

## **Kitsap County Telecommuting Policy**

### **A. Introduction**

As an employer, Kitsap County is required to implement commute trip reduction programs, consistent with state law and local ordinances to reduce the number of trips and miles employees commute alone to work. RCW 70.94.531 (2) (xiii) lists telecommuting as one of the alternatives that employers have available to achieve the applicable commute trip reduction goals. The evolution of technology has created the opportunity for several work activities to be accomplished from remote and/or alternate locations.

Certain requirements for all telecommuting arrangements are set forth in this policy statement and are intended to ensure that such arrangements comply with all applicable laws as well as data and network security. The intent is to allow County departments and their managers' discretion in designing telecommuting programs that align with their line of business needs.

Employees who will work at least part time at an alternate work place on a regular basis over a period of time must complete and sign a written telecommuting agreement provided by the employees' supervisor regarding the employee's work arrangement away from the regular office. The employee's Department Head and/or Director must also sign the written agreement.

Telecommuting - The use of wireless communications, computers, or similar technology to permit an employee to work from home, or alternative work location. Telecommuting means working arrangements in which the workplace is located at least part time at an alternate location, such as the employee's home or a satellite office.

### **B. Policy Statement**

To reduce traffic congestion, conserve petroleum resources, protect air quality, increase the availability of public parking around the Courthouse Campus, and reasonably meet the needs of Kitsap County employees, Kitsap County will give consideration to telecommuting work arrangements. These arrangements will be considered providing they do not have a negative impact upon public service nor impede the organizational unit from accomplishing its mission in an efficient and cost effective manner.

### **C. Statement of Philosophy**

In Kitsap County Offices, telecommuting may be used:

- To reduce office operation costs, and reduce travel costs for employees who work in the field
- To reduce courthouse parking space requirements and enhance opportunities for 'shared' office space
- To enhance employee productivity, creativity and satisfaction
- As a mutually agreed upon work alternative between supervisor and employee, rather than a reward or a job requirement
- If clear communication exists between supervisor and employee, and between telecommuter and the rest of the office

- If the practice is transparent to the public
- If standard business practices are maintained
- If consistent criteria for participant selection is employed
- If structured time policies are used to ensure attendance at meetings, agency events, etc

### **D. Management Responsibilities and Considerations**

Elected Officials and Department Heads who choose to allow telecommuting in their departments shall take the following steps before implementing a telecommuting program.

- Formulate and communicate a comprehensive department specific telecommuting policy for employees
- Develop fair performance evaluation criteria before implementing telecommuting
- Ensure that department policy provides for fair and equitable treatment of employees regardless of telecommuting status
- Establish individual employee agreements for arrangements based upon the comprehensive policy
- Establish a procedure for the periodic review of individual employee telecommuting agreements and arrangements
- Arrange for filing and maintenance of telecommuting agreements within the department

Jobs which lend themselves to telecommuting are positions in which:

- Clear work objectives can be set
- Work flow can be controlled
- Tasks on telecommuting days can be clearly defined
- Projects where quiet or uninterrupted time would increase employee productivity

A determination whether to allow an employee to telecommute should be based on an employee's past performance. Only employees who meet the following criteria should be considered as candidates for telecommuting.

- Self-motivated
- Results oriented
- Able to work independently
- Familiar and comfortable with their job requirements

- Knowledgeable about necessary procedures
- Successful in current position
- Effective communicator who is adaptable

### **E. Telecommuting Rules**

1. Telecommuting is not a universal employee benefit, and an employee's participation in a telecommuting program is entirely voluntary. Telecommuting is strictly within the discretion of the Elected Official or Department Head and may be revoked at any time.
2. Telecommuting arrangements for employees represented by a union must be approved by the union. Unions may provide approval for represented employees in general, rather than separate approval for each employee.
3. Employee salary, benefits, workers' compensation, sick leave, annual leave, and other employee insurance shall not change due to telecommuting. Likewise, the duties, obligations, and responsibilities of telecommuting employees remain unchanged.
4. Performance evaluation requirements for telecommuting shall not differ from those of non-telecommuters.
5. Total hours worked on a telecommuting day must cover the department's established core hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., including specific core hours of phone accessibility. The specific day(s) and work hours will be identified in a separate Telecommuting Agreement.
6. Each incidence of overtime must be expressly approved by the Elected Official or Department Head.
7. Telecommuting is not a substitute for dependent care. Telecommuters must make and maintain dependent care arrangements.
8. It is the telecommuter's responsibility to ensure that time sheets and other periodic reporting forms are turned in by the required deadlines.
9. In the event circumstances such as illness, power failure or equipment failure prohibit the telecommuter from performing his/her duties while working at the alternative worksite, the telecommuter shall immediately contact his/her supervisor for further instructions. These instructions may include requiring the employee to report to the courthouse Campus or other County worksite.
10. Kitsap County makes no representation as to whether a telecommuter's alternative work station is a tax deduction for the telecommuter. Telecommuters should contact a tax expert for independent advice on this issue.
11. A telecommuter is responsible for conforming to the County's policy regarding electronic communications. See Appendix F.

## **F. Communications**

Effective communication is key to the success of telecommuting. From the perspective of professionalism and productivity, telecommuters must strive to ensure that telecommuting has no negative impacts, especially on anyone outside the Department offices.

1. Telecommuters are responsible for maintaining effective communication and work flow with their supervisor and co-workers.
2. Each telecommuter must devise an appropriate strategy for communication which is approved by their supervisor. This must include clear, consistent communication with their immediate supervisor about telecommuting days. The telecommuter's alternative work station telephone number must be known so that he/she can be reached by co-workers or supervisors.

## **G. Alternate Work Locations**

1. The Elected Official and/or Department Head shall have the discretion to inspect and approve an employee's home as an alternate work location for telecommuting. When the employee's home workplace is considered an extension of the office workplace, the employee may be covered by workers' compensation laws and regulations for accidents that occur while performing work on behalf of the County and during the understood and approved work schedule. Workers' compensation shall NOT apply to non-job related injuries that occur in the home
2. All approved work locations must be maintained by the telecommuter in a clean, professional, and safe condition
3. At mutually agreed-upon times, the County shall have the right to make on-site inspection of the work area and County-owned equipment, to ensure that safe working conditions exist
4. Except for local calls, the County will reimburse the employee on a case-by-case basis for job-related telephone expenses incurred by the employee at home. The employee must present an itemized copy of the telephone bill for reimbursement. The County will not be responsible for any basic phone service
5. The public will not be given a telecommuter's home phone number
6. Any hardware or software purchased by the County remains the property of the County and will be returned to the County when the telecommuting agreement is terminated
7. For security purposes, only Kitsap County software may be installed on County-owned equipment
8. Restricted-access materials (such as payroll and personnel files) may not be removed from County offices or accessed through computers from a remote location without the written permission of the Elected Official or Department Head
9. County equipment located at an alternate worksite may not be used for personal purposes
10. Supplies required to complete assigned work at the alternate work location should be obtained during one of the telecommuter's in-office work periods. Out-of-pocket expenses for materials and supplies normally available through the County will not be reimbursed

11. Kitsap County shall not be liable for loss, damage, or wear and tear of employee-owned equipment or supplies used in telecommuting

**H. Software** - The programs, routines, and symbolic languages that control the functioning of the hardware and direct its operation.

1. While working at home performing County functions, employees must conform to software standards established by the County Department of Information Services. Under most circumstances employees will be allowed to run a copy of County standard software on the PC they have at home based on the various manufacturer's licensing agreements. It will be the telecommuter's responsibility to contact Information Services to ensure that the software they plan to use conforms to this agreement.
2. All software, virus protection, and other operational utilities are required to be patched and updated to the same level that is maintained on County systems
3. No County software is to be copied and used off-site without the written approval of the employee's Department Head and/or Information Services
4. Telecommuters using County software must adhere to the manufacturer's licensing agreement

## **I. Hardware**

1. Employees using personally owned hardware are required to be self-supporting of their hardware to ensure it meets the standard configuration requirements as County hardware.
2. Employees using County equipment at an alternate work place are responsible for taking care of the equipment to protect it from damage or theft. Employees must take reasonable measures to protect against computer viruses.
3. Both personal and county equipment must be physically protected. Any access must have County standard complex passwords.
4. Incidents of damage or theft will be examined to determine whether loss resulted from employee gross negligence, intentional misuse, or violation of rules and procedures employee has agreed to follow.