



Orange County Government Telework Guidelines

Introduction:

Our residents and businesses rely on the County to provide essential government services. We believe changes in County services are measured steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our community. Utilizing alternative methods of conducting business including telework can facilitate social distancing. We understand that striking a balance is crucial throughout this process, and many critical County functions will continue at their normal work locations. Every department and function is unique and changes to operations need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis within departments. The following document provides some general guidelines for telework.

Telework is an alternative work arrangement that authorizes an employee to perform the duties and responsibilities of their position at home or another off-site location. Depending on the job duties and responsibilities telework may be applicable to some employees or jobs but not for others.

Telework is not an entitlement, but a benefit to mutually support both the employee and organizational needs and Orange County has the right to cancel or suspend employee telework privileges at any time.

Eligibility:

In the wake of COVID-19, the County's primary business operations and the delivery of essential community services remain top priorities. All key staff directly associated with these activities will continue to perform their normal work responsibilities, and most at their usual facilities and locations. Generally, these employees are not eligible for telework.

As the County continues to take reasonable precautions to promote social distancing, many other operations have been scaled back and some services are being modified to minimize the spread of the virus. As a result, managers should re-evaluate the way these operations and functions are staffed and determine when and which employees may work from home as a way of protecting them and further promoting the practice of social distancing.

When evaluating employees' eligibility to telework a few factors should be considered such as whether the job:

- entails working alone or with equipment that can be kept at the alternative job site;
- has clearly defined tasks and objectives;
- has measurable work activities; and

- otherwise supports the County's ability to practice social distancing to prevent the spread of the virus.

In many cases the employee's current work duties and assignments easily lend themselves to telework arrangements; however, others may require some modification.

Teleworking generally works well with exempt positions, but it can be more challenging with some nonexempt positions. Nonexempt positions may require closer monitoring and oversight, in order to comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act and collective bargaining unit agreements, if applicable. In addition, nonexempt positions require careful tracking of time and recording of each workday showing when the employee begins and ends the workday, as well as meal and break periods.

There may not be one solution that works for or is right for everyone. Some employees, due to the nature of their work, will be expected to report to work at their usual location. However, it is encouraged to allow eligible employees to telework, whenever possible.

Telework requests need to be evaluated based on the factors mentioned above and approved by the Division Manager and the Department Director. Human Resources should be notified which employees are teleworking.

Steps to Ensure Telework Effectiveness:

Define Work Arrangement

- Establish the days and hours the employee is expected to telework
 - Leave policy and procedures for requesting time off remain the same
- Identify methods of contact (such as dedicated phone line, voice mail, email, videoconference, etc.) and time/frequency of contact.

Determine Key Deliverables

- Identify assignments and tasks that need to be performed each week.
- Establish and communicate measureable deliverables for the week.
- Specify who is responsible for monitoring deliverables.

It may be unrealistic to assume that all productivity standards or outcomes can be sustained as we continue to navigate COVID-19. Some services are being deferred or modified during this period. Our focus now is to keep everyone safe and healthy while maintaining as much productivity as possible.

Performance Measurement Criteria:

- Clarify assessment techniques that will be used to evaluate and measure performance.
- The focus should be on the effective delivery of the expected results.

Compensation and Work Hours:

Employee compensation, benefits and work status will not change due to participation in telework. In addition, the base work hours is expected to remain the same.

Confidentiality and Protection of Data:

Care must be taken to ensure that records are subject to the privacy act, HIPAA, sunshine laws (public record), etc. and sensitive data is protected and not disclosed to anyone.