

TELECOMMUTING HANDBOOK



Clatsop County

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Table of Contents

A-35 Telecommuting Policy	1
Telecommuting Guidelines	6
Form A Telecommuting Employee Application Form	11
Form B Telecommuting Approval/Signature	13
Form C Employee - Supervisor Agreement Form	14
Form D Telecommuting Security Agreement Form	15
Form E Telecommuting Safety Checklist Form	16

CLATSOP COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY NO. A-35

SUBJECT: Telecommuting Policy

DATE: November 2020

I. PURPOSE

The telecommuting policy provides criteria, standards and processes for the evaluation, implementation and management of telecommuting assignments. Telecommuting is an option for addressing temporary and extended work assignments where a remote temporary duty station will mutually benefit the employer and employee.

II. AUTHORITY

Clatsop County Charter Chapter VI, section 4. Personnel Policy and Chapter IV, section 2. County Manager. County Code, Title 2, Chapter 2.20.

III. APPLICABILITY

Applies to all Clatsop County employees.

IV. DEFINITIONS

- a. Duty Station – refers to the physical location (county owned or leased space) to which an employee is assigned and normally works.
- b. Mutual Benefit – refers to the notion that telecommuting assignments must meet the needs of the employer and employee. It incorporates the underlying assumption that a telecommuting assignment will contribute to productivity, customer service, team relations/cohesiveness, and quality of work; while providing a convenience to the employee.
- c. Telecommuting – refers to the act of performing assigned duties and responsibilities from a remote (temporary duty station) location.
- d. Temporary Duty Station – refers to the physical location to which an employee is temporarily assigned and works, which may include home or satellite office.

V. GENERAL POLICY

Telecommuting is an arrangement that allows employees to temporarily and conditionally work at a location other than the assigned duty station, such as an employee's home or satellite office. Telecommuting may be used for part of, or an entire work week, and may be intermittent or regular.

Four elements are required for successful telecommuting: 1) work that is fairly independent in nature; 2) employee is productive, responsible, self-motivated and skilled in assigned duties and responsibilities; 3) supervisor is willing and able to provide oversight and support without being in constant visual contact with the employee; and 4) employee has reliable and sufficient internet and phone service.

The Clatsop County Telecommuting Program is designed for select employees who meet specific work standards and expectations, as described in this policy.

The goals of the program are to 1) promote efficient use of County resources; 2) promote quality work and productivity; 3) promote customer service and team coordination; 4) promote a mutual benefit to the employee and employer; and 5) promote a method to respond to emerging workplace challenges (such as COVID-19).

VI. PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Each participating department will comply with these guidelines.

- a. Departments will evaluate/review employee application for telecommuting based on suitability, the likelihood of success and the supervisor's ability and willingness to manage the employee. All participants (supervisors or employees) must have the approval of the Department Director, and/or elected official, with review and sign-off by Human Resources and Information Technology.
- b. All telecommuting employees and supervisors will: 1) comply with screening and selection criteria; 2) agree to follow Participation Guidelines; and 3) sign telecommuting agreements;
- c. Participation in the Telecommuting Program is voluntary. The department director may, at any time, cancel or modify the telecommuting agreement permanently or temporarily.
- d. Except in cases of an emergency or failures to comply with the Policy or Agreement, the department director shall provide an employee with seven (7) calendar days' notice of a permanent schedule change and or twelve (12) hour notice of a temporary change. The employee must provide the department director seven (7) calendar days' notice of intention to return to the assigned duty station. Timeframes may be modified by mutual agreement of the department director and employee.
- e. The Human Resources and Information Technology Departments will provide technical assistance to departments upon request.
- f. Final decision as to approval or modification of the telecommuting assignment rest solely with the department director and/or elected official.

VII. PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES

- a. The duties, obligations, responsibilities, and conditions of a County employee are not changed by telecommuting. An employee's salary, retirement, benefits, and insurance coverage remain unchanged.
- b. The telecommuting employee remains obligated to comply with all County

rules, policies, practices and instructions. Violation may preclude participation in telecommuting and/or disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

- c. Work hours, overtime compensation, and vacation schedule will conform with personnel rules and/or collective bargaining agreement, Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), and to any other terms agreed upon by employee and supervisor, except that, those terms may not violate the laws/provisions stated within.
- d. Telecommuting may occur on a regular, part-time or periodic basis, which is arranged with the supervisor. Requests to work overtime, use sick leave, vacation, or other accrued leave must be pre-approved by the supervisor in the same manner as when working at regular duty station.
- e. Employee will work at an approved designated location during the hours agreed upon. Employee will not work at an unauthorized location.
- f. Employee agrees not to engage in employment activities other than County assignments during telecommuting hours.
- g. Expectations must be pre-established between telecommuter and supervisor regarding work assignment(s), productivity level, and productivity measurements to be used when employee is telecommuting.
- h. Information Technology must approve all arrangements for the use or installation of County computer equipment. Required office supplies will be provided by the department. All requests for equipment and supplies must be approved by the supervisor.
- i. Use of County equipment and supplies is restricted to authorized persons for purposes related to County business. The County will provide for repairs for equipment. Employee will cover all utility costs incurred while working from home, including internet access and phone.
- j. In the event of delay in repair, replacement or acquisition of equipment or any other circumstance under which it would be problematic for the employee to telecommute, the employee will be assigned other work and/or return to assigned duty station.
- k. Employees must designate a workspace at home that is maintained in safe condition, free from hazards. Telecommuter will be responsible for completing a home/work safety checklist. Any accident must be timely reported to the supervisor.
- l. With 24-hour advance notice, a representative of the County may make on-site visits to determine that the work site is safe and free from hazards, and to maintain, repair, inspect or retrieve County-owned equipment.
- m. Telecommuters must be able to receive and respond to communications from other staff, supervisors, and clients. Communication methods will be incorporated into the written agreement between supervisor and employee.
- n. The County's workers' compensation liability for job-related accidents will continue during the employee's telecommuting work hours, which are the department's normally scheduled work hours.
- o. Telecommuter is liable for injuries to third parties on employee's premise.

Clatsop County is not liable for damage to the employee's real or personal property. Employees are advised to consider incidental office liability coverage. This coverage is an extension of homeowner or rental policy to cover "business pursuits" at the home. The County is not responsible for any additional premium that may be charged.

- p. Telecommuter will take precautions necessary to secure County information and equipment in the home, prevent unauthorized access, and will sign an equipment security agreement.
- q. Telecommuter will comply with all Clatsop County policies.
- r. The telecommuter must provide child or dependent care in a manner that allows job responsibilities to be consistently and professionally fulfilled.
- s. Telecommuter employee's home addresses remain confidential and are not released to clients or other members of the public.
- t. Non-compliance with these regulations can result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.'

VIII. EQUIPMENT

1. Each department will determine the technology requirements for any given telecommuting assignment.
2. With few exceptions, County equipment, supplies and network access will be provided. Department's should consult with IT early in the process to identify and procure equipment and establish access rights.
3. Equipment and software must be restricted to County use.
4. All equipment and software owned by the County will be repaired and maintained by the County. Any employee owned equipment is the responsibility of the employee.
5. An inventory of County-owned hardware, software, and other equipment shall be maintained by the department.
6. Ownership of all data and files will be retained by the County and the employee must adhere to public records laws and other laws, policies and procedures.

IX. SECURITY

Data and information must be managed according to state law and County policy. Telecommuters must establish data security procedures with household members. Access codes and passwords will not be shared with unauthorized personnel.

A signed Security Agreement must be included in the application packet.

X. SAFETY

As part of telecommuting, employee must ensure safety and ergonomic standards are met. The workspace must have adequate lighting, ventilation and furniture that is comfortable and safe. Posted emergency phone numbers and first aid kit are also

important items for the home office.

If injured while working at home, policies and procedures apply the same as if you were injured while working at your County duty station. Report the injury immediately to your supervisor.

Each Clatsop County employee accepted into the Telecommuting Program must complete and submit a Safety Checklist before beginning to telecommute.

XI. REQUIRED FORMS AND AGREEMENTS

- a. Employee Application (Form A)
- b. Telecommuting Approval/Signature Routing (Form B)
- c. Employer/Supervisor Agreement (Form C)
- d. Security Agreement (Form D)
- e. Telecommuting Safety Checklist (Form E)

XII. IMPLEMENTATION

Elected officials and department directors are to be knowledgeable of, and responsible for, implementing this policy within respective departments.

XIII. PERIODIC REVIEW

The policy shall be reviewed and updated by the County Manager's Office every three (3) years, or more frequently as necessary.



TELECOMMUTING GUIDELINES

SUCCESSFUL TELECOMMUTING

Telecommuting is not as simple as staying at home and working. It requires careful planning, discipline and quality communication with supervisor, coworkers and clients. The following describes basic tools for working at home and maintaining or increasing productivity and work quality.

Getting Organized

Develop a thoughtful plan to deploy good work habits from the initial days of telecommuting:

- Identify a suitable work location – Identify a safe and quiet workspace. Locate your workstation away from distractions.
- Organize supplies and equipment – Have the necessary tools and supplies to work efficiently.
- Establish a routine – Set a work schedule and remain committed. Begin and end work at the same time. This will help establish a routine.
- Make a to-do list for work assignments - Develop a list of goals and assignments for the day. At the end of the day, go over the list and see how much you have been able to accomplish. Prepare your list for the next day.
- Replace the ritual of getting ready for the office with another ritual – As a telecommuter, you will no longer have the traditional office rituals. Establish new rituals for telecommuting. Some telecommuters leave their house, go for a walk, and begin the workday. Others play specific music, or begin working after a morning exercise session. Find a ritual that works for you.
- Have an end of the day ritual – It is a good practice to have an end of the day ritual. Be creative:
 - Turn off the computer and lights
 - Close the door to your office.
 - Go for a walk.
 - Pick up children from school or day care.
 - Change your clothes.
 - Sit down and relax.

Managing your work

As a telecommuter, it is necessary to manage your work efficiently. It is up to you to stay connected to your supervisor, coworkers and clients and manage your productivity.

- Maintain contact with your office. Check messages regularly and respond in a timely fashion.
- Establish an organized system at home – If you do not make the time to organize your resources and materials, your productivity will suffer.



- Stick to deadlines – follow the same rules for deadlines as if you were in the office.
- Attend department meetings – electronically or in-person (as requested) participate in department or work group meetings. Do not allow yourself to be untethered to your supervisor and coworkers.
- Be considerate of co-workers – Set a good example, by being productive while working away from the office. Be sensitive not to be an imposition on coworkers in the office.

Communicating with Supervisor

Take the time to clearly understand expectations between you and your supervisor and agree upon evaluation and accountability techniques.

- Use the application questionnaire to assist you and your supervisor to determine exactly what tasks or projects will be accomplished during telecommuting.
- Develop a detailed agreement of assignment and expectations with your supervisor.
- Determine a timeline for evaluating success of telecommuting.
- Schedule and maintain a regular reporting “check-in” time with your supervisor.
- Build up trust in telecommuting by informal and formal reports to your supervisor.

Family members and friends

In order for telecommuting to work, you must be fully committed to productivity and a solid work ethic. It is still work, it must be productive, it must support and complement your coworkers and the value you provide to the “team” should be self-evident.

- The message is: You are working from home –which requires set aside time to fulfill your duties and responsibilities. Reinforce that you have the same objectives, goals and deadlines as you do in the office.
- Decide which interruptions are appropriate – develop ground rules for managing interruptions while telecommuting.
 - Establish guidelines for use of equipment and office supplies – develop an understanding with household members regarding the restrictions of using office supplies and equipment; such items are not for personal use.
- Telecommuting requires balancing family and friends – Telecommuting can allow more flexibility in managing a wide range of family needs, but it is not generally a replacement for dependent care.

Developing good habits

- Pace yourself – make sure you take breaks. Remember, all time needs to be reported and overtime must be pre-authorized by your supervisor.



Begin and end the workday in a timely manner. Do not develop bad work habits and do less work than before.

- Watch for bad habits – be sure to stay productive, healthy and happy and avoid any activities (watching tv, talking on phone, engaging in social media) that distract you from your work.

The key to successful telecommuting includes managing your workspace, job, family and household members and yourself. Remember, there are rules to follow in the office and rules to follow at home. It is your responsibility to make telecommuting work for you, supervisor and coworkers.

The Do's And Don'ts Of Telecommuting

DO	DON'T
Select a workspace at home	Procrastinate
Take a walk before starting workday	Develop bad work habits
Stick to the same schedule	Become distracted at home
Take appropriate breaks	Become a burden to coworkers
Keep organized	Set a bad example for others
Plan/schedule your workday	Slack-off or become complacent
Avoid interruptions	Confuse the privilege with a right
Keep in touch with supervisor/coworkers	Continue if it is not working for you or your family
Adhere to deadlines	
Maintain productivity/performance	
Attend all department meetings	
Have an end of workday ritual	
Be honest with yourself and supervisor if telecommuting is not working for you	

SUPERVISING

Supervising telecommuters demands the same skills that are required for good supervision of any employee, including communication, organization and trust.

Organization

- Assist telecommuters organize their work - understand the timeframes and resources involved in completing tasks.
- Communicate work expectations – establish a means of communicating the expected end product, due date, quality and other criteria that must be met to successfully perform the assignment or project.

Communication may include phone calls, a regular in person meeting or written correspondence. Use whatever means of communication is most comfortable for you and the employee.



- Review status – “Check-in” with employees regularly. Problem solve where appropriate. Assess whether or not telecommuting is working and what types of adjustment are needed.
- Promote professional development – reinforce positive professional behavior. Bring unsatisfactory performance to employee’s attention and develop capabilities in your employees to correct deficiencies. Provide timely and ongoing feedback.

Managing by Objectives

Managing by objectives or “outcomes” is a way to clearly communicate work expectation.

A few steps to follow in MBO:

- Prepare an itemized list of expectations that describes the work objectives on a weekly, monthly or quarterly basis. Expectations should be specific and clear.
- Expectations can detail tasks or simply describe the end product. Level of specificity depends on the working relationship between supervisor and employee, and the complexity and size of the work project.
- Telecommuter and supervisor should establish the objectives and timeline together and agree on criteria that must be met to satisfactorily complete the task.
- Track the results through meetings and written records. If you have weekly objectives, meet every week to review accomplishments and make any necessary adjustments to the timeline, assignment or objectives.
- Both supervisor and telecommuter should maintain copies of the objectives and timelines as well as any adjustments made to expectations.

By clarifying expectations, detailing tasks and timelines, and consistently checking on progress, you will automatically develop ways to account for work accomplished.

Follow the basic rules of good supervision in order to ensure a method of accountability most comfortable for you and the telecommuting employee.

MANAGING NON-TELECOMMUTERS

- As you evaluate telecommuters, it is necessary to consider and work carefully with the non-telecommuters to avoid feelings of resentment regarding “why does “X” telecommute and not me?” Prepare in advance the necessary documentation you will need to support the decision.
- Develop a team approach. Non-telecommuters are as critical to the department’s effectiveness as the telecommuters. Your understanding of



how each employee contributes to the team will support further development of a working team.

- Be ready to address issues and openly communicate with the entire team.
- Be ready to adjust – telecommuting must work for the individual telecommuter and the broader team. Develop contingency plans to guide the team through the inevitable bumps in the road.

What Happens if it is Not Working?

Not everyone who telecommutes is successful. While the application process attempts to identify successful telecommuters, there is no guarantee. Some reasons why the telecommuter may need to terminate participation, include:

- Uncontrollable distractions
- Cabin Fever
- Productivity and/or quality of work issues
- Negative impacts on coworkers
- Desire to be around coworkers

If telecommuting is not working; simply revert back to regularly assigned duty station.

The DO's and Don'ts of Supervising Telecommuters

DO	DON'T
Trust telecommuter	Call employee every hour
Encourage good organizational skills	Ask for constant status reports
Encourage goal setting	Neglect/Ignore problems
Appropriate and timely feedback	Set unattainable goals
Make time to plan	Manage by over-supervising
Manage by results	
Communicate regularly	
Be flexible	
Expect the program to evolve and change	
Actively supervise	
Delegate assignments equitably between telecommuters and non-telecommuters	
Schedule regular status reports	
Be prepared	



Form A

Telecommuting Employee Application Form

Complete the application and submit to your supervisor. If approved by the supervisor, it will be routed to the department director and/or elected official. If the director approves, it will be submitted to Human Resources and Information Technology for final review. If approved and signed-off, a copy will be returned to the Department and routed as appropriate. Once the application is approved, the employee and supervisor will finalize the agreement, including all other required forms and sign-offs.

Applicant's Name _____ Supervisor _____

Department _____ Position _____

1. Describe the work you will conduct from temporary duty station on telecommuting days.
2. Describe your preferred telecommuting schedule – days and hours.
3. Describe any current duties and responsibilities that cannot be performed from temporary duty station; or whose performance will be less efficient or effective.
4. Describe any current duties and responsibilities that will be improved by the temporary duty station.
5. Describe any impacts telecommuting will have on coworkers – and suggested mitigation and/or remedies.
6. Describe how you will report and account for the work performed during telecommuting.



Form B
Telecommuting Approval/Signature

Applicant's Name _____ Date Submitted _____

Department _____ Position _____

Approval Routing

Supervisor

- Approved
- Approved, with modification
- Denied

Comments:

Signature _____ Date _____

Department Director and/or elected official

- Approved
- Approved, with modification
- Denied

Comments:

Signature _____ Date _____

Technical Review Routing

Information Systems

- Reviewed

Comments:

Signature _____ Date _____

Human Resources

- Reviewed

Comments:

Signature _____ Date _____



Form C

Employee-Supervisor Agreement Form

This agreement specifies the telecommuting arrangement and is signed when employee has been approved by the department director and/or elected official for telecommuting.

Employee agrees to comply with all Clatsop County policies and procedures.

Employee will telecommute on the following schedule:

Work assignments will be reported and accounted for in the following manner:

The following equipment will be used:

Employee will maintain regular communication with supervisor and coworkers as detailed below:

The following meetings will be attended by telecommuting employee (note virtual or in-person)

Employee agrees to obtain all supplies from department. Out of pocket expenses for supplies available from department will not be reimbursed. If using procurement card, shipping address should remain at physical County office (not home address).

Employee and supervisor acknowledge telecommuting is voluntary and may be terminated or modified as provided in the policy.

Employee acknowledges familiarity with Telecommunications Policy and Guidelines.

The request for telecommuting has been approved by the supervisor, department director, Information Technology and Human Resources.

Supervisor Signature _____ Date _____

Employee Signature _____ Date _____

This agreement must be accompanied by:

1. Approved employee application
2. Signed Approval/Signature Form
3. Signed security agreement
4. Telecommuter Safety Checklist



Form D

Telecommuting Security Agreement Form

When working from a temporary duty station (i.e. home), it is the responsibility of the telecommuter to protect County assets, information and information technology.

1. Confidential papers, purchasing information, and equipment will be maintained in a secure area with controlled access.
2. Equipment belonging to the employee that contains County information will be protected by password or other access control methods developed by IT.
3. Documents containing sensitive information will be returned to a County work location for proper disposal.
4. Transportation of documents or materials to and from the temporary duty station will be in a safe, secure and confidential manner. Files, materials and equipment will not be left unattended in vehicles and will be maintained in a secure area. Household members will not have access to confidential records.
5. Requests for system access will be in writing and subject to the approval of IT. The employee will not access data by any unauthorized means.
6. Other:

I agree to follow the above security procedures and all technical guidelines.

Employee Signature _____ Date _____

Supervisor Signature _____ Date _____



Form E

Telecommuting Safety Checklist Form

Workspace

- Employee has a separate, clearly defined work space
- The work area is adequately illuminated
- Exits and pathways are free of obstructions
- Supplies and equipment are available
- Work area is well ventilated and heated
- Surge protectors are used for electronic equipment
- Heavy items are securely placed on sturdy stands
- Computer equipment are maintained out of direct sunlight and away from heaters
- First aid kit is available and accessible
- Fire extinguisher is available and accessible and rated for A, B, and C

Ergonomics

Desk, PC and other equipment are of appropriate design and arranged so that:

- Neck and shoulders are not stooped to view the task
- There is no glare on the terminal screen
- Work can be performed without eyestrain
- There is no strain on any part of the body

Comments:

Employee Signature _____ Date _____

Supervisor Signature _____ Date _____