite other than the location from which the employee would otherwise work.

Telecommuting Acknowledgement: A required written agreement signed by the eligible employee, their Department Head, and Director of Human Resources, that specifically outlines the terms and conditions that must be met by the employee and the suitability of their position for Telecommuting. In the event Emergency Telecommuting is activated or authorized, a Telecommuting Acknowledgement may not be required.



Title: TELECOMMUTING POLICY	
Subject: HUMAN RESOURCES & LEGAL AFFAIRS	Page: 3 of 19
Category: DISTRICTWIDE POLICY	Approval Date: 09/30/2021
	Policy Number: 07.20.00
	Last Revised Date: 06/30/2022

PROCEDURE/PROCESS:

1) Position Eligibility:

- a) To be eligible to Telecommute, the position must be assessed by the Department Head as a position whose duties can be performed from an Alternate Worksite with little to no disruption of department operations.
- b) An eligible position for Telecommuting should have minimal requirements for direct supervision with little to no need for specialized equipment, and the work goals and tasks must be clearly defined.
- c) Emergency Telecommuting may be authorized for Department Heads, supervisors, management, or positions with direct supervision and/or positions that need specialized equipment on a case-by-case basis.
- d) In the event Emergency Telecommuting is authorized or activated, eligible positions for Telecommuting may be expanded.

2) Employee Eligibility:

- a) Employees whose essential job functions require them to remain at their official work location due to the need to access or use specific equipment or software or are required to perform an on-site job function may not be eligible to Telecommute.
- b) The employee must satisfactorily perform their job duties.
- c) The employee must be self-motivated, able to work independently, manage distractions, and meet deadlines.
- d) In the event Emergency Telecommuting is authorized or implemented to address business continuity, employees eligible to Telecommute may be expanded.

3) Safety: Employees are expected to operate in a safe manner at any Alternative Worksite. They are responsible for ensuring that the location is free from distractions and hazards. ([Friendly Tips Site](#)) Telecommuting employees must notify their Department Head (or Designee) of any on-the-job injuries as soon as practical. The Department Head (or Designee) must notify the Legal Department & Cook County Risk Management of any such injuries using the standard workers compensation process, forms, and instructions.

4) Supplies/Office Set-Up/Equipment/Data Security/Record Retention:

- a) Supplies: Supplies for official work purposes may be provided to the employee from the District. This may include certain office supplies (file folders, staplers, staples, pens, markers, etc.) with supervisor’s approval and ordered through Department Admin Office Supply. Employees will not be reimbursed for printing paper and/or printing ink. Employees are expected to print/scan materials at a District location.
- b) Office Setup: The Telecommuter is responsible for managing their worksite, including but not limited to any desk, chair, lighting, and file cabinet. Where appropriate, employees may request a reasonable accommodation as described in the District’s [Reasonable Request Policy](#).
- c) Equipment:
 - 1. Equipment Provided: The District will supply the Telecommuter with hardware and software. This may include a: **(a)** Laptop w/ built in mic & webcam (*purchased by IT*) – use same device at home and in office; **(b)** Standard size Monitor (*purchased by IT*) – for home; **(c)** Standard size Monitor



Title: TELECOMMUTING POLICY	
Subject: HUMAN RESOURCES & LEGAL AFFAIRS	Page: 4 of 19
Category: DISTRICTWIDE POLICY	Approval Date: 09/30/2021
	Policy Number: 07.20.00
	Last Revised Date: 06/30/2022

(purchased by IT) – for office; **(d)** Cables (purchased by IT); **(e)** Keyboard or numeric keypad (purchased by IT) – for home; **(f)** Mouse (purchased by IT) – for home; and **(g)** Docking Station in office (purchased by IT).

2. Office Set-up: The District will not install equipment at an Alternate Worksite. The Telecommuter must only use District issued equipment in the performance of their duties while Telecommuting unless the Telecommuter has prior approval from his or her Supervisor and the Information Technology Office to use their personal hardware. (All District work products saved on an individual's personal hardware is subject to FOIA compliance standards.) The District accepts no responsibility for damage or repairs to employee-owned equipment. The Telecommuter must sign an inventory of all District property received and agree to take proper action to protect the items from damage or theft. Upon termination of employment, all District property will be returned to the District.
3. IT Support: On a case-by-case basis, the Information Technology Office will assist the Department Head to determine the appropriate equipment needs for each Telecommuting arrangement provided such equipment is available. The Information Technology Office reserves the right to make determinations as to proper equipment, subject to change at the District's discretion.
4. Repairs: The District will not maintain equipment at an Alternate Worksite. All District equipment must be returned to the employee's official worksite for repair or replacement.

d) Data Security/Record Retention:

1. All applicable cybersecurity [policies and rules apply](#) to equipment supplied to the Telecommuter. The Telecommuter must comply with all District policies for use of computer hardware and software, including: **(a)** [Electronic Communications & Technological Use Policy](#); **(b)** [Identity Protection Policy](#); **(c)** All Information Security Office Policies; and **(d)** All Best Practice Security Information Training.
2. Restricted-access materials, including, but not limited to, confidential records and materials having Personally Identifying Information, shall not be taken out of the official worksite, or accessed through the computer unless otherwise approved by the Department Head. If approved, all materials must be kept securely. Materials containing Personally Identifying Information must be returned to the Official Worksite for proper storage and/or destruction in accordance with the applicable [Record Retention Policy](#).
3. Products, documents, and records used and/or developed while Telecommuting shall remain the property of the District and must be treated as confidential material in accordance with [Personnel Rules](#), [the Ethics Ordinance](#), the [Cook County Record Retention Policy](#), and the [IL Local Records Act](#). The mandated data repository for District files will be the employee's District-provided web-based data storage. Extra copies and other documents permitted to be tossed under the Record Retention Policy, especially documents containing sensitive information, should only be shredded/disposed of at a District location.

5) Terms of Employment:

- a) Terms of employment for an employee authorized to Telecommute or Emergency Telecommute shall remain the same as those for non-Telecommuting employee. The employee's salary and benefits shall not change because of Telecommuting.
- b) District policies, rules and practices shall apply to the Telecommuter at all Alternate Worksites, including those governing communicating internally and with the public, employee rights and



Title: TELECOMMUTING POLICY	
Subject: HUMAN RESOURCES & LEGAL AFFAIRS	Page: 5 of 19
Category: DISTRICTWIDE POLICY	Policy Number: 07.20.00
	Approval Date: 09/30/2021
	Last Revised Date: 06/30/2022

responsibilities, facilities and equipment management, financial management, information resource management, purchasing of property and services, and safety. Failure to follow policies, rules and procedures may result in termination of the Telecommuting Acknowledgment Form and/or disciplinary action consistent with [County Personnel Rules](#).

- c) Ordinary and necessary expenses incurred for the expressed purpose of performing an employee’s job duties will be reimbursed.
- 6) **Work Schedule & Accessibility:**
- a) An employee may Telecommute no more than 3 days per workweek. Request to Telecommute more than 3 days per week must be approved by the Dept. Head, Director of Human Resources and, Assistant to the General Superintendent for Labor Matters. Requests should be forwarded to: FPDCC.SpecialReviewCommittee@cookcountyil.gov.
 - b) The number of hours worked will not change due to an employee’s participation in Telecommuting or Emergency Telecommuting. A consistent schedule of Telecommuting workdays and hours must ensure regular and predictable contact with District staff. For some positions, more flexibility in work hours and days may be possible at the discretion of the Department Head.
 - c) The Telecommuting schedule must allow adequate time at the official worksite for meetings, access to facilities and supplies, and communications with other employees and personnel.
 - d) The Telecommuter will attend meetings, trainings, and conferences, as requested by their Supervisor.
 - e) While Telecommuting, the employee must be reachable via telephone, teleconference and/or e-mail during agreed-upon work hours.
 - f) Should an emergency occur at the Alternate Worksite, the Telecommuter will notify their Supervisor as soon as possible and follow instructions as given by their Department Head.
- 7) **Employee Performance:** Employees are expected to maintain the same level of productivity while at the Alternate Worksite as they do at their official worksite. Telecommuters and Department Heads must have clear expectations for work product requirements. The Telecommuter’s performance will be evaluated in accordance with District’s Performance Management System, if applicable.
- 8) **Time Worked:** Employees working at an Alternate Worksite are expected to accurately record their work hours. For employees that are FLSA Non-Exempt, hours worked more than those scheduled per day and per work week require advance approval of the Telecommuter’s Department Head. FLSA Exempt employees are required to work the normal work week of 40 hours but may be required to work beyond such hours to satisfactorily fulfill the responsibilities of their position. Failure to follow this requirement may result in the immediate termination of the Telecommuting Acknowledgement and/or disciplinary action. Supervisors of FLSA Non-Exempt employees may not contact them outside of their agreed upon work hours, unless due to an emergency.

Employees working at an Alternate Worksite should clock in and clock out through the CCT Dashboard or may be authorized to use a time clock or the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system. Pursuant to the Time and Attendance Policy, the Department Head has the discretion to authorize the Department Timekeeper to enter the employee’s time in the CCT System. Failure to follow this requirement may result in immediate termination of Telecommuting privileges and/or disciplinary action.



Title: TELECOMMUTING POLICY	
Subject: HUMAN RESOURCES & LEGAL AFFAIRS	Page: 6 of 19
Category: DISTRICTWIDE POLICY	Approval Date: 09/30/2021
	Policy Number: 07.20.00
	Last Revised Date: 06/30/2022

- 9) **Denying, Changing, or Terminating a Telecommuting Arrangement:** A Department Head may deny, change, or terminate a Telecommuting Acknowledgement if it is not compatible with the District’s mission and/or operational needs. Department Heads shall give employees at least forty-eight (48) hours notification when changing or ending a Telecommuting Acknowledgement, unless warranted by an emergency or personnel situation. An employee may request to change or end the Telecommuting Acknowledgement prior to the agreed upon end date by notifying their Department Head seven (7) days prior to the requested change or end date. If the request to end the Telecommuting Acknowledgement is based on an emergency, the Telecommuter should contact their Department Head immediately.
- 10) **Penalties:** Failure to follow the provisions of this policy may subject an employee to discipline, up to and including termination of employment in accordance with the Personnel Rules and/or applicable CBA.
- 11) **Acceptable Use of Information Technology (IT) Resources and Communications:** Nothing in this Policy should be interpreted to conflict with the current Electronic Communications & Technological Usage Policy. All Telecommuters must be familiar with and follow all provisions of this policy. Failure to do so may result in rescission of the Telecommuting Acknowledgement.

RESPONSIBILITY:

Department of Human Resources: The Human Resources Department shall: (a) support the implementation of this policy; and (b) work with Dept. Heads to amend employee job descriptions to indicate which positions are eligible and non-eligible for Telecommuting.

Department Heads: District Department Heads shall: (a) Review the job duties of all position titles in the department to determine whether the duties can be performed at an Alternative Worksite without disruption to other employee or departmental operations; (b) Provide the Department of Human Resources a list of positions that may be authorized to Telecommute; (c) Assess the need for having all employees or positions present daily at the official worksite to have a productive department, taking into consideration the likelihood that productivity may increase if there is greater flexibility in the work schedule; (d) Determine if the operational needs of the department can continue to be met if an employee or position is allowed to work at an Alternate Worksite; (e) Determine the equipment needed by the employee or position in order to perform duties at an Alternate Worksite; (f) Determine department’s ability to accept responsibility for cost associated in authorizing Telecommuting; (g) Review and execute the Telecommuting Acknowledgement prior to its submission to the General Superintendent for final approval; and (e) ensure compliance with the standards described in the No Political Consideration Certification section of this policy.

District Supervisor: District supervisors shall: (a) To the extent offered, attend training provided by the Department of Human Resources on the incorporation of Telecommuting into a department; (b) Determine whether the employee’s past work behavior demonstrates that they are able to work at an Alternate Worksite and can meet all project deadlines with minimal supervisory oversight; (c) Complete and execute the Telecommuting Request Form with justification, if applicable; (d) Complete, review and ensure the Telecommuting Acknowledgement is signed by the employee; and, (e) Transmit the Telecommuting Acknowledgement along with the Telecommuting Request Form to the Department Head for review and Signature.



Title:
TELECOMMUTING POLICY

Subject: HUMAN RESOURCES & LEGAL AFFAIRS	Page: 7 of 19	Policy Number: 07.20.00
Category: DISTRICTWIDE POLICY	Approval Date: 09/30/2021	Last Revised Date: 06/30/2022

District Employees: The District employees shall: **(a)** Submit a Telecommuting Request Form to the Supervisor; **(b)** Review and sign the Telecommuting Acknowledgement; **(c)** Accept responsibility for cost associated with the setup of a home office; **(d)** Attend training on the rules and responsibilities regarding Telecommuting once implemented.

Once the Department of Human Resources agrees with the Department Head’s assessment, the Department Head, the employee, and the Director of Human Resources must sign the Telecommuting Acknowledgement. The Acknowledgement will include the Alternative Worksite, the Department Head’s expectation as to the goals to be accomplished by the employee in a set period and the assurance that the employee will make themselves available to respond to telephone, teleconference, and emails during District business hours. A Department Head may deny, change, or terminate an Acknowledgement if they later learn the arrangement is not compatible with the District’s mission and/or operational needs. A Telecommuting Acknowledgement shall not be required in the event Emergency Telecommuting is authorized or activated.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS:

- 1) All relevant District employees shall be trained on this policy.

COMMUNICATION PLAN:

- 1) This policy should be distributed to all relevant employees.
- 2) This policy should be added to the District shared drive, website, and intranet.

REFERENCES:

Cook County Personnel Rules
[Personnel Rules & Policies | CookCountyIL.gov](http://CookCountyIL.gov)

Cook County Telecommuting Policy
[telecommuting-policy-effective-7062020.pdf \(cookcountyil.gov\)](http://telecommuting-policy-effective-7062020.pdf)

POLICY LEAD: Michelle Gage
Director of Human Resources

APPROVAL: Arnold Randall
General Superintendent

POLICY HISTORY:

Approved: 09/30/2021
Revised: 06/30/2022 **Revised:**



Title: TELECOMMUTING POLICY	
Subject: HUMAN RESOURCES & LEGAL AFFAIRS	Page: 8 of 19
Category: DISTRICTWIDE POLICY	Approval Date: 09/30/2021
	Policy Number: 07.20.00
	Last Revised Date: 06/30/2022

APPENDIX A
TELECOMMUTING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County (the “District”) considers telecommuting to be a viable alternative work arrangement in cases where individual and job characteristics are suited to such an arrangement. It is not an entitlement; it is not a District-wide benefit; and it in no way changes the terms and conditions of employment.

GENERAL WORK ARRANGEMENTS

This document specifies the terms and conditions of the Telecommuting Acknowledgement between [Employee Name] and [Department Head Name] of the Department of [Department Name], beginning on [Date] and ending on [Date]. The maximum duration of this Acknowledgement cannot exceed a 12-month period. After a 12-month period, a new Acknowledgement must be entered.

The days and hours when the employee are expected to be present in the office or department are [List days] between the hours of [List hours] and additional times designated by the Department Head for office or for department meetings, etc.

- 1) The Alternative Worksite is [Address], this is considered [write an Alternative Worksite based on the definition].
- 2) The days and hours when the employee is expected to Telecommute [List days] and [List hours].
- 3) The employee’s duties and responsibilities:
 - a. Will remain the same as when working at the Official Worksite (regular District worksite); OR
 - b. The specific duties and assignments authorized to be conducted at the Alternative Worksite, are [specify duties or indicate to see attached description of duties and expectations].
- 4) Effective communication is essential for this arrangement to be successful. The employee agrees to remain accessible during their assigned work schedule. The following methods and times of communicating are agreed upon: [specify contact methods, contact individuals, and required frequency of communication].
- 5) The Department Head may terminate the Acknowledgement with forty-eight (48) hours prior notification. The employee may terminate the Acknowledgement with seven (7) days’ notice given to their Department Head.

PERSONNEL POLICIES & PROCEDURES

- 1) All applicable Personnel Rules and District Policies shall apply.
- 2) Non-Exempt Employees:



Title: TELECOMMUTING POLICY
--

Subject: HUMAN RESOURCES & LEGAL AFFAIRS	Page: 9 of 19	Policy Number: 07.20.00
Category: DISTRICTWIDE POLICY	Approval Date: 09/30/2021	Last Revised Date: 06/30/2022

- a. Must track and record their hours worked pursuant to Cook County Time and Attendance Policy.
 - b. Requests to work overtime, use sick leave, vacation, or other leave must be approved by the employee’s Department Head in the same manner as required when working at the Official Worksite.
- 3) The employee agrees to, and understands that all obligations, responsibilities, terms, and conditions of employment with the District remain unchanged, except those obligations and responsibilities specifically addressed in this Acknowledgement.
 - 4) The employee agrees to and understands that management retains the right to modify this Acknowledgement at its discretion.

SAFETY, EQUIPMENT, & INFORMATION SECURITY

- 1) The employee agrees to maintain a work environment that is clean, safe, and free of obstructions and hazardous situations.
- 2) The employee agrees to use District-owned equipment, records, and materials for purposes of District business only, and to protect them against unauthorized or accidental access, use, modification, destruction, theft, or disclosure. The precautions described in this Acknowledgement apply regardless of the storage media on which information is recorded, the locations where the information is stored, the systems used to process the information, or the processes by which the information is handled.
- 3) The employee agrees to report to their Department Head any instances of loss, damage, or unauthorized access at the earliest reasonable opportunity.
- 4) The employee agrees to report work-related injuries to the Supervisor as soon as practicable.
- 5) The employee has received a copy of the Electronic Communications & Technological Usage Policy and agrees to abide by its provisions. The employee understands that failure to do so may result in cancelation of this Telecommuting Acknowledgement as well as any other penalties provided in the Electronic Communications & Technological Usage Policy.

EQUIPMENT, FURNITURE, & SUPPLIES

- 1) The employee agrees that the Information Technology Office will supply the following equipment and software: **[Specify items provided]**.
- 2) The employee understands that all equipment provided by the District, records, and materials produced in the performance of the employee’s duties shall remain property of the District.
- 3) The employee agrees to return District equipment, records, and materials within **[Number]** days of termination of this Acknowledgement.



Title:
TELECOMMUTING POLICY

Subject: HUMAN RESOURCES & LEGAL AFFAIRS	Page: 10 of 19	Policy Number: 07.20.00
Category: DISTRICTWIDE POLICY	Approval Date: 09/30/2021	Last Revised Date: 06/30/2022

- 4) All District equipment will be returned to the Information Technology Office by the employee for inspection, repair, replacement, or repossession with [Number] days' written notice.
- 5) All equipment, furniture, and/or supplies not listed in item one will be supplied and maintained by the employee.
- 6) If the equipment is damaged, stolen or lost, the employee will be held responsible and may be liable for replacement cost.



Title: TELECOMMUTING POLICY	
Subject: HUMAN RESOURCES & LEGAL AFFAIRS	Page: 11 of 19
Category: DISTRICTWIDE POLICY	Policy Number: 07.20.00
	Approval Date: 09/30/2021
	Last Revised Date: 06/30/2022

NO POLITICAL CONSIDERATION CERTIFICATION

With respect to all District jobs under the jurisdiction of the Forest Preserve District Board President that are not exempt under Shakman, I certify that I am aware that I am strictly prohibited from conditioning, basing, or knowingly prejudicing or affecting any term or aspect of District employment or hiring upon or because of any political reason or factor or knowing inducing, aiding, abetting, participating in, cooperating with, or threatening any act which is proscribed above. I certify, under penalty of perjury, as provided by the law that, to the best of my knowledge, Political Reasons or Factors did not enter any District Employment Actions taken with respect to the above Telecommuting Program or the employment or hiring process. I understand that failure to comply with the above prohibitions may result in sanctions, including disciplinary action up to and including termination and may subject me to criminal prosecution.

Department Head's Name and Signature **Date**

Director of Human Resources' Name and Signature **Date**

Employee Acknowledgement: I have received a copy of the District's Telecommuting and Electronic Communications & Technologic Usage Policies. I have read and understand these policies. I have been provided the opportunity to ask questions regarding this policy. I understand that violations of these policies may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Employee's Name and Signature **Date**

Department Head's Name and Signature **Date**

Director of Human Resources' Name and Signature **Date**



Title: TELECOMMUTING POLICY		
Subject: HUMAN RESOURCES & LEGAL AFFAIRS	Page: 12 of 19	Policy Number: 07.20.00
Category: DISTRICTWIDE POLICY	Approval Date: 09/30/2021	Last Revised Date: 06/30/2022

APPENDIX B
TELECOMMUTING PROCEDURES FOR DEPARTMENT HEADS

This document provides the information Department Heads need to make informed decisions to determine if and how to implement a telecommuting program in their department(s). Please refer to the attached Telecommuting Policy, for a detailed explanation of District’s expectations.

Employees may not begin Telecommuting until final authorization is provided by the Bureau Chief of Human Resources.

1. **Determination of Position and Employee Eligibility:** The Department Head must review and approve all requests for position(s) and employee(s) to participate in Telecommuting BEFORE the request is sent to the Department of Human Resources.
 - a. A Department Head will designate eligible positions based on these factors:
 - 1) The position is assessed as having duties that can be performed at an Alternative Worksite with no disruption to departmental operations.
 - 2) The position requires minimal direct supervision with little to no need for specialized equipment.
 - 3) Work goals are clearly defined.
 - b. A Department Head will designate eligible employees based on these factors:
 - 1) The essential functions of an employee’s job duties do not require the employee to remain at their official work location.
 - 2) The employee is self-motivated, able to work independently, can manage distractions, and meet deadlines.
 - 3) The employee has not received any disciplinary actions beyond an oral warning for twelve (12) months prior to their request to participate in the Telecommuting Program.
 - c. The work objectives and tasks must be clearly defined.
2. **Review of Telecommuting Acknowledgement with Employee:** The detailed review of the Acknowledgement with the employee must include:
 - a. Dates, hours of work, objectives, and tasks.
 - b. Rules regarding employee availability to participate in meeting.
3. **The Department of Human Resources Approval:** The Department Head, the employee, and the Director of Human Resources sign the Telecommuting Acknowledgement.
4. **Denying, Modifying or Terminating the Telecommuting Acknowledgement:**
 - a. A Department Head may deny, modify, or terminate a Telecommuting Acknowledgement at any time for any reason.
 - b. An employee may choose to terminate a Telecommuting Acknowledgement with enough notice.



Title: TELECOMMUTING POLICY		
Subject: HUMAN RESOURCES & LEGAL AFFAIRS	Page: 13 of 19	Policy Number: 07.20.00
Category: DISTRICTWIDE POLICY	Approval Date: 09/30/2021	Last Revised Date: 06/30/2022

**APPENDIX C
TELECOMMUTING REQUEST FORM**

<u>Telecommuting Request Form</u>	
Employee Name:	Employee Title:
Supervisor Name:	Department Name:
Alternative Worksite Address:	Employee Phone#:
	Proposed Start Date:
	Proposed End Date:
Telecommuting Days of the Week:	
Purpose/Rational for Telecommuting Request:	

TO BE COMPLETED BY SUPERVISOR

1. Do you expect to be able to communicate effectively with the employee at the Alternative Worksite, if necessary? Yes No
2. Are the employee’s knowledge, skills, abilities, and work habits conducive to telecommuting?
 Yes No
3. Will the proposed Alternate Worksite enable the employee to adequately perform his or her job duties?
 Yes No
4. Will the proposed telecommuting arrangement result in a savings to, or other positive impact on, the department? Yes No

If you answered “no” to any of the above questions, please explain below. You may also address the employee’s concerns, express your own concerns, or add any other comments or recommendations regarding the proposed telecommuting arrangement.



Title: TELECOMMUTING POLICY	
Subject: HUMAN RESOURCES & LEGAL AFFAIRS	Page: 14 of 19
Category: DISTRICTWIDE POLICY	Approval Date: 09/30/2021
	Policy Number: 07.20.00
	Last Revised Date: 06/30/2022

Supervisor's Signature: _____ Date ____ / ____ / ____

TO BE COMPLETED BY EMPLOYEE

I understand that this request does not guarantee that I will receive approval to Telecommute. I also understand that I will not be permitted to Telecommute until I have signed a Telecommuting Acknowledgement, and that Acknowledgement has been approved and signed by my Department Head and the Director of Human Resources. The terms and conditions of an approved Telecommuting arrangement, including the hours to be worked, will be solely governed by the Telecommuting Acknowledgement, and not by this request or any verbal agreements. If changes are to be made to the Acknowledgement, they must be made with enough notification as detailed in the Telecommuting Policy. I will abide by the terms of that policy.

Employee's Signature: _____ Date ____ / ____ / ____

DEPARTMENT HEAD CERTIFICATION

With respect to all District jobs under the jurisdiction of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County Board President that are not exempt under Shakman, I certify that I am aware that I am strictly prohibited from conditioning, basing or knowingly prejudicing or affecting any term or aspect of District employment or hiring upon or because of any political reason or factor or knowing inducing, aiding, abetting, participating in, cooperating with or threatening any act which is proscribed above. I certify, under penalty of perjury, as provided by the law that, to the best of my knowledge, Political Reasons or Factors did not enter any District Employment Actions taken with respect to the above Telecommuting Program or the employment or hiring process. I understand that failure to comply with the above prohibitions may result in sanctions, including disciplinary action up to and including termination and may subject me to criminal prosecution.

Dept. Head Name (Please Print): _____

Dept. Head Signature: _____ Date ____ / ____ / ____

- Approve
- Do Not approve



Title: TELECOMMUTING POLICY	
Subject: HUMAN RESOURCES & LEGAL AFFAIRS	Page: 16 of 19
Category: DISTRICTWIDE POLICY	Approval Date: 09/30/2021
	Policy Number: 07.20.00
	Last Revised Date: 06/30/2022

APPENDIX D

Best Practices for Managing & Supporting Remote Employees

When the pandemic hit in 2020, the District quickly pivoted to remote work for office staff. As vaccines became available in early 2021, the District began exploring how/when staff would return to the office. The District: (a) surveyed employees working remotely; (b) reviewed the telework policies for the County, peer agencies, and other businesses; and (c) explored various options to provide on-going flexibility to staff while maintaining District operations, a sense of teamwork and collaboration, and opportunities for mentoring and networking. In September 2021, the District adopted a Telecommuting Policy which allows eligible employees in certain positions to work from home up to three days per week. In the fall of 2021, the District transitioned to its new hybrid schedule. The best practices listed below are to assist supervisors and employees in the implementation of the District’s Telecommuting Policy.

1. Develop & Maintain Trust

- Managers need to be able to trust employees to do their jobs without direct supervision.
- Employees need to be able to trust their managers to provide needed information and support and to treat them fairly.
- To maintain employees’ trust, managers need to:
- Be trustworthy; do what you say you will do.
 - Trust employees to do the work.
 - Don’t micro-manage; manage by objectives.
 - Be available when employees have questions or need help.
 - Don’t make it personal. When things go wrong, focus on the problem (not the person.)
 - Share negative or sensitive information in-person or at least face-to-face. Do not use text or email for this.
 - Establish a check-in procedure. A department may want to share your daily location with your team via Outlook.
- To maintain their managers’ trust, employees need to:
- Be trustworthy; do what you say you will do.
 - Be disciplined and self-motivated.
 - Be comfortable and proficient using Teams, SharePoint, etc.
 - Ask for help when needed.
 - Be available and responsive during work hours—especially core hours for your team.



Title: TELECOMMUTING POLICY
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Subject: HUMAN RESOURCES & LEGAL AFFAIRS	Page: 17 of 19	Policy Number: 07.20.00
Category: DISTRICTWIDE POLICY	Approval Date: 09/30/2021	Last Revised Date: 06/30/2022

2. Communicate	<p>Clear, on-going communication is essential.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hold regular check-in meetings with remote employees (both one-on-one and team meetings). ▪ Provide clear expectations regarding work hours, assignments, deadlines, etc. ▪ Ensure remote employees have easy access to schedules, reports, other information they need. ▪ Regularly convene the entire team in-person. ▪ Text colleagues to ask, “Are you available to talk now?”
3. Promote Inclusive Meetings	<p>Meetings where everyone is on-line are the most inclusive. Meetings where everyone's in person are next. Hybrid meetings are a big challenge.</p> <p>To make meetings as inclusive and engaging as possible,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create hybrid meeting spaces which make meetings equally inclusive for remote workers and people in the room. (For example, Microsoft is building hybrid meeting spaces with multiple screens, cameras, and mixed reality scenarios.) ▪ For small group meetings (up to ten people), turn cameras on. Make eye contact, and do not multi-task. For larger group meetings, turn on camera when speaking. (Be mindful of bandwidth issues.) Also, for large meetings, consider turning cameras on at start and end of meeting. Do not turn the camera on if you are driving. ▪ Mute microphones when not speaking. ▪ Chat is one way that people can make their voices heard, but it can also be distracting. Use chat to provide input directly related to the conversation; don't use chat to diverge or distract from the conversation. For large meetings, assign someone to monitor chat and raised hands. ▪ Provide tutorials and other training to use technology and tools (on-line polls, whiteboards, etc.) and use these tools to improve engagement. ▪ Provide training on other meeting best practices (how to use ppt, other meeting tools.)
4. Promote Equity	<p><i>Who is included and who is excluded by technologies and social practices is a complex issue.</i></p> <p><i>FPCC should further explore the impacts to employees who are deaf, blind or have other disabilities.</i></p> <p><i>Only 20% of companies help employees pay for home office equipment. FPCC pays for the computer and camera, but not for a desk or chair.</i></p>



Title:
TELECOMMUTING POLICY

Subject: HUMAN RESOURCES & LEGAL AFFAIRS	Page: 18 of 19	Policy Number: 07.20.00
Category: DISTRICTWIDE POLICY	Approval Date: 09/30/2021	Last Revised Date: 06/30/2022

5. Avoid Burnout

Some remote employees tend to work all the time. They also do not have casual breaks that occur during an on-site workday (such as stopping to chat with a colleague).

Employees should:

- Work consistent hours, take breaks, stop working when the workday is over. Take vacations.

Managers should:

- Make sure goals and deadlines are achievable and employees have the resources needed to achieve them.
- Communicate during scheduled hours; do not send emails/texts/chats after work hours.
- Provide opportunities for training and development.
- Recognize remote employees' achievements.
- Seek opportunities for remote team members to have casual face-to-face interactions with others. (For example, use video chat for informal meetings or join colleagues via video for lunch and learns, book clubs, etc.

6. Identify & Respond Quickly to Warning Signs

Respond quickly if a remote employee exhibits the following warning signs:

- Doesn't respond to communications in a timely manner; is difficult to reach.
- Doesn't meet deadlines.
- Continually experiences technical difficulties.

Managers should respond first by making sure the employee understands expectations and has the support and resources needed. If these are in place, managers should:

- Describe the situation and concerns to the employee in objective, neutral terms.
- Explain the affect the situation is having on the team.
- Develop a solution, ideally with the employee's input, and outline specific action items.
- Gain buy-in and commitment from the employee to follow through.
- Set-up regular check-ins to evaluate the employee's progress. If the problematic behavior continues, follow FPCC's disciplinary protocols.

7. IT & Security

- Make sure employees have the right equipment and software.
- Train workers to use technology and remote tools effectively. Also provide on-line tutorials for self-learning.
- Provide secure remote access and ensure employees know how to use it properly.



Title:
TELECOMMUTING POLICY

Subject: HUMAN RESOURCES & LEGAL AFFAIRS	Page: 19 of 19	Policy Number: 07.20.00
Category: DISTRICTWIDE POLICY	Approval Date: 09/30/2021	Last Revised Date: 06/30/2022

If you have questions concerning this District policy, please contact:

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