

PROPOSED KENT COUNTY LEVY COURT POLICY P21-02

INTRODUCED BY: Commissioner Allan F. Angel

ADOPTION DATE:

EFFECTIVE DATE:

§ TBD. Remote Work/Telecommuting.

This policy provides a remote work/telecommuting program as an alternative to the traditional work location. The program is designed to achieve increased productivity and effective use of staff work time, promote efficient use of resources, and assist in reducing traffic and air quality hazards.

A. Applicability

It is essential that each department/office/worksites be staffed during normal business hours Monday thru Friday.

Telecommuting is not an employee right but a privilege and may be offered by a Department/Office based upon business needs. As such, telecommuting employees shall perform normal duties during building closings/emergencies without additional compensation. If at any time the Department Head or Personnel Director determines the work schedules and/or workweek periods offered must be changed, affected employees will be notified of the change at least one week in advance of the change, except for urgent situations.

Telework refers to a work flexibility arrangement under which an employee performs the duties and responsibilities of their position, and other authorized activities, from an approved worksite other than the location from which the employee would otherwise work.

There are three types of telework:

1. Routine telework occurs as part of an ongoing, regular schedule with the employee required to report to the normal County worksite at least TWO (2) days a week.
2. Situational telework, as approved by the Department Head on a case-by-case basis, is where the hours worked were NOT part of a previously approved, ongoing and regular telework schedule. Situational telework may be used occasionally for the cases of doctors' appointments, road hazards, inclement weather, sick family members, or emergencies, or for offsite meetings, web based training, or appointments where telework would increase staff efficiency. Situational telework is allowed at a maximum of five (5) days a month unless an emergency situation arises.
3. Management telework, as approved by the Department Head in advance, permits management employees to work offsite for approved reasons with notification to their staff how to reach them while working remotely.

Designated field staff in possession of necessary equipment, supplies, and applicable work assignments have the ability to begin and/or end the workday from their residence and proceed directly to/from the field work location (i.e. launch from home) with approval by the Department Head. Like teleworkers, designated field staff must remain fully engaged in County related duties the entire compensated work day (except approved leave) and comply with all telecommuting performance expectations and employee responsibility guidelines contained in County policies/procedures.

B. Eligibility

Eligibility to participate in the telecommuting program is subject at all times to the needs of the County department/office and may be modified at any time.

This policy shall be applicable to selected employees who meet specific work standards and job duties appropriate for telecommuting. Certain positions may be ineligible for participation due to business necessities. Meeting one or more of the eligibility requirements does not guarantee approval of telecommuting. The County Administrator holds the final determination of an employee's position being appropriate for routine telecommuting and if the employee meets the telecommuting eligibility standards.

Minimum work standard eligibility requirements include, but are not limited to:

1. Regular status full time employees who have worked at the County department/office for at least one (1) year;
2. Prior annual job performance evaluation and/or job performance that meets or exceeds standards across all listed performance measures and demonstrates employee ability to work independently;
3. Employee is self-motivated and demonstrates high dependability;
4. Job duties and requirements allow the employee to be away from the County worksite for a period of time during the work week;
5. Telecommuting does not impede other employees or work groups from performing their job duties, impact the County's business needs, or diminish the operations of the Department or Office;
6. Telecommuting does not reduce service to internal or external customers; and
7. Supervisor is able to manage the employee remotely.

C. Participation Guidelines

1. Employee Responsibilities

The duties, obligations, responsibilities, and conditions of a County employee are not changed by telecommuting or remote work including obligation to comply with all County rules, policies, ordinances, practices, instructions and federal and state laws. Violations may result in exclusion

from telecommuting and/or disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

2. Performance Expectations

Expectations must be established in advance between telecommuters and supervisors regarding work assignment(s), productivity level, and productivity measurements to be used when employee is telecommuting. Timeliness, quality, and quantity of work must be maintained.

Attendance and punctuality that is observant of scheduled hours on a regular basis is an essential function of each position and must be maintained during telecommuting, unless otherwise approved in advance.

Employees shall not engage in non-County work activities during telecommuting hours, including other employment, child care, etc.

3. Equipment

Telecommuters are not entitled to County provided equipment or supplies, but specific items may be provided upon approval of the County Administrator. The County retains ownership of all equipment and/or licenses provided and proper use is limited to authorized persons for purposes relating to County business.

The County will provide for maintenance and repairs to County equipment. However, when an employee uses his/her own equipment for telecommuting, the employee is responsible for maintenance and repair of equipment.

The County will not provide and is not responsible for the payment of utilities (heat, electricity, internet, telephone, cellphone, etc.) or home maintenance costs.

In the event of delay in repair or replacement of equipment, internet or telephone service interruption/outage, or any other circumstance under which it would be ineffective for the employee to telecommute, the employee will immediately report to the normal County work place.

4. Remote Work Location

Employees must designate a work space at home or another location that is maintained in a safe condition, free from hazards. Telecommuter is responsible for completing a work space safety review. Any accident must be brought to the immediate attention of the supervisor and Personnel Office.

The telecommuter must ensure that safety and ergonomic standards are met in the work space. Although the work space does not have to be a

separate room, it must have adequate lighting, ventilation, and furniture that is ergonomically comfortable and safe to use.

Telecommuters must have a method for reliably and expediently receiving and responding to communications (phone calls, messages, mail, etc.) from other staff, supervisors, and when applicable, and/or the public.

Telecommuters remain solely liable for injuries to third persons and/or members of employee's family on employee's premises. The County is not liable for damage to the employee's real property.

Telecommuters will take all reasonable precautions necessary to secure County information and equipment in the designated work space, prevent unauthorized access to any system or information. Data and information used by telecommuters must be treated with the same caution and respect that confidential material is given in the office. In some cases, telecommuters will need to take a few added precautions.

5. Security and Data Integrity

Employees must comply with all procedures to assure that security measures are in place to protect equipment, data and documents from physical damage, theft, loss, modification, destruction, inappropriate release, or access by unauthorized individuals. Data containing employee identifying information must be sent encrypted.

Employees must access the County network according to standards and policies via Virtual Private Network (VPN) or authorized connection from the alternate work location. Access will be limited to the minimum necessary to fulfill defined mission requirements.

The County reserves the right to monitor and log, without notice, all telecommuting activity, including email. Employees that are telecommuting should have no expectation of privacy in the use of County-related resources or business.

D. Request for a Telecommuting Schedule

Employees who would like Routine and/or Situational Telework must submit Telecommuting Request forms to their immediate supervisor for consideration. The employee's Department Head and the County Administrator must approve a request for a telecommuting work schedule. This request form will be held in the employees personnel file and will cover any and all future telecommuting work.

In the case of Situational Telecommuting, employees who anticipate using Situational Telecommuting, in addition to the (one time) request form, must submit a request to their Department Head for every situational telecommuting occur-

rence. The request must be formally approved or denied by email or telephone call before staff can telecommute that day(s).

E. Complaints/Concerns

Complaints alleging a violation of this policy must be directed to the Department Head. Upon receipt of a complaint, Department Head and Personnel Director shall determine the appropriate course of action to resolve the issue, and will take steps such as verbal or written counseling or documentation to prevent future incidents, if applicable.