BP 7261 TELECOMMUTING

It is the policy of Allan Hancock College to consider the use of telecommuting where it is a viable management work option with clearly defined benefits. The district recognizes the benefits of such work options for employees when both district and employee needs can be addressed.

Adopted: 10/10/07
Revised:

(Replaces Board Policy 5980)
AP 7261 TELECOMMUTING

I. TELECOMMUTING PROCEDURES

Managers and employees must understand that adherence to the policy and procedures is an essential requirement of the telecommuting program.

A. Responsibilities
   All vice presidents, directors, deans, managers, supervisors, and telecommuters are expected to become familiar with and comply with the district telecommuting policy and procedures. More detailed descriptions of responsibilities are provided in the 'Procedures and Considerations' section.

B. Eligibility
   Full time classified employees are eligible for participation in the telecommuting program. Probationary employees and/or temporary (170-day) employees are not eligible to participate. Employees serving in a training capacity or providing hands-on service will not normally be approved to participate in the telecommuting program on a regular, ongoing basis.

   This policy does not apply to faculty.

C. Participation Approval
   Participation in the telecommuting program is voluntary and subject to the prior written approval by both an employee’s immediate supervisor and department dean/director. The final decision will rest with the appropriate cabinet-level administrator. Approval must be completed prior to the start of the employee's telecommuting schedule by execution of a Telecommuting Agreement, a Safety Checklist, and a Supervisor's Checklist. The supervisor and employee will each maintain a copy of the Telecommuting Agreement and Checklists. The originals will be placed in the employee's personnel file maintained in Human Resources.

D. Renewal of Telecommuting Understanding
   The Telecommuting Agreement needs to be completed and approved at least annually.
E. Termination of Telecommuting Participation
The employee may discontinue participation in the telecommuting program at any time, for any reason, upon written or verbal notice to his/her supervisor. Management may terminate an individual employee's participation at any time, as follows:

1. For any reason, upon providing fourteen (14) calendar days prior written explanation to the affected employee.

2. For cause, upon provision of 24 hours prior explanation to the affected employee. All verbal explanations are to be followed with a written explanation, within fourteen (14) calendar days.

3. The employee should return to work if equipment fails and will lead to the loss of a specified period of work time (more than four hours). The employee will remain in the office until such time as the equipment is again functional. The Telecommuting Agreement will be temporarily suspended if the equipment is malfunctioning.

The requirement for prior written notification and explanation may be waived in the event of an emergency (such as equipment failure).

II. BACKGROUND

A. Definitions
“Telecommuting” is defined as periodic work away from the normal work location, one or more days per week, either at home or in a telecommute center. More formally, it is the partial substitution of computers or telecommunications technologies, or both, for the commute to work. It is usually an off-site arrangement that permits employees to work in or near their homes, near clients' offices or at project sites for all or part of a work week.

B. Benefits
The use of a telecommuting arrangement can assist management and employees in economically and effectively accomplishing the mission of the district in the following ways:

- Improve program effectiveness and employee productivity and morale;
- Facilitate optimum utilization of the office space and parking facilities;
- Reduce absenteeism;
- Promote employee health and wellness;
- Improve employee recruitment and retention;
- Improve air quality and reduce traffic congestion;
- Enhance the working life and opportunities of persons with disabilities; and
• Effectively continue business as part of a disaster recovery or emergency plan.

III. PROCEDURES AND CONSIDERATIONS

A. Considerations for Telecommuting Participation

The work to be performed will be the determining factor for telecommuting. Participation in the district telecommuting program should be based on the ability of the employee to perform tasks that can be completed from remote locations, such as a home office and the manager's assessment of the employee's ability to complete those tasks satisfactorily. Consideration, on a case-by-case basis, should be given to the following:

1. Job Knowledge
   Does the employee have the necessary knowledge to perform the required job tasks at home or does the employee need close supervision or input from others that is only available at the office?

2. Job Characteristics
   Does the job lend itself to self-directed activities? Can priorities be easily established? Can the time of the activities be managed effectively by the employee?

3. Task Scheduling
   Does the individual already work alone handling information tasks such as thinking, planning, coordinating, writing, reading, analysis, teleconferencing, computer programming, word processing or data entry? Can tasks, which can be completed away from the office, be grouped and scheduled for telecommuting days? Can staff meetings and conferences be grouped and scheduled for non-telecommuting days or accommodated through other means (e.g., teleconferencing)?

4. Public/District Contacts
   What portion of the job is devoted to face-to-face contact with other departments, students, the public or internal staff? Can this contact be structured to allow for communication via phone or computer, or grouped into non-telecommuting days, or can alternatives be established to provide this contact on telecommuting days?

5. Reference Materials
   What portion of the job requires the use of reference materials or resources located in the designated work site? Can these resources be easily taken home for a day or two without interfering with co-workers' job performance? Are these resources available through other means such as a computer accessible library service?
6. Use of Computers
Will response time on computer equipment used at home be fast enough to allow for required productivity? If network access is needed, does the correct "dial-up" capability exist? If long-distance "dial-up" is necessary, is the cost prohibitive? If connection to a Local Area Network (LAN) at the workplace is required, are the necessary hardware components in place? Has the employee completed training for and demonstrated an adequate level of skill in use of the computer and software that will be used for telecommuting?

7. Special Equipment
What portion of the job relies upon access to photocopiers, fax capabilities or other specialized equipment? Can access be managed to allow telecommuters needs to be met on non-telecommuting days or can these needs be satisfied at a facility near the employee’s telecommuting office?

8. Information Security
What portion of the job uses secured or otherwise confidential information and can the integrity of that information be secured in accordance with information security policies?

9. Travel
Does the job involve field work? Can trips begin or end at the employee’s off site office rather than at the district location? In many of the job assignments, access to the district’s computer network is essential for obtaining work-related information, processing work and communicating. The effectiveness of performing work at a remote location, such as a home office, may be greatly diminished if an employee does not have access to the computer network.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Cabinet-Level Administrator
Administer the telecommuting program in their respective departments, including ensuring compliance with all applicable policies and procedures; identifying positions suitable for the telecommuting option, and determining whether the department should provide equipment and software on a case-by-case basis. Unless there are extreme mitigating circumstances, the district will not provide equipment and software when a similarly equipped workstation is maintained at the office for the employee seeking a telecommuting option. Provision of equipment for a telecommuter will normally be an exceptional situation in which the cabinet-level administrator determines a clear benefit to the program and the employee has special needs. In such cases, an Equipment Use Agreement form must be completed and signed by the telecommuter, supervisor, and cabinet-level administrator.

B. Directors, Deans, Managers, and Supervisors
1. Determine if proposals for their employees to telecommuting are likely to contribute to the district’s objectives, while maintaining or improving program efficiency, productivity, service, benefits, and safety conditions.

2. Ensure that employees who remain in the office are not burdened by being required to handle the telecommuter's regular assignments (i.e., answering telephone calls, dispensing information, etc.).

3. As for all other employees, provide specific, measurable, and attainable performance expectations for the telecommuter; define in detail, assignments, corresponding deadlines, and the quality of work expected.

4. Provide for employee training in use of equipment and software as required for the employee to function effectively and independently.

5. Inform employees that failure to comply with policy and procedures may result in terminating participation in the telecommuting program and/or possible disciplinary action.

6. Obtain cabinet-level administrator approval by submitting all completed and signed forms as a packet to the appropriate administrator for consideration.

7. If approved, provide employee with copies and maintain copies of the employee’s Safety Checklist, Supervisor's Checklist, Telecommuting Agreement, and, if applicable, Equipment Use Agreement.

8. Send original forms to Human Resources for placement in the employee’s personnel file.

C. Telecommuters

1. When telecommuting is determined to be a viable work option, work with supervisor to develop an acceptable telecommuting agreement.

2. Abide by the provisions set forth in this Telecommuting Policy and Procedures.

3. Adhere to all applicable laws, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures regarding information security as outlined below in "Information Security."

4. Acquire the skills necessary to meet district requirements and operate independently from a telecommuting site.

5. Establish and maintain an acceptable and safe home office environment as outlined in "Work Environment Criteria" and "Setting Up a Home Office".
(Employees are required to complete the "Safety Checklist" and certify to its accuracy annually when the Telecommuting Agreement is renewed.)

6. Establish, operate and maintain the home office, equipment, devices, and services associated with the telecommuting arrangement.

7. Repair and/or replace at own expense any district-owned equipment that is damaged, lost, or stolen due to inattention; report damage, malfunction, loss or theft of any district-owned equipment to Business Services immediately; report damage, malfunction, loss or theft of any work-related equipment to the telecommuter’s supervisor immediately.

8. Adhere to all district policies, with special attention to the Electronic Communications policy 8990.

9. Do not hold any district business related meetings at the telecommuting site.

10. Comply with Tax laws. The district is not responsible for substantiating a telecommuter’s claim of tax deductions for operation of a home office used to perform district work. Employees should seek advice from a tax advisor concerning home office deductions. However, if required by the IRS and if a copy of the employee/telecommuter’s executed telecommuting agreement is not sufficient evidence, under limited circumstances this district will certify, if requested, as to the dates during which a Telecommuting Agreement between the college and the employee/telecommuter was in effect.

D. Human Resources Office

1. Assist employees and management in understanding the Telecommuting Policy and Procedures.

2. Maintain and update the Telecommuting Policy and Procedures as needed.

3. File appropriate paperwork (contract) in the employee’s personnel file.

E. Information Technology Services (ITS)

1. Approve any district-purchased software or hardware installed for the telecommuting option to ensure that it is in accordance with software copyright laws and compatible with district software standards.

2. Provide general oversight regarding equipment and other information and computer needs associated with telecommuting.
3. Provide guidelines defining the appropriate data communications equipment, software and services for home-based telecommuting. In-house operations will take first priority.

V. TELECOMMUTING SCHEDULING

A. Regular Schedule

“Regular telecommuting” means an established schedule of days per week or month. A regular telecommuting schedule must be established prior to the start of the work arrangement and must be mutually agreed to by the employee and the supervisor. Any change in the agreed upon schedule must be approved by the supervisor, and when established, documented and appended to the Telecommuting Agreement. The supervisor and the telecommuter must take actions to prevent the telecommuter from becoming isolated from office staff. Schedule changes are to be approved by the appropriate cabinet-level administrator.

An employee must forego telecommuting if needed in the office on a regularly scheduled telecommuting day in order to meet the work goals of his or her unit or department, or the needs of the district. The employee may also be called in to the office when necessary to meet operational needs. The manager or supervisor should provide reasonable notice whenever possible. However, due to unforeseen circumstances or an immediate need, the employee may be required to report to the office without advance notice, as needed.

While working away from the office, employees must be accessible for communication (e.g., telephone, pager, e-mail, etc.). Supervisors are encouraged to allow for flexibility in the means for accessing a telecommuter. Full-time telecommuting is permissible only when necessary and justified (e.g., to accommodate medical restrictions or disabilities) and depends on the needs of the job and demonstration of a clear benefit to program objectives and operations.

B. Temporary Schedule

Employees may be allowed to telecommuting on a temporary basis as their duty assignment permits. Circumstances that may be appropriate for “temporary” telecommuting included, but are not limited to:

- Special project work which requires a period of uninterrupted time.
- While all reasonable commute routes are blocked (i.e., major construction, storm, or disaster).
- Primary work site is inaccessible or uninhabitable.

A short-term, temporary telecommuting agreement between a supervisor and an employee does not require the completion of the Telecommuting Annual Agreement or Safety Checklist. The supervisor must send written notification specifying dates, times,
and reasons to the cabinet-level administrator at the start of a temporary telecommuting schedule.

C. Hours of Work and Overtime
Terms and conditions of collective bargaining unit agreements would apply.

D. Equipment, Software, Services, Maintenance, Repair, and Replacement
The district will not, as a standard, purchase computers, software, software licenses, Internet or phone services or office equipment such as printers, fax machines, calculators, or furniture for in-home telecommuting. In addition, the selection, installation, maintenance, repair or replacement of employee-owned equipment and software is the responsibility of the employee. Computer equipment should have a configuration that is compatible with the district's information technology infrastructure. In the event of equipment malfunction, the telecommuter must notify his/her supervisor immediately. If repairs will take some time, the telecommuter may be asked to report to the main office until the equipment is usable. District-owned equipment and services are to be used only for district business. The telecommuter must repair and/or replace at own expense any district-owned equipment that is damaged, lost, or stolen due to inattention.

E. Work Environment Criteria
The opportunity to participate in a home telecommuting program is offered with the understanding that it is the responsibility of the employee to ensure that a proper work environment is maintained as follows:

1. Designate an area that allows for working in an office setting. Ensure that the equipment necessary to perform the work is in the designated area.

2. Make advance arrangements for dependent care to ensure a productive work environment. (Telecommuting is not intended to be a substitute for day care or other personal obligations.)

3. Keep personal disruptions such as non-business telephone calls and visitors to a minimum.

4. Obtain pre-approval from the supervisor for use of vacation time or sick leave to attend to family or home matters during home office hours.

5. Ensure that the home office is a safe place to work. See "Setting up A Home Office" below.

F. Information Security
Security of confidential information is of primary concern and importance to the district. Telecommuters, like all district employees, are expected to adhere to all applicable laws, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures regarding information security. The following are basic information security guidelines:
1. Use district information assets only for authorized purposes, and ensure that confidential information is not disclosed to any unauthorized person.

2. Back up critical information on a regular basis to assure the information can be recovered if the primary source is damaged or destroyed.

3. Use "logon" passwords on all systems containing confidential information and keep those passwords secure.

4. Use the latest virus protection software on telecommuting systems used to prepare information for subsequent use on district systems.

5. Return material (paper documents, diskettes, etc.) containing all confidential information to the district for proper handling or disposal, if necessary.

6. Adhere to copyright laws by not copying or sharing any district owned software utilized by telecommuters, and when no longer employed by the district, remove all such software from the home computer and return any software media to the college.

G. Health and Safety
Failure to maintain a proper and safe work environment, in accordance with this policy, may be cause for terminating the telecommuting program for the employee. If an employee incurs a work-related injury in the approved “home office” portion of the house during telecommuting hours while telecommuting, workers’ compensation laws and rules apply just as they would if such an injury occurred at the main office. However, if the injury occurs in another portion of the home, even if it occurs during telecommuting hours, it will not be covered under workers’ compensation laws. Employees must notify their supervisors immediately and complete all necessary documents regarding a work-related injury, or regarding an injury that occurred during working hours.

H. Setting up a Home Office
It is important for all employees to maintain a healthy, safe and ergonomically sound work environment while working in the office or at a remote location. The major difference between the employer's office and the home office is ownership and control over the workplace.

A "Safety Checklist" must be completed by the potential telecommuter prior to the beginning of home telecommuting and all items must be reviewed and evaluated as being satisfactory by the employee’s supervisor.

I. Protecting Data and Equipment
The following computer safeguards can prevent costly computer breakdowns and the loss of crucial data:

1. Position equipment away from direct sunlight or heat.
2. Place equipment on well-ventilated surfaces.

3. Dust the office space regularly and use dust covers.

4. Do not eat or drink near data or equipment.

5. Do not touch unprotected floppy diskette or CD-ROM surfaces or place heavy objects on diskettes.

6. Keep diskettes and CD-ROMs away from heat, dirt, smoke and moisture.

7. Keep all magnets, magnetic paper clip holders, fluorescent lamps and electric motors away from computer equipment and floppy diskettes.

J. Fire Protection

1. Smoke Detectors - The Health and Safety Code, Sections 13113.7 and 13113.8 require that dwellings be provided with smoke detectors. Employees are responsible for assuring home compliance with these requirements. Smoke detectors placed in the home work area must meet the following criteria;

   a. The detector must be placed in a location, which monitors the work area, and any electronic equipment used to support telecommuting.

   b. Must be approved by Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) and/or State Fire Marshall, and have a functional test mechanism.

   c. Detectors should be tested at the time of installation and on a monthly basis. Detectors which are wired into the house electrical system and have a battery backup should be checked with main power both on and off. Battery operated detectors should be cleaned and equipped with fresh batteries, as recommended by the manufacturer.

2. Fire Extinguisher - The designated work area must be equipped with an UL approved ABC fire extinguisher with dry chemical agent capable of fighting Class "A," (Trash, Wood, Paper) "B," (Liquids), and "C" (Electrical Equip) type fires. Employees are responsible for assuring home compliance with this requirement. The fully charged extinguisher should be made easily and readily accessible near the work area (no more than 10 feet).

VI. TELECOMMUTING PROCEDURES

A. Checklists and Agreement
These procedures are to be followed prior to the start of a telecommuting schedule. The employee submits a verbal or written request to his/her immediate supervisor, who
should discuss the proposal with his/her manager. If the proposal is viewed as having potential for approval, the following steps should be followed:

1. A Safety Checklist is completed, signed, and dated by the employee.

2. The employee submits the signed Safety Checklist to his/her supervisor.

3. The supervisor either denies the Safety Checklist and returns it to the employee, or approves it and retains the signed form.

4. The supervisor completes the Supervisor's Checklist. The employee and supervisor sign and date the bottom of the form. The supervisor retains the signed form.

5. If applicable, the employee completes an Equipment Use Agreement (see IV.A.). The employee and supervisor sign and date the form. The supervisor retains the signed form. Approval is also required by the cabinet-level administrator.

6. The supervisor or the employee completes a Telecommuting Agreement. The agreement is signed and dated by the telecommuter and the supervisor, who attaches all original forms and forwards the packet for approval to the director/manager/dean and then to the cabinet-level administrator, who has final decision-making responsibility for approval of the Telecommuting Agreement. The cabinet-level administrator retains a copy of the Telecommuting Agreement and returns the packet to the supervisor.

7. If approved, the supervisor retains a copy of the signed telecommuting forms, gives a copy to the employee, and forwards the packet of original forms to Human Resources for placement in the employee’s personnel file.

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