

TELEWORKING

Teleworking, the practice of working at home or away from an employee's assigned work location, is an alternative work arrangement that the County may offer to some employees when it would be advantageous for both the employee and the County. Teleworking does not change the basic terms and conditions of employment with the County, and employees are subject to the same policies that apply when working at a County facility. Teleworking is not a benefit or entitlement, but a voluntary alternative work arrangement intended to enhance productivity, creativity, employee satisfaction and/or reduce operating costs. Teleworking employees must complete a formal teleworking agreement that is approved by the appropriate Department Director/designee. The employee or the County may terminate the agreement at any time for any reason. Should the employee terminate the agreement, they must give the department up to two weeks to find a workspace.

The Department Director/designee has the authority to approve individual teleworking arrangements consistent with these guidelines. The Department Director or designee has the discretion to make a final decision on all teleworking arrangements. Department Directors may develop more specific guidelines based upon the business needs of their department. The guidelines must be consistent with the County guidelines as outlined below:

Position Criteria:

Department Directors/designees must consider the following criteria when approving a teleworking arrangement:

- Full-time or part-time positions are eligible. Limited part-time and temporary positions are not eligible.
- Position has a well-developed work plan with clear objectives and appropriate measurement criteria to ensure accountability.
- Needs of customers and co-workers can be met from alternative location. Review "Customer Service Priority Assessment for Positions" (Addendum A)

Employee Criteria:

Department Directors/designees must consider the following criteria when approving a teleworking arrangement:

- Employee has thorough knowledge of the job, performance, and telework expectations.
- Effective January 31, 2022, an employee who receives any corrective action will have their telework agreement revoked for one (1) year. Documented Reminder (Coaching) is not considered corrective action for purposes of this policy.
- The Department Director or designee may approve a new employee to telework immediately after the new employee is hired. The new employee must demonstrate they are performing successfully and meeting all County expectations.
- The Department Director or designee at their discretion may have new employees complete a training period in the office prior to the approving the employee to telework.
- Employee has reviewed the Telework Agreement (Addendum B) and outlined a weekly schedule limiting the days teleworking to three (3) days per week.
- Employee telecommutes from a location in North Carolina or South Carolina.
- Employee must meet the same conditions and standards of employment while

teleworking as if they were working at a County facility, including compliance with all policies and procedures, and work expectations. An employee who violates County policy or fails to meet work expectations while teleworking is subject to additional Corrective Action, such as skipping progressive levels or immediate termination.

- Employee must establish and maintain an adequate and safe space to work.
- Teleworking is not a substitute for dependent care. Employees will not act as the primary caregiver for dependents during scheduled work hours. Employees working at home will manage dependent care and other personal responsibilities in a manner that allows them to successfully meet job responsibilities.
- Employees must have reliable transportation and are required to be able to be at their regular County office within one hour of a call should a situation arise. Any exceptions outside one hour must be discussed with the teleworker and their manager or supervisor.

Management Criteria:

Department Directors/designees must consider the following criteria when approving a teleworking arrangement:

- Management must be committed to making the teleworking arrangement successful.
- Management and the employee will have developed a results-oriented work plan that allows independent performance and accountability prior to the commencement of the teleworking agreement.
- Management must ensure performance expectations, including telework expectations are clearly stated in the employee's performance plan. Management will monitor the performance of employees teleworking to ensure they are performing consistently at a level that is consistent with the employee's performance plan. Management will work to increase the level of employee engagement both individually and within a team by making sure the lines of communication are open and all employees are treated fairly and equitably.

Teleworking Requirements:

Employees are permitted to work from a remote location within North Carolina or South Carolina for a **maximum of three days per week**. The only exceptions are employees whose work is primarily in the community with direct interaction with customers. These employees are heavily engaged in community activities and are in the office regularly for meetings, to complete paperwork, and to fulfill other administrative duties. However, given the type of work they do (highly mobile) they do not need an office space on site. Examples include some Social Workers, Building Inspectors, Code Inspectors, and similar positions. The final determination of whether the position is a field worker is left to the Department Director/designee.

Employees who must isolate or quarantine for either themselves or their children may telework up to 5 days/week during the isolation/quarantine period. Employees will have to submit proper proof of isolation/quarantine requirements or proof of emergency school closure to the Employee Services Center.

Specific hours and days of the week must be defined and approved through a formal teleworking agreement between the employee and the Department Director/designee. In-person business visits, meetings with customers or regularly scheduled meetings with co-workers may not be held at the home worksite.

Employees subject to random testing protocols (FMCSA, FTA, Mecklenburg County Safety Sensitive) will remain subject to monthly random drug testing set forth by the Drug Free Workplace policy. Employees will be sent for testing on a day they report to the office.

Employees, by virtue of their regular absence from the office, may forfeit their assigned office space and may share space with another employee. The Department Directors/designee will determine how shared spaces will be utilized. In certain instances, a hoteling arrangement may be initiated by the department for employees so that a space is available when they are in the office. If the teleworking agreement is modified or canceled by the County, the Department Director/designee is responsible for identifying office space within the department. If the agreement is canceled by the employee; the County may have up to two weeks to address office space issues.

Compliance with Law and Policies and Procedures:

Telecommuting arrangements must comply with federal, state and municipal laws that apply to County employees. This includes, but is not limited to, the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA).

County Equipment:

The equipment and supplies necessary to telework will be provided by a combination of both the employee and the County. The equipment issued to a teleworker should be sufficient to support the employee's work requirements; however, the Department Director/designee should make cost effective decisions as it relates to equipment.

Employees must have the ability to communicate with other employees and customers in a manner consistent with a non-teleworking employee.

County provided computer equipment that adheres to County standards for hardware, software and related equipment will be provided to employees. The specific type of equipment depends on the job and will be recommended by departmental or County ITS staff for approval by the Department Director/designee. Work is prohibited from being performed on a device other than that which is provided by the County. The use of home peripherals such as monitors, keyboards, mice and printers are allowed as these devices do not store data. Text messages sent or received on a personal device are subject to public record laws as outlined in the County's Public Records Policy. Exceptions to this policy are subject to the IT Security Exception process and must be approved as such.

The County is responsible for the maintenance and support of County owned equipment, including hardware and software. Support will be provided by ITS and/or the teleworker's departmental ITS staff. Customer Support Center support and equipment maintenance will be provided Monday – Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Any County equipment needing repair or software installation must be returned to a County facility for service. If there is a delay in the repair or replacement of the equipment or any other circumstance which would make it impossible for the teleworker to work off site, then the teleworker will be reassigned to a County facility until the repair has been made, or the circumstance has been corrected. The Department Director/designee will be responsible for identifying appropriate office space for the teleworker if the County office space has been reallocated.

Cyber Security:

Employees are expected to follow all County ITS policies and procedures when working both at the office, as well as from a remote location. This includes using only agency approved software, including but not limited to chat and video conferencing platforms. Sharing materials and documentation is necessary when working remotely. Employees should only use approved methods for sharing files which includes email, secure delivery for encryption through email if warranted, OneDrive, network shares and SharePoint locations. Personal on-line

storage is prohibited for storage of any Mecklenburg County data. All County equipment should be secured at the end of the workday which includes logging off or powering down all equipment. Internet connections are inherently insecure, even home networks. Therefore, employees must use the County's sanctioned virtual private network (VPN) to connect to the County's network before performing any work. Exceptions to this standard should be submitted through the ITS Security Exception process via the ITS ticketing system. Employees are responsible for safeguarding all confidential or sensitive material when at home. This includes protected health information (PHI), personally identifiable information (PII), and county proprietary information. Paper copies of documents should be shredded at home, if possible, or securely brought back to the office location for disposal in a secure shred bin. Lastly, County equipment should be used for work-related activities only, minimizing activities performed for personal use as described in the IT Acceptable Use Policy. Additional resources when teleworking can be found on MeckWeb including but are not limited to the following ITS policies and procedures:

- Acceptable Use Policy
- Access Control Policy
- HIPAA Security Policy
- IT Asset Management Policy
- VPN Remote Access Policy

Safety

The employee is responsible for establishing and maintaining an adequate and safe workspace and for providing a work environment free of interruptions and distractions that would affect performance. The home office must meet safety guidelines, and the County reserves the right to make on-site inspections during normal business hours as defined in the teleworking agreement. The home office should function in the same way and with the same safety awareness as if working at a County facility. Employees are expected to follow basic safety precautions in their homes. These include:

- **Walking surfaces**- Keep floor surfaces level and dry. Ensure that carpets are in good condition and secured to the floor. Keep telephone and electrical cords out of walkways. Outdoor walkways, porches, and steps should also be kept clear of obstacles, debris, ice, and snow.
- **Fire Hazards** – Keep combustible materials to a minimum and dispose of trash promptly. Be sure to have a functioning smoke detector and fire extinguisher in the work area. Be sure that all paths of egress are clear of any obstacles. If you use a portable heater, keep it away from combustible materials and be sure that it has a tip over switch in case it tips over. Be sure that all equipment is UL approved.
- **Electrical Safety** – Keep electrical plugs, cords and receptacles in good repair. Use surge protectors with computers. Do not place electrical cords under rugs or heavy furniture. Don't overload extension cords or plugs.
- **Air Quality** – Work in a well-ventilated area.
- **Lighting**-Ensure all lighting is adequate and computer equipment is not subject to glare from lighting or windows.
- **Ergonomics** – Make the work area adjustable to the person working in the space. Maintain proper posture. Be sure office furniture is in good repair.

Since the home office is an extension of County workspace during the hours and days established in the

teleworking agreement, any on-the-job accidents or injuries will be covered under the County's Workers' Compensation Program provided that such accidents or injuries are within the course and scope of the job and occur during the specified teleworking schedule.

Employees must report any work-related accidents or injuries immediately to their supervisor as if working in the normal office environment and report to Concentra for assessment and treatment. Worker's Compensation claims are subject to review and investigation by the Risk Management Division, which reserves the right to inspect home workspaces following any reported on- the-job injury.

Expenses

Normal business expenses reimbursed by the County will be handled similarly for employees. Employees are expected to obtain necessary office supplies when they are at the regular County office. Local internet service provider charges will be the responsibility of the teleworker. Other business expenses must be submitted and approved using the normal reimbursement process established by the teleworker's department and the County Finance Department.

Emergencies

A teleworking employee may sometimes, but not always, be affected by an emergency requiring the regular County office to close. For example, on a snow day where the County Manager releases County employees early or opens late, the teleworking employee would be expected to follow their normal work schedule if working at home. If an emergency such as loss of power affects the teleworker's home office for a major portion of the day, the employee may be required to report to a County office or take vacation leave.

Employees who are assigned to Disaster Duty are still required to fulfill duties even if on an approved telework schedule.

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