

PLUMAS COUNTY
EMERGENCY TELECOMMUTING
POLICY
(non-disaster worker)



1.0 Purpose

To help ensure essential services of Plumas County are operational during times of declared emergencies as declared by any one, or all of these entities: the Governor, Plumas County Public Health Officer, Board of Supervisors/County Administrator/Sheriff. Plumas County employees are the critical component that deliver services in times when they are needed most. This telecommuting policy, under emergencies, allows County employees to continue work from alternative locations to minimize disruption to services the public needs when normal operations are disrupted.

This policy will be activated by the County Administrator and/or the Chair of the Board under emergency situations and is not an employee right. This policy is an emergency policy and the County Administrator and/or the Chair of the Board have the discretion to discontinue the Policy at the conclusion of the declared emergency.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to Plumas County positions that are suitable to Telecommuting to maintain a continuity of public services according to departmental and the County's Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) during a time of declared emergency. Emergency situations fall under County declared emergencies or executive orders by the Governor or similar enactments of local, state and federal governments.

3.0 General Duties, Obligations and Responsibilities:

1. Employees must adhere to the provisions set forth in this Policy and the terms of the Emergency Telecommuting Agreement (ETA). Any deviation from the ETA requires prior written approval from the employee's supervisor and notification to the department head and the County Administrator/Chair of the Board.
2. All existing duties, obligations, responsibilities and conditions of employment remain unchanged. Telecommuting employees are expected to abide by all County of Plumas and departmental policies and procedures, rules and regulations, applicable Memoranda of Understanding, and all other official County of Plumas documents and directives.
3. Employees' salary and benefits remain unchanged. Workers' Compensation benefits will apply only to injuries arising out of and in the course of employment as defined by Workers' Compensation law. Employees must report any such work-related injuries to their supervisor immediately. The County of Plumas shall not be responsible for injuries

or property damage unrelated to such work activities, including injuries to third persons when said injuries occur at alternate worksite.

4. Employees authorized to perform work at an alternate worksite must meet the same standards of performance and professionalism expected at their formal County work site in terms of job responsibilities, work product, timeliness of assignments, and contact with other County employees and the public.
5. All existing supervisory relationships, lines of authority and supervisory practices remain in effect. Supervisors and employees shall agree upon a reasonable set of goals and objectives to be accomplished weekly during the duration of the emergency. Supervisors shall use reasonable means to ensure that timelines are adhered to and that goals and objectives are achieved as well as needed resources and supplies are available.
6. Employees shall continue to abide by practices, policies and procedures for requests of sick, vacation and other leaves of absences. Requests to work overtime, declare vacation or take other time off from work must be pre-approved according to County policy. If an employee becomes ill while working under the ETA, he/she shall notify his/her supervisor immediately and record on his/her timesheet any hours not worked due to incapacitation.
7. Employees shall ensure that all official County of Plumas documents are retained and maintained according to the normal operating procedures in the same manner as if working at their formal office or worksite. Employees shall exercise precautions according to County policies to safeguard electronic and paper information, protect confidentiality, and adhere to the County of Plumas's records retention policies, especially as it pertains to the Public Records Act. Employees must safeguard all sensitive and confidential information (both on paper and in electronic form) relating to County of Plumas work they access from the alternate worksite or transport from their County of Plumas worksite to alternate worksite. Employees must also take reasonable precautions to prevent third parties from accessing or handling sensitive and confidential information they access from the alternate worksite or transport from their County of Plumas worksite to the alternate worksite. Protect confidential conversations from third party observation. Employees must return all records, documents, and correspondence to the County of Plumas at the termination of the ETA or upon request by their supervisor, Department Head, County Administrator or Human Resources.
8. The County of Plumas shall not be responsible for costs associated with the use of a personal computer and/or cellular equipment, including energy, data or maintenance costs, network costs, home maintenance, home workspace furniture, ergonomic equipment, liability for third party claims, or any other incidental costs (*e.g.*, utilities associated with the employee's telecommuting).

4.0 Eligibility Criteria

The Emergency Telecommuting Policy is not applicable to all positions. The Department Head has the discretion to determine the positions who may telecommute due to emergency situations utilizing criteria that includes, but is not limited to:

1. The operational needs of the employee's department and the County
2. The potential for disruption to the County's essential functions
3. The ability of the employee to perform his or her specific job duties from a location separate from his or her formal worksite without diminishing the quantity or quality of the work performed
4. The degree of face-to-face interaction with other County of Plumas employees and the public that the employee's position requires
5. The portability of the employee's work
6. The ability to create a functional, reliable, safe, and secure alternate worksite for the employee
7. The risk factors associated with performing the employee's job duties from a location separate from his or her formal worksite
8. The ability to measure the employee's work performance from a location separate from his or her formal worksite
9. The employee's supervisory responsibilities
10. The employee's need for supervision
11. Other considerations deemed necessary and appropriate by the employee's immediate supervisor or Department Head
12. As deemed necessary by the definitions of 'essential and non-essential employees' and 'disaster service worker' by County policy and Continuity of Operations Plans.

5.0 Managing personnel under the Emergency Telecommuting Policy

5.1 Telecommute Conditions

Employees working remotely may work from home or another office closer to their home under this policy.

Employees are required to maintain an accurate record of all hours worked at the alternate worksite. Employees shall record all non-productive work time on his/her timesheet.

The employee remains liable for injuries to third persons and/or members of the employee's family on employee's premises. The employee agrees the County is not liable for damages to an employee's personal or real property while the employee is working at the approved alternate work location.

With reasonable notice, the County may make on-site visits to the telecommuting address to determine that the work site is safe and free from hazards and to maintain, repair, inspect or retrieve County owned equipment, software, data and supplies.

Clients, customers, vendors, contractors and other visitors are not allowed to enter telecommute office space to conduct County business.

Remote office locations do not preclude the County from taking any appropriate disciplinary action or adverse action against an employee who fails to comply with County policies.

Since the remote office space shall be considered an extension of the County work space, the County's workers compensation liability for job related accidents will continue to exist during the employee's work hours.

Telecommuting is not a substitute for dependent care, child or elderly, and the employee must make regular dependent care arrangements.

5.2 Supervision and Management

- a) Employee(s) telecommuting will review and sign the documents as found in the Appendix with their supervisor and copies disseminated as specified in this policy and according to the directions on each form.
- b) County departments must maintain detailed records of the number of employees participating in the program, number of days per week each employee telecommutes, records of any signed agreements and submit copies to the offices of the County Administrator, Auditor (for payroll) and Human Resources upon request.
- c) Prior to beginning the Telecommute assignment, a Telecommute Agreement must be signed by the new Telecommuter and Supervisor. The agreement is contained in this appendix and the original is maintained by the Human Resources Department. A copy of the signed Telecommute Agreement must be filed in the Telecommuter's personnel file.
- d) Employees interested in Telecommute must make a formal request in writing to their supervisor. See Appendix for applicable forms.
- e) The Telecommuter completes the Home Office Safety Checklist to assess the safety of the Telecommute site. The Telecommuters Home Office Safety Checklist is available for review and the premises for inspection by the County's Risk or Assistant Risk Manager. This includes ergonomic evaluations as requested by the telecommuter.
- f) The Telecommute Task Schedule is designed to assist the supervisor and Telecommuter define task expectations. See Appendix for applicable forms.
- g) Use of the Telecommute Survey form will help the supervisor and employee improve efficiency and effectiveness. See Appendix for applicable forms.
- h) Thirty (30) days after beginning a Telecommute schedule, the Supervisor must complete a Job Performance Survey for all new Telecommuters if the emergency situation is in place for as long as or longer than thirty days. Every thirty days thereafter for as long as the emergency exists a Job Performance Survey shall be completed. If the survey is unsatisfactory, then appropriate corrective actions should be taken, documented and copies provided to Human Resources Department for personnel file.

- i) If a Telecommuter requests or is removed from participation in telecommuting, Termination of Telecommute Participation form must be completed and submitted to the County Administrator, Auditor and Human Resources with a copy placed in the employee's personnel file.
- j) Non-exempt employees who receive overtime shall be assigned a work schedule in the ETA, including rest and meal breaks ("Work Schedule"). Any deviation from the Work Schedule must be approved in advance, in writing, by the Department Head. Non-exempt employees must take meal and rest breaks while telecommuting, just as they would if they were reporting to work at their County of Plumas worksite. Non-exempt employees may not telecommute outside their normal work hours without prior written authorization from their supervisor. A non-exempt employee who fails to secure written authorization before telecommuting outside his or her normal work hours may face discipline in accordance with the County of Plumas's policy for working unauthorized overtime.

5.3 Information Technology

- a) The Department of Information Technology (IT) has the capacity to support remote secure connections to the County network. Access will be setup on a County controlled/owned device.
- b) The employee will use their own internet connection.
- c) Notice of an employee planning to telecommute must be provided to IT in advance as much as possible by the Department Head to allow for correct configuration.
- d) Employees may receive a virtual private network ("VPN") account, as approved by the Manager of IT.
- e) Employees must take reasonable precautions to ensure their devices (*e.g.*, computers, laptops, tablets, smart phones, etc.) are secure before connecting remotely to the County of Plumas's network and must close or secure all connections to County of Plumas desktop or system resources (*e.g.*, remote desktop, VPN connections, etc.) when not conducting work for the County of Plumas. Employees must maintain adequate firewall and security protection on all such devices used to conduct County of Plumas work from the alternate worksite.
- f) For departments that have State controlled data networks, remote access may be out of IT's abilities and control.
- g) The county IT Department cannot support software and/or equipment not purchased through the County. The County will not provide unique or auxiliary products to telecommute work space for products that are incompatible to County IT infrastructure.
- h) Personal computer and related equipment may not be used unless approved by the Manager of IT. If an employee uses personal equipment, the County assumes no responsibility for its maintenance, repair or associated costs. County information including confidential information, shall not be saved to a personally

owned device, including but not limited to, hard drive, laptop, mobile device, or flash drive. Information must be stored on properly secured County owned and maintained property, that is protected by the employee at all times. Unless absolutely necessary to fulfill a job function, personal printers, and fax machines must not be used for purposed of printing or sending confidential information.

6.0 Adoption:

This "Plumas County Emergency Telecommuting Policy (Non-Disaster Worker)" is adopted by the Plumas County Board of Supervisors at a meeting held April 14, 2020.

Revision History:

Initial Adoption:	4/14/20
Revised:	12/15/20
Current:	12/15/20

APPENDIX

Plumas County Emergency Telecommute Policy

- 1. Plumas County Emergency Telecommuting Agreement**
- 2. Remote Work Space Self-Certification Checklist**
- 3. Resource/Asset Loan Agreement**
- 4. Task Schedule**
- 5. Job Performance Survey**
- 6. Helpful Management Tips for Supervisor and Employee**
- 7. Employee Rights- Paid Sick Leave and Expanded Family and Medical Leave**

PLUMAS COUNTY EMERGENCY TELECOMMUTING AGREEMENT

The Emergency Telecommute Agreement (“ETA”) is only valid for the time period of the declared emergency. The Agreement is invalid at the end of the declared emergency. The County of Plumas may, in its discretion, decide to terminate the Agreement earlier. Violation of the ETA and Emergency Telecommute Policy may expose the employee to corrective action, discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

This ETA is put into place for:

Employee Name: _____

Department: _____ Position: _____

Regular work schedule: _____

Date of agreement: _____

Employee remote work location and work schedule are identified and agreed to as follows:

Remote Work Location

Address: _____ City: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Remote Work Schedule

Day	Morning		Lunch	Afternoon		Total Hours
	Start	End		Start	End	
Sunday						
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						
Thursday						
Friday						
Saturday						

EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- I have read the Emergency Telecommuting Policy and the Emergency Telecommuting Agreement (“ETA”) in their entirety.
- I understand the ETA does not change my classification, rate of pay or benefits.
- I understand this Agreement expires at the end of the declared emergency, unless terminated by the County in advance I understand the expectation to log only hours worked in which I conducted County business under my normal work schedule, which is not altered by the ETA.
- I understand and agree that the ETA is temporary and approval does not imply entitlement to a permanently modified position or a continued telecommute arrangement.
- I understand and agree that the ETA is voluntary and may be terminated at any time. I further understand that the County may, at any time, change any or all of the conditions under which approval to participate in the ETA is granted, with or without notice.
- I understand my duties, expectations, obligations and responsibilities. Further, I understand it is my responsibility to provide adequate advance notification to my supervisor if I am unable to keep any of the agreed upon commitments and/or deliverables. If I fail to do so, I understand corrective actions may be taken.
- I understand the expectation is to be available to the department via telephone and/or email and other means of communication during all ETA designated work hours.
- I understand the expectation to maintain the alternate worksite in an atmosphere conducive to safe, effective and efficient work. My work remote workspace will be free of distractions, ergonomically correct and have reliable and secure internet and/or wireless access.
- I understand any leave time must be approved in advance by management in accordance with department policy and documented on the appropriate leave of absence slip.
- I will ensure dependent care will not interfere with work responsibilities.
- I will notify my supervisor promptly when unable to perform work assignments because of equipment failure or other unforeseen circumstances.
- If the County has provided County owned equipment, employees agree to follow the County of Plumas’s Policy for the use of County owned equipment, resources and assets. I will report to my supervisor any loss, damage, or unauthorized access to County of Plumas owned equipment, immediately upon discovery of such loss, damage, or unauthorized access.
- I understand any breach of the Emergency Telecommuting Agreement and Policy by the employee may result in termination of the Agreement and/or disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.
- I agree to report work-related injuries to the Employee’s supervisor at the earliest reasonable opportunity. The Employee agrees to hold the County harmless for injury to third parties at the alternate worksite.
- I will maintain all county records, and work related activities, as confidential, at all times.

I hereby affirm by my signature that I have read this Emergency Telecommuting Agreement, and understand and agree to all of its provisions.

_____ Employee's Name and Title	_____ Signature	_____ Date
------------------------------------	--------------------	---------------

_____ Department Head Name and Title	_____ Signature	_____ Date
---	--------------------	---------------

Please submit the original agreement to Humans Resources for employee personnel file; retain a copy for the employee and department head; and submit a copy to the County Administrator/Risk Manager.

PLUMAS COUNTY EMERGENCY TELECOMMUTING POLICY
REMOTE WORK SPACE SELF-CERTIFICATION CHECKLIST

It is the employee's responsibility to ensure their temporary telecommute environment, their residence, is safe, effective and efficient. Further, the remote work environment must comply with the County's health and safety programs and policies. Failure to do so may be cause for corrective actions, discipline or even be cause for termination. The telecommuting employee must complete and submit this checklist to the Department Head and a copy to the office of Risk Management prior to approval.

To make your new temporary work environment safe, efficient and effective, please evaluate and modify your telecommute space according to each point below:

- | | | | |
|----|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Is the work space free from excessive noise? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2 | Is adequate lighting (side or rear) provided at the workstation? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 3 | Is all electrical equipment free of recognized hazards that could cause physical harm (frayed wires running through walls, exposed wires fixed to the ceiling)? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 4 | Are proper fire protection measures in place (extinguishers & alarms)? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 5 | Is the work environment properly heated/cooled and ventilated? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 6 | Are surge protectors properly installed? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 7 | Are aisles, doorways and floors free of obstructions to permit visibility and movement? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 8 | Is there an exit that allows prompt exiting? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 9 | Are work materials and equipment in a secure place and protected from damage, theft or misuse? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 10 | Is the office space neat and clean? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 11 | Is the work area private and free of intrusions? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 12 | Are files and data secure? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 13 | Are first aid supplies readily accessible and adequate? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 14 | Have you requested an ergonomic evaluation by the Risk Management office? Office equipment is ergonomically correct? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

PLUMAS COUNTY EMERGENCY TELECOMMUTING POLICY
RESOURCE/ASSET LOAN AGREEMENT

In conjunction with my Telecommuting Authorization Form, I accept the LOAN of the following equipment, resource, asset and/or software provided by Plumas County:

Equipment/Resource/Asset	Brand Name	Serial Number
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____
6. _____	_____	_____

Equipment and/or software, if any, provided by the employee:

1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____

I agree:

- To maintain the above equipment in operating condition
- To operate the above equipment in a safe fashion intended for its use
- To return the above equipment to the department if I should resign, be transferred or discontinue telecommuting, or when requested by the County
- To use this equipment to conduct official County business only

Employee Name (print)

Signature

Date

Name of Issuing Employee

Signature

Date

_____ **Initial if you do not need any equipment from the County**

PLUMAS COUNTY EMERGENCY TELECOMMUTING POLICY
TASK SCHEDULE

Telecommuter Name		
Date Tasks Assigned		
Department		
Telecommute Hours	From	To

1.Task Deliverable	_____	Estimated hours _____
	_____	Actual Hours _____
2. Task Deliverable	_____	Estimated hours _____
	_____	Actual Hours _____
3. Task Deliverable	_____	Estimated hours _____
	_____	Actual Hours _____
4. Task Deliverable	_____	Estimated hours _____
	_____	Actual Hours _____

Total Estimated Hours:	Total Actual Hours :
-------------------------------	-----------------------------

Employee Signature

Supervisor Signature

Date

PLUMAS COUNTY EMERGENCY TELECOMMUTING POLICY
JOB PERFORMANCE SURVEY

Employee			
Department			
Supervisor			Date

1. How often do you currently communicate with your employee? (please check all that apply)

	At least once a day	2 – 4 times/week	About once/week	About once/month
A. In person meetings				
B. Telephone calls				
C. E-mail				
D. Fax				
E. Notes				

2. Indicate whether you agree that the following methods of communication are effective with the employee:

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Not Applicable
A. In person meetings				
B. Telephone calls				
C. E-mail				
D. Fax				
E. Notes				

3. Rate the employee's performance in the following areas:

	Excellent/ Exceeds Expectations	Very Good	Good	Meets Minimum Requirements	Needs Improvement
A. Productivity					
B. Interpersonal Skills					
C. Dependability					
D. Communication skills					
E. Ability to work independently					
F. Overall performance					

Supervisors should document and file this survey form on a monthly basis to help the telecommuting employee be effective and efficient in meeting County and departmental jobs, projects and expectations.

PLUMAS COUNTY EMERGENCY TELECOMMUTING POLICY
HELPFUL MANAGEMENT TIPS FOR EMPLOYEE AND SUPERVISOR

THE SUPERVISOR

To be successful at supervising your telecommute employees, you will need to use the management skills with which you currently manage your non-telecommute employees. The skills you may rely upon most frequently are:

- Assisting telecommuters in organizing their work
 - Time frames involved in completing tasks assigned
 - Resources required to complete assigned tasks
 - Adequate and appropriate distribution of work to all employees supervised
- Assignment of work to telecommuters
 - Establish means of communication with telecommuters
 - Communicate expected deliverables and time frames
 - Establish anticipated quality of work
 - Discuss any other criteria affecting the completion of assigned tasks
- Establishing timeframes
 - Develop attainable timeframes
 - Clarify and ensure telecommuters understand the workload
 - Create timetables for tasks assigned to telecommuters
- Reviewing status
 - Establish intermediate review periods to determine progress on tasks
 - Establish intervals for assessment during specific points in project timeline or upon completion of a specific task or on a recurring basis
- Coaching and developing employee's capabilities
 - Time may be limited so make the most of the time spent with telecommuters
 - Always reinforce positive behavior
 - Bring unsatisfactory performance to the employee's attention immediately
 - Develop plans or behaviors for correction of deficiencies
 - Use communication tools available to you to provide the employee with timely and ongoing feedback

Managing by Objectives

Managing by objectives (MBO) is a management tool that allows you and your employees the opportunity to communicate clearly your expectations as a supervisor and the employee's expectations as a telecommuter. You may find that this tool is so successful that you may implement it as a means of managing all of your employees. Refer to the Appendix for a sample Telecommute Task Schedule. Implementation of MBO is as follows:

- Prepare an itemized list of what you expect from the employee. This list can be organized on a weekly or quarterly basis. You have the flexibility to establish objectives in a format that will be easy for you to administer.

- Include the telecommuters in the process of establishing objectives. This allows the employee to provide valuable input in defining expected results.
- Be very explicit about what you expect from the employee. If necessary, establish a matrix or graph and clearly define what the telecommuter needs to accomplish and by when.
- Use the County Telecommute Agreement to document the telecommute arrangement. The County's Telecommute Policies, Standards and Procedures help define the relationship between the County and the telecommuter.
- Track the results. If you are establishing weekly objectives, schedule a meeting in a week to review the telecommuter's accomplishments. Use the sample Telecommute Task Schedule, refer to the Appendix, if needed. This document will enable you and the telecommuters to instantly determine whether the telecommuters are successful. Maintain a copy of the Telecommute Task Schedule for your file. Employees feel more in control when they too can track their success.

This management tool will provide you the capability of managing the products, which your employees produce, not the process they employ to reach the goal. In many instances, your focus should not be on how the employee accomplishes the task, but focus instead on the quality, quantity and timeliness of the completed work product. Effectively managing the non-telecommuters in a telecommute environment is just as important as managing the telecommuter.

As you identify the participants in the telecommute program, you need to work carefully with the non-telecommuters to lessen potential feelings of resentment which can form regarding "why is that person chosen instead of me?" If an employee is interested in telecommute and you determined they do not have the necessary organizational skills or their current assignment is not conducive to telecommute, discuss this with your employee. Perhaps you can set up an action plan so the employee can work on developing the necessary skills. If an employee's job assignment is not conducive to telecommute, perhaps they can telecommute if their assignment changes or telecommute occasionally as their workload warrants.

The non-telecommuters are just as crucial to the program's effectiveness as the telecommuters. Your work group's success depends on the efforts of all the members of the team. The non-telecommuters should not be expected to do extra work in the office while the telecommuters are working from their remote locations. Establish mutual strategies which will support both the non-telecommuters and telecommuters alike.

Some County telephones can be programmed to forward calls to the telecommuter's remote location. The telecommuter's phone can be programmed to forward calls at the beginning of the workday and the forwarding feature can be removed at the end of the workday. If the telecommuter wishes to be undisturbed, the phone should automatically send calls to the office voice mail, which the telecommuter can check throughout the workday.

Supervisor 'Do's and Don'ts'

Do's	Don'ts
<p>Trust your telecommuters</p> <p>Encourage good communication skills</p> <p>Encourage goal setting</p> <p>Communicate regularly</p> <p>Be flexible and use your creativity to achieve optimum program results</p> <p>Use telecommute as an opportunity to strengthen your management skills</p> <p>Delegate assignments equitably among your telecommuters and non-telecommuters</p> <p>Manage by measuring results</p> <p>Give appropriate and timely feedback</p> <p>Plan meetings when your telecommuters can participate</p> <p>Schedule regular status reports</p> <p>Expect changes</p> <p>Be prepared if telecommute doesn't work well and allow the employee to terminate participation in the telecommute program</p>	<p>Don't call telecommuter every hour to check on progress</p> <p>Don't set unattainable goals</p> <p>Don't expect perfection; there will be adjustments needed</p> <p>Don't set unrealistic deadlines for projects</p> <p>Don't ask for constant status reports</p> <p>Don't neglect problems</p> <p>Don't expect everyone to be a successful telecommuter</p>

THE EMPLOYEE

To be a successful telecommuter, you will need to learn to deal with less structure and more freedom in completing your work. Telecommute is not as simple as staying at home and working. It requires planning and discipline. The following section has been designed to provide you with some basic tools for working at home and maintain or increasing your level of productivity and the quality and quantity and timeliness of your work product. If you take the time to develop good work habits from the first day that you start telecommuting, you will realize that it can be easy to get your work completed away from the office.

- Pick a separate location
 - It is very important that you identify a safe location in your home as your work station. You do not need to devote a whole room to be your workspace. Some telecommuters have successfully developed part of an existing room, a garage, an attic and even a closet to be their work station. Make sure the space is safe and separate from other areas. The more separate your work station is from the rest of the house, the less likely you will be disrupted by other household members when they are home. Avoid temporary work areas such as the dining room table or kitchen unless you are a sporadic telecommuter (less than once per week).
- Establish a routine
 - Set a work schedule for the days you telecommute and stick to it as much as possible. Start and stop working at the same hours on telecommute days. This will help establish a work routine for you. Establish your work hours with your supervisor. Various distractions can occur while working remotely, but it is encouraged to develop a schedule as similar to the regular schedule as possible to maintain continuity with the demands of the job and availability of colleagues and your supervisor. Take advantage of working the hours that you are most productive as long as these hours are agreeable with your supervisor.
- Replace the ritual of getting ready for the office
 - As a telecommuter, you will no longer have the traditional office rituals of morning conversations, coffee, a suit and tie or even a long dreadful commute that will symbolize the beginning of the work day. You may need to come up with some new rituals. Some telecommuters play specific music or start working after the morning exercise or bike ride. Find a ritual that will set the beginning of the work day much like the commute does on days you work in the office.
- Make a to-do list for your assignments
 - Develop a list of goals and assignments for the days that you telecommute. The Telecommute Task Schedule (Appendix) was developed as an option for you and your supervisor to use in planning your telecommute day. At the end of the day go over your list to see how much you have actually accomplished. The use of the Telecommute Task Schedule or a comparable list of things to do will help you plan for all the resources that you will need at home.

- Schedule your work so you don't need assistance from others on your telecommute days. Remember you may not have access to a fax machine, a photocopier or even a computer at home. Plan your work accordingly. Start planning your whole week, not just one day at a time. Save work throughout your week that would be appropriate for telecommute. Planning your whole week will increase your productivity by establishing the best place to accomplish certain tasks.
- Working at home is more intense than working in a traditional office. You tend to get more work done in a given amount of time, provided you have planned out your week's work appropriately. Make use of that intensity in scheduling your hours, both in and out of the office.
- Have an "end of the day" ritual
 - It is a good practice to have some ritual in place that marks the end of the work day. Be creative. Take advantage of your new schedule to end the work day with something you may want to do more of like increase your exercise program, work on a hobby, enjoy your children, etc.

Managing Your Work

As a telecommuter, you will need to manage your work efficiently. It is up to you to make sure you are well informed and working hard.

- Maintain contact with your office
 - Make sure that you stay in touch with the office on days that you telecommute. You might want to set up a buddy system with another telecommuter, whom you call once a day when you telecommute and vice versa when your buddy telecommutes. It is essential that you check your messages on the days you telecommute and return the phone calls. Don't stay out of touch just because you telecommute. Decide early in the day how accessible you want to be. As a telecommuter, you may have the luxury of actually working for three to four hours without any interruptions.
- Make sure that you check your voice mail at work
 - Some County telephones enable you to have calls from your office forwarded to your home telephone. This method enables you to avoid giving your home phone number to business associates (check with your telephone coordinator).
- Have a system at home
 - Establish a system for organizing the work that you keep or do at home.

- Impact on co-workers
 - Discuss with your manager what job duties will be impacted while you telecommute. How will you handle last-minute rush assignments? Does your job assignment need to be rearranged among co-workers to account for your absence from the office?
- Stick to deadlines
 - Make sure you follow the same rules for deadlines as in the office. Don't miss deadlines. If you are mailing reports, send them so they are in the office on the day they are due or earlier. If you are sending your work via the computer or fax, follow up with your telecommute buddy or your manager to ensure its safe arrival.
- Keep your manager informed of your progress
 - As a telecommuter, you must ensure that your supervisor or manager is kept informed on the status of your work products, your progress or any difficulties you are having. Think of your manager as a customer you need to keep satisfied.
- Attend department gatherings
 - Always attend department social gatherings and group meetings. It is important to stay involved with your co-workers even though you work away from the office on some days.

Training Family and Friends

To be taken seriously as a telecommuter, you will need to take telecommute seriously yourself. Be careful not to create a bad image for the telecommute program. You will need to train the people around you so you don't have too many interruptions.

- The message is that you are home working
 - The first thing you will need to do is let everyone around you know that you are working at home and you still have the same responsibilities that you normally have as an employee. You have the same objectives, the same goals and the same deadlines. The only difference is that you are working from home.
- Decide on what type of interruptions are acceptable
 - You should decide under what circumstances family or friends can actually interrupt your work to ask you questions, favors or have you respond to an urgent need. You will want to develop ground rules for your family.

- Set rules for the use of office materials, equipment, pens, papers, etc., in the home
 - You may need to set some rules regarding the use of office supplies needed at your home work space. You may want to call your work space off-limits to other members in your household to avoid any personal use of County owned equipment, data, and office supplies.
- Don't telecommute if there are problems at home
 - It is best to avoid telecommute on days you know there will be distractions in the home. Additionally, if you are experiencing family difficulties, it is not advisable to telecommute during that period.
- Handling jokes and negative comments
 - Expect jokes when you return to the office after telecommute like "How was your vacation?" Respond to these comments by being positive and don't be defensive.

Developing Good Habits

Develop good telecommute habits and beware of overindulgence.

- Pace yourself so you don't burn out
 - Make sure you are taking enough breaks and you are not turning into a workaholic just because your work is always there. You must be able to start and end the work day in a timely manner. Schedule a few breaks throughout the work day. On the other hand, don't develop bad work habits and do less work than before.
- Watch out for bad habits
 - Be aware of the following habits because they can impact your productivity:
 - Snacking too often
 - Sleeping late
 - Talking on the phone
 - Watching television
 - Wearing your pajamas all day long
 - Visiting with neighbors
 - Procrastination

These habits are harmful to the telecommute program. Try to remove all the possible temptations so you can conduct your work.

The key to success in the telecommute program, is the ability to manage your work space, your job, your family members and others, and yourself. With determination, discipline and commitment and by following the guidelines set for you in this manual, you can make the program work for you. Just remember there are rules that you followed in the office, and you will need another set of rules for working in your home. It is your responsibility to make telecommute effective.

Set Up a productive Home Office

Designing your workspace is important to the success of working at home. Spend time planning your workspace now so you won't have to waste time later rearranging your office. The key components of your home office are:

1. Your Desk
 - a. The height of the work surface should satisfy the requirement of the most critical tasks. Conventional desk surfaces are usually 29 inches, which can be perfectly adequate for many tasks. A common height recommended for computing surfaces is approximately 26 inches. Be sure your desk is a comfortable height for you.
2. Your Chair
 - a. This is probably the most important piece of furniture in the office so it should be selected carefully. The seat should be adjustable and the height of the top surface of the seat should be 15 – 21 inches. Both the height and the angle of the back rest should be adjustable and it should also provide support, but not so large as to be in the way.
3. Lighting
 - a. The lighting in an office can affect comfort, visibility and performance. Whether you are using natural daylight or artificial lighting, it should be directed toward the side or behind your line of vision. Bright light sources can bounce off work surfaces and diminish your sense of contrast. Try not to use direct sunlight on work surfaces; use shade or indoor lighting.
4. Safety
 - a. Be alert to electrical support needed for your equipment when configuring your work space. Arrange the hardware as follows:
 - i. Cover interconnecting cables or make sure they are placed out of the way to avoid the possibility of tripping over them.
 - ii. Place the equipment in close proximity to electrical outlets. If using a computer or fax machine, connect it or them to a surge protector or master switch
 - iii. Place heavy items on sturdy stands close to walls
 - iv. Provide sufficient air space around computer components. Keep equipment out of direct sunlight and away from heaters.

5. Noise

- a. A totally noise-free environment can be stressful. Psychologically some background sound (like music) can be beneficial in maintaining a level of productivity and reducing boredom. Should you choose to use music in your home office, you may find it helps you concentrate. Your professional image may be affected by sounds of crying children, lawnmowers, vacuum cleaners or barking dogs while you attempt to conduct business over the phone at home. You may be able to shut a door to eliminate noise. The use of a room divider or screen may prove useful in controlling the noise.

6. Office Supplies

- a. It is reasonable to expect your supervisor to allow you to take home a reasonable amount of office supplies to support your work effort. Make sure you secure the necessary authorizations to take such supplies to your remote workspace.

Telecommuter Do's and Don'ts

Do's	Don'ts
<p>Have a separate work space at home</p> <p>Stick to the same work schedule Take breaks throughout the day Keep your work organized</p> <p>Keep your boss informed of the progress you are making</p> <p>Attend department and group meetings, if possible</p> <p>Stick to all deadlines</p> <p>Call the office and keep in touch</p> <p>Maintain or increase your level of performance</p> <p>Inform family members and neighbors about when you may be interrupted</p> <p>If telecommute is not suitable for you, talk to your supervisor or manager</p>	<p>Don't develop bad habits at home</p> <p>Don't let the radio or television distract you</p> <p>Don't start sleeping late on telecommute days</p> <p>Don't stay in your bed clothes all day</p> <p>Don't change your work schedule every time you telecommute</p> <p>Don't run errands for everybody in the neighborhood just because you are home</p> <p>Don't telecommute if you have an infant or an elderly person who requires your attention</p> <p>Don't give telecommute a bad name</p> <p>Don't stay in the telecommute program if it's not working for you</p>