



## CITY OF PROVIDENCE

### 4.4 TELECOMMUTING POLICY

#### **Purpose**

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The City of Providence seeks to continue to allow employee participation in telecommuting practices to the extent that they maintain or improve organizational performance without impacting the performance of individual employees. It is also the city's intention to remain competitive in attracting qualified talent in an environment where candidates are expecting flexibility in the ability to work remotely for at least part of their work week. To this end, the following policy has been developed, to guide management in determining which roles will be allowed to telecommute for a portion of their working hours, and how much in-office time will be required.

#### **Scope**

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This policy applies solely to non-union City of Providence employees and City employees represented by Local Union 1033.

#### **Policy**

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Telecommuting allows employees to work at home, on the road or in a satellite location for part of their workweek. The City of Providence considers telecommuting to be a viable, flexible work option when both the employee and the job are suited to such an arrangement. Telecommuting may be appropriate for some employees and jobs but not for others. Telecommuting is not an entitlement, it is not a citywide benefit, and it in no way changes the terms and conditions of employment with The City of Providence.

##### **1. General Standards**

- A. Department directors shall have discretion, based upon operational feasibility, regarding which staff is granted the ability to telecommute, which shall be periodically submitted to the Department of People and Culture (DPC) for review, and updated as needed.
- B. Directors are responsible for providing telecommuting employees with the same level of guidance, support, and supervision as when employees are not telecommuting.
- C. Employees are required to work three (3) consecutive days in person, with up to two (2) days of remote flexibility.
- D. Remote work will not be on a set schedule and should not be deployed on Monday or Friday whenever possible.

##### **2. Eligibility for Telecommuting**

- A. Whether the position or person is suitable for remote work is based on the nature of the job duties, employee readiness for telework, and/or manager and team readiness for telework. Determinations are at the director's discretion and should be made thoughtfully, not based on any one factor alone (cost savings, employee preference, etc.). A position(s) suitable for telework is one that has responsibilities that can be conducted through telework, using basic telecommunications technology at home without affecting service quality or organizational operations.
- B. Some employees, not otherwise eligible for regular weekly telecommuting hours, may be allowed to telecommute on a task-based basis, for particular projects, and under particular circumstances determined by department management. In these cases, the employee will be equipped with all tools and materials required to complete the assigned task and will be required to provide documentation of completion of the assigned work at the completion of their telecommuting period.



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- C. Employees with roles that do not allow telecommuting will not be permitted to do so and are required to physically report to their work locations on their regularly assigned schedule. These may include, but are not limited to:
  - 1. employees responsible for daily direct interaction with and service of constituents
  - 2. those responsible for maintaining the condition of city streets and infrastructure
  - 3. those required to clean and maintain the condition of city facilities

### **3. Authorization and Oversight**

- A. Telecommuting employees must receive approval from their supervisor in advance before the remote day. Additional flexibility for emergencies is allowed at the supervisor's direction.
- B. Remote work should be added to your calendar with the hours of remote work clearly indicated.
- C. Employees participating in remote work must share their full calendar with their supervisor and team members per remote work best practices.
- D. In instances where remote work is preplanned, employees should ensure they don't have any in-person meetings scheduled.
- E. Employees are expected to complete all basic job functions in addition to assigned tasks and work while telecommuting. Telecommuting employees are expected to report on their productivity and performance to the satisfaction of their supervisor and may be required to provide proof that assigned projects and tasks have been completed in a timely fashion.
- F. Determining the degree to which the telecommuting employee is meeting accountability benchmarks in their productivity and effectiveness is at the manager's sole discretion. Managers may require telecommuting employees to prepare a written report on tasks completed, schedule mandatory time during which to perform specific tasks (e.g., callbacks, form processing), mandate employee attendance at check in calls or virtual meetings, and institute other reporting requirements as deemed appropriate by the supervisor in consultation with the Department of People and Culture.
- G. Employees are required to strictly comply with all City and department policies while telecommuting. Employees engaging in telecommuting activities are expected to be compliant with the City of Providence's Information Technology Policy when working remotely.
- H. All work products produced while telecommuting is the property of the City of Providence, and such work must not be stored on a personal device or software account.
- I. All requests for equipment, software, and systems access related to telecommuting should be addressed to the City of Providence's Information Technology Department by the department director.

### **4. Safety and Workers' Compensation**

- A. The employee will continue to have statutory workers' compensation insurance coverage while telecommuting for any injury that arises directly out of, and while performing City-approved work during the defined work period.
- B. An employee who sustains a work-related injury must report it immediately to the supervisor and other designated officials responsible for workers' compensation claims.
- C. The City has the right to inspect the site of the injury if a work-related injury is reported.

### **5. Additional Notes**

- A. Employees remain responsible for compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, ordinances, and policies while telecommuting, just as they would during regular work hours at their permanent work site. The



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telecommuting employee must perform at the same level of productivity they achieve on a regular workday to be compensated for their time with regular hours.

- B. Telecommuting may not be substituted for circumstances in which the employee would otherwise be appropriately discharging sick, vacation, or floating holiday time.
- C. A periodic report including objectives achieved may be required of any employee performing remote work. The department director will determine the value, validity, and acceptability of the work product detailed in that report.

### 6. **Additional Guidance on Supervising Telecommuting Employees:**

- A. Review this policy with the telecommuting employee.
- B. Before an employee begins telecommuting, the supervisor must ensure that they have the necessary equipment, software, and instruction from the Information Technology Department to safely access their city account and shared drives via the city's virtual private network (VPN).
- C. It is important to review with the employee all objectives which will be expected to be achieved as a result of telecommuting, and benchmarks which must be achieved.
- D. Communication is critical in a telecommuting scenario. The supervisor must periodically review the effectiveness of telecommuting with the employee, and set realistic measurable expectations, which are clearly communicated to the employee.
- E. The DPC is always available to brainstorm strategies for improving productivity for telecommuting employees.

### 7. **Guidance to Employees:**

- A. Review this policy in its entirety and ensure that you understand all provisions. If you require additional context or clarification, ask.
- B. Before telecommuting, ensure all necessary technology to perform duties is available. Advise your department director and the IT Department in advance of telecommuting activity needs.
- C. Ensure you have a clear understanding of management's expectations and objectives while you are telecommuting.
- D. Do not store any city documents on personal devices, software, or accounts.
- E. When telecommuting, you are expected to be immediately accessible during scheduled work hours.
- F. Consult with your direct supervisor if telecommuting becomes a challenge to your productivity.

### 8. **Mandatory Telecommuting During Weather, Public Health, or Other Emergencies**

- A. The Chief People Officer, in consultation with City officials and all relevant parties, may determine that employees are required to perform their job functions remotely during periods of weather emergency, public health emergency, or other unforeseen contingencies. Telecommuting in this circumstance is involuntary and is necessary to ensure continuity of city operations in the event of a prolonged emergency event.
- B. Accordingly, any employees refusing to telecommute when required to do so may be subject to progressive disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
- C. Unproductive or ineffective use of telecommuting time may result in progressive disciplinary action, and the employee may additionally be required to deduct vacation, floating holiday, or personal time, if it is determined that they are abusing their telecommuting privileges. Multiple infractions or abuse of this policy could result in the revocation of telecommuting privileges and disciplinary action up to and including termination.



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### **Related Policies:**

Information and Security Systems Policy

Code of Conduct

Ethics Guide

Discipline Policy

Laptop Computer and Mobile Device Policy

Timeclock Policy

### **Other Related Information:**

Local 1033 [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#)