

Title VII – Department Procedures

Section 1500 - Remote Work Policy

A. PURPOSE

In January 2021, the Board of Supervisors approved the County's first ever Remote Work Policy, which was developed by the County Administrative Office in concert with County Departments, Personnel and the bargaining units to establish a more adaptive work environment to better meet the needs of the County and its constituents during both regular and emergency operations.

While the original version of this Policy arose out of necessity in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the County will continue to offer remote work as an option for those employees for whom this work arrangement is appropriate based on their job duties.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on the current phase of the County's hybrid work environment, which allows for a combination of a minimum two-day per week on-site and remote work. A hybrid work arrangement offers departments and employees flexibility in determining the best way to meet operational needs. While hybrid remote/on-site work at the County is not a condition of employment, it can be requested by employees on a voluntary basis.

Remote Work Benefits

A hybrid work arrangement benefits County workers by reducing drive times and commutes. When fewer employees travel to work, traffic decreases, and parking constraints are removed, which benefits not only the County but all constituents and visitors to the County. The decreased traffic also reduces emissions, creating a cleaner environment and thus benefiting the world beyond the County of Santa Cruz. These are but a few of the benefits of remote work.

Hybrid Work Expectation

Employees who are approved for remote work are expected to work a "hybrid" schedule which includes work on-site at their County work location at least two days per week in addition to off-site remote work. Requests to work remotely 100% of the time require Department Head and County Administrative Officer approval. Approval of such requests is very rare and will be made only under exceptional circumstances.

Guiding Principles

All remote work must comply with the County Administrative Officer's Guiding Principles, included in the Appendix to this policy.

B. DEFINITIONS

Remote Work

An arrangement that allows an employee to perform County work at an approved alternate worksite, which is typically the employee's home. Even when approved to work remotely, employees must retain the ability to report to the County worksite at least two days per week and as needed for meetings, coverage, emergencies, or other operational reasons unless otherwise approved by the Department Head and County Administrative Officer.

Additionally, under California law all County employees are required to serve as Disaster Service Workers should the need arise, and employees must comply with this obligation regardless of their remote work status.

Remote work outcomes and performance

Remote work should not differ from in office work in terms of productivity. The job is the same; the location where it is performed is different.

C. ELIGIBILITY

Not every County position nor every County employee will be eligible to work remotely. The business needs of the department will determine eligibility. Even if a particular position can be performed remotely, not every employee in that position may be eligible to work remotely. Individual eligibility is at the discretion of the department. Departments will determine which employees are eligible for remote work based upon job duties and business needs. Should a department deny a request for remote work, they will provide the employee with an explanation of the legitimate business reasons for that denial. Employees eligible for remote work must remain in good standing, meet job performance expectations and comply with the terms of the remote work agreement they make with their supervisor.

Employees may at times also be required to return to work at the County site on their scheduled remote work days for meetings, covering for other employee absences, or other operational reasons.

1. Department Needs

The business needs of the department will be foremost in determining eligibility. Some jobs are not practical or possible to perform remotely. Each department will determine which positions and which employees are eligible for remote work.

a. Examples of work that can be done remotely

- Electronic correspondence
- Writing reports
- Conducting meetings that do not require in person interaction
- Doing department business while accessing online system

b. Examples of work that needs to be done on site

- Staffing reception desks
- Filing, distributing mail and certain other clerical functions
- Custodial or building maintenance tasks
- Warehouse work
- Configuring or deploying computers or other equipment
- In-person services requiring customer contact, like some health services

2. Appropriate Remote Workspace

Working remotely means having the appropriate space to work and the appropriate equipment and infrastructure. The department and the employee will work together to assess the employee's environment, infrastructure, and tools for a successful remote work experience.

3. Geographic Work Location

The expectation is that employees who perform remote work will do so from their personal residence. This best ensures that the employee will be available to meet the County's operational needs (including reporting to the County work site if needed) as well as to perform their duties as a Disaster Service Worker should that need arise.

a. Out of State Remote Work

Out of State remote work presents numerous challenges such as different tax laws, health insurance plan availability, labor laws and more, and makes it impossible for employees to report to work quickly if required to do so to meet operational needs or perform their duties as Disaster Service Workers. For these reasons out of state work options are under review and require the advance approval of both the Department Head and the County Administrative Officer. Approval will only be granted under very limited circumstances.

b. Remote Work Coupled with Vacation or Other Absence

Remote work should not be combined with vacation or other absence from work without the advance approval of the Department Head and the County Administrative Officer. Approval will only be granted under very limited circumstances.

4. Job Offers

Job offers may not be extended with a commitment of ongoing remote work, as departments' operational needs change and flexibility is paramount in determining where employees are needed.

D. EVALUATION AND EXPECTATIONS

Overall, the same productivity standards, performance expectations and other County policies shall apply to employees when working remotely as when working in a County facility.

1. Performance Measurements

Just as they do for employees who work exclusively in County locations, supervisors must clearly communicate their performance expectations to employees who work remotely, and document and evaluate employees' compliance with those expectations. The supervisor should ensure the work is completed correctly and in a timely manner, and that the employee receives the appropriate training, guidance, and feedback.

2. Communication

Employees who are working remotely and their supervisor will define communication standards and expectations and establish what status updates or check ins are required. The employee and the supervisor should discuss the items listed in the sections below and document their agreement. This policy includes a sample Remote Work Agreement that could be used to guide the conversation. It can also be modified to match the business needs of the department.

- a. Schedules. The employee and the supervisor must establish a schedule that clearly specifies when the employee will be working remotely and when they will be working from a County facility. The supervisor should clearly communicate the expectations and requirements for any changes to that schedule, the protocols for requesting time off, and reporting absences or tardiness. It is the employee's responsibility to comply with those guidelines.
- b. County business. Employees should be focused on and engaged in County business during their scheduled work time, regardless of where they perform that work. Just as when they are working in County facilities, if employees who are working remotely need to conduct personal business during their scheduled work hours, they must do so during their meal and rest breaks or else make advance

arrangements with their supervisor to adjust their work schedule to allow for the personal activities.

- c. Work product / deliverables. The supervisor and the employee must develop a plan for what work the employee will be performing while they are working remotely and specify how and when that work must be completed. It shall be the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that the employee clearly understands what is expected of them and the employee's responsibility to fulfill those expectations.
- d. Feedback. Supervisors should conduct 1:1 and team meetings with employees who are working remotely with at least the same frequency as they conduct such meetings with on-site employees. These meetings may occur via Teams, teleconference, or other remote means. In addition to these formal check-ins, supervisors should have regular brief check-ins with employees who are working remotely, just as they would with on-site employees.

3. Remote Work Agreement

Every employee who works remotely must meet with their supervisor and together complete a written Remote Work Agreement which includes details such as the employee's remote work location, work schedule (including details specifying when the employee will work remotely and which days they will work on-site in a County facility), and the expectations that will apply while the employee is working remotely. The Appendix to this policy includes a sample Remote Work Agreement that may be used to guide this conversation. That Agreement may be modified to match the business needs of the department.

E. IT EQUIPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Most employees working remotely will require internet access, a computer, and a phone; other equipment may also be necessary. Currently, a variety of solutions have been implemented to facilitate remote work. Some employees are using County equipment for remote work and some are using their personal equipment. Departments will work with employees to determine which solution works for the department and the employee. As the County determines the appropriate standard configuration, the policy will be updated.

1. Internet access

Employees who will be accessing electronic tools, the County network and online County business applications will require reliable internet access that will allow

them to perform the job duties required. Employees will need to obtain, maintain, support and pay for their own internet access.

2. Other equipment and infrastructure

For most remote workers, computers, laptops, tablets, and other devices might be required. Monitors, printers, webcams, headsets and scanners are examples of other devices that might be required. The County department and the employee will work together to define the required tools and how they will be provided. This policy allows for County as well as personal equipment to be used by the remote worker. When using personal equipment, current virus protection software will be required to access the County network via VPN. Questions about versions of operating systems, browsers and the like should be referred to the Information Services Department.

3. County IT Support

County IT Support staff will support remote staff. Documentation and phone or email support are available to remote staff. There are a few areas where County IT Support is not available. County IT staff is unable to provide services at the home of remote workers. County IT Staff is unable to support personal devices or other personal equipment, internet services or other non-County IT infrastructure used by the remote worker.

F. WORKSPACE AND REMOTE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Employees working remotely must have a private, safe location to work. All standards for maintaining the confidentiality of information, such as HIPAA or Personally Identifiable Information (PII) –related, must be in place. The policies that pertain to work environment at the County work site apply to the Remote Work site as well.

1. Confidential and PII Information

It is the duty of the employee to safeguard sensitive information, including PII, while in the office and while working remotely. PII refers to information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity, either alone or when combined with other personal or identifying information that is linked or linkable to a specific individual.

Examples of PII that are sensitive include:

- full or truncated Social Security numbers
- dates of birth
- addresses
- phone numbers
- email addresses
- credit card numbers

- financial information
- mother's maiden name
- biometric identifiers
- medical information
- passport number
- driver's license number
- performance ratings

You should also consider context as non-sensitive PII can become sensitive when combined with other information.

2. Documents

Work with your supervisor to determine what types of documents are appropriate to take home and what documents should stay secured within the County workspace. Know the sensitivity of your documents, and make sure they are appropriately marked to help mitigate the risk of unauthorized disclosure. You and your supervisor must ensure that adequate safeguards are in place to protect the records from unauthorized disclosure.

3. Equipment

Always secure your County equipment and information, including while transporting information home or while traveling. If you must leave equipment or documents unattended for a short period of time, always secure them. Records cannot be left exposed or unattended without proper safeguards. Friends and family should not handle County records, so do not leave them on your home desk where your family can view or access them. Inventory your documents before working remotely, and ensure all documents are returned to the office. When possible utilize computer access protection practices such as locking your computer screen if you walk away from your computer, protection screens to limit exposure, and conduct client-facing or PII exposing work in a private setting if there are other people in the remote work area. Any potential loss, theft, or compromise of PII or sensitive data, whether suspected or confirmed, or loss of County equipment, must be reported immediately to your supervisor.

4. Communication

If other people are present at your remote work location, then in addition to securing your computer and physical documents, you must also ensure that no one can overhear you when you are discussing confidential work matters over the telephone or in virtual meetings.

5. Ergonomics

The County will not set up or inspect the employee's remote workspace, and it shall be the employee's responsibility to configure that space in a manner which allows them to perform their job duties safely and comfortably. Employees are

encouraged to use the ergonomic checklist provided in the Appendix to ensure that the remote work site is ergonomically appropriate for them. It may be possible in some instances for a department to provide an employee with equipment or furniture to assist with their ergonomic set up, but this is not guaranteed. If an employee is unable to set up their remote workspace in a manner which allows them to perform their work in a safe and ergonomically correct manner, remote work may not be appropriate for this employee.

G. COMPENSATION

Remote work is optional and working remotely does not change employee compensation. There is no differential for remote work. Employees working remotely who need to return to the County work location will not be compensated for travel, gas or lodging.

H. REVOCATION OF REMOTE WORK

The department may determine that remote work is no longer appropriate for the position or that the employee is no longer meeting the eligibility requirements for remote work. This can be due to changes affecting or altering the employee's remote work site, employee performance issues, or other concerns. The responsibilities of the position may change making remote work no longer appropriate. In this situation, the employee would be required to resume working exclusively at the County location. This decision is entirely within the discretion of the department's management.

Appendix

A. Sample Remote Work Agreement

- This is intended as a guide and can be modified as needed

B. Ergonomic Checklist

C. Guiding Principles of Remote Work at the County

**SAMPLE
REMOTE WORK AGREEMENT**



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ



REMOTE WORK AGREEMENT

EMPLOYEE INFORMATION

Employee Name

Job Title/Class

Department

Supervisor/Manager

Work Phone #

Remote Work #

Office Work Address

Remote Work Address

SECURITY

I agree:

1. To maintain the confidentiality of all County information and documents, including but not limited to confidential contact and other personal information about County customers or other County employees and to prevent unauthorized access to any County system or information, and dispose of work-related documents in a manner that will not jeopardize the interests of the County.
2. To use County resources, such as OneSolution to save and manage my work.
3. That if I am using my personally owned computer, netbook, laptop, or other similar device, I will ensure it has anti-virus software, installed and configured to properly receive malware signature file updates on a daily basis. And to adhere to applicable County of Santa Cruz policies relating to remote access and use of VPN connections while using my personally owned computer or laptop during remote work.
4. That I am responsible for all activity originating from my account credentials (username and password) and will immediately report any unauthorized use or suspicious activity immediately.

EQUIPMENT AND SOFTWARE

I agree:

1. To properly care for, secure and prevent damage, loss and theft of all County equipment assigned to me.
2. Not to use County equipment or software for personal purposes, nor allow family members or friends access to the equipment or software. This includes not allowing non-employees to use any personally owned computer or laptop when it is accessing the County network with the connecting software.
3. To disable the VPN or other connection when I am not using it.
4. To promptly return all County-owned software, equipment and documents when requested.
5. That if I am using my personally owned computer, I will follow all software licensing provisions agreed to by the County. This includes uninstalling any county-provided software when it is no longer required for County business purposes or if I leave County employment.
6. Not to hold the County responsible for personal property used, lost, damaged or destroyed.

WORKING CONDITIONS APPLICABLE TO ALL EMPLOYEES

I agree:

1. I must be able to communicate with my supervisor or other authority via an electronic (e.g., telephone or email) and that if I am unable, I do not have authorization to work remotely.
2. That I am responsible for obtaining, maintaining, supporting and paying for any expenses related to a home office and that the County will not reimburse me for such expenses.
3. To call the office or access my voicemail to obtain messages daily and/or on the schedule my supervisor requires while working at home/remote location (or I agree to forward telephone line to my remote work location while working remotely).
4. That my supervisor or other authority may call me to work at my remote worksite for business reasons. I must be able to communicate with my supervisor or other authority via an electronic method (e.g., telephone or email) and that if I am unable, I do not have authorization remotely.
5. My duties, obligations, and responsibilities as an employee working remotely are the same as office-based workers, including my obligation to respond to my voicemail, email messages in a timely manner.
6. I will take my breaks during my remote work time.
7. That if a situation arises necessitating the use of sick leave, I can utilize sick leave work day(s) but must report the absence in the same manner as office-based employees.
8. That while working remotely, I am expected to be working at the above-listed home/remote locations during my work schedule. I understand that personal leave time normally during a scheduled workday must be arranged in the same manner as office-based employees.
9. That I am responsible for maintaining a safe and ergonomic working environment, work area, bathroom, and other areas that may be necessary for working during my remote work time.
10. That the County will not be responsible for injuries to third parties or family that occur on my premises.
11. In the event of a job-related incident or accident during my remote work hours, I will report the incident to my supervisor as soon as possible and follow established procedures to report and investigate workplace injuries or incidents.
12. I will not hold in-person business meetings with internal or external clients, customers, or colleagues at my remote work location, unless specifically authorized in advance.
13. I will abide by all terms of **Remote Work Policy**.

SCHEDULING AND OVERTIME - HOURLY EMPLOYEES ONLY

I understand:

1. As an overtime-eligible (“hourly”) employee under the FLSA that remote work and accessing work through the connecting software is considered work time. Therefore, I will only use the connecting software during my scheduled remote work days as authorized by my supervisor or other designated authority for purposes of performing my work functions.
2. I understand that any hours beyond my normal work schedule must be authorized in advance by my supervisor.

ADDITIONAL DEPARTMENT-SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS

I agree:

To abide by any additional considerations that meet my work unit's business needs as identified below and which I have discussed with my supervisor.

AGREEMENT

Employee

By signing below, I certify that I have read, understand and agree with the terms outlined in the County's Remote Work policy and this agreement. I also agree to comply with other applicable County of Santa Cruz direction and policies including guidelines for computer use, data confidentiality and security.

Employee Name:

Employee Signature:

Date:

Supervisor

I have reviewed the Remote Work Agreement with the employee.

Supervisor Name:

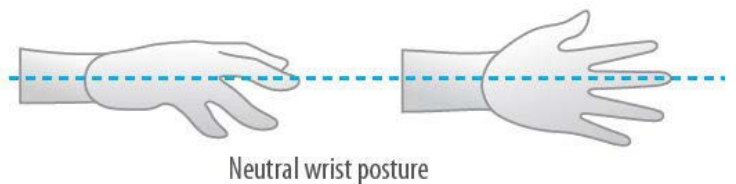
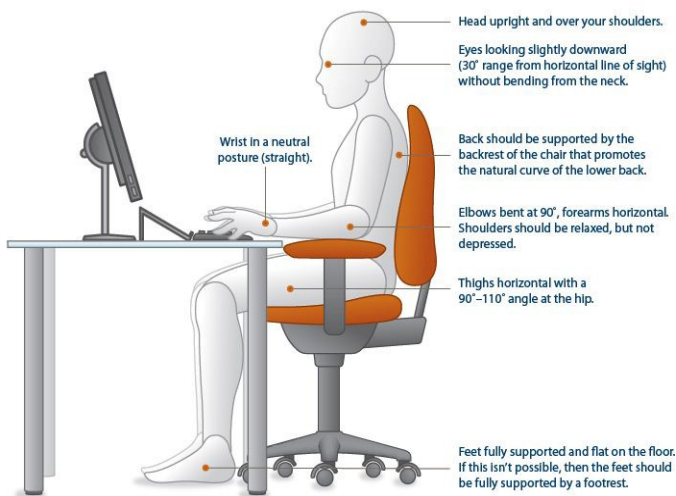
Supervisor Signature:

Date:

Computer Workstation Ergonomics: Self-Assessment Checklist

The goal of this self-assessment is to help you set up your workstation for optimal comfort and performance. For more information, refer to the [National Institutes of Health, Office of Research Services, Division of Occupational Health and Safety website](#).

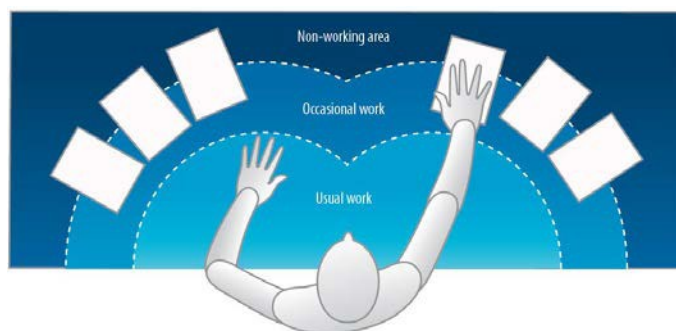
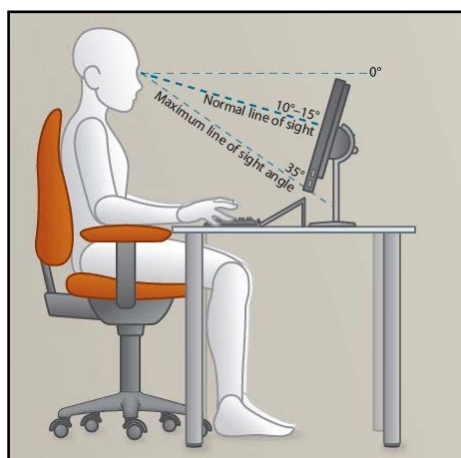
Item	The Office Chair	Yes	No	N/A	Suggested Actions
1.	Can the height, seat and back of the chair be adjusted to achieve the posture outlined below?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain a fully adjustable chair
2.	Are your feet fully supported by the floor when you are seated?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower the chair Use a footrest
3.	Does your chair provide support for your lower back?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjust chair back Obtain proper chair Obtain lumbar roll
4.	When your back is supported, are you able to sit without feeling pressure from the chair seat on the back of your knees?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjust seat pan Add a back support
5.	Do your armrests allow you to get close to your workstation?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjust armrests Remove armrests



Item	Keyboard and Mouse	Yes	No	N/A	Suggested Actions
6.	Are your keyboard, mouse and work surface at your elbow height?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise / lower workstation Raise or lower keyboard Raise or lower chair
7.	Are frequently used items within easy reach?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rearrange workstation
8.	Is the keyboard close to the front edge of the desk allowing space for the wrist to rest on the desk surface?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move keyboard to correct position
9.	When using your keyboard and mouse, are your wrists straight and your upper arms relaxed? <i>The keyboard should be flat and not propped up on keyboard legs as an angled keyboard may place the wrist in an awkward posture when keying.</i>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-check chair, raise or lower as needed Check posture Check keyboard and mouse height
10.	Is your mouse at the same level and as close as possible to your keyboard?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move mouse closer to keyboard Obtain larger keyboard tray if necessary
11.	Is the mouse comfortable to use?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rest your dominant hand by using the mouse with your non-dominant hand

Item	Keyboard and Mouse	Yes	No	N/A	Suggested Actions
					for brief periods (mouse buttons can be changed within the computer control panel) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate alternate mouse options.

Item	WorkSurface	Yes	No	N/A	Suggested Actions
12.	Is your monitor positioned directly in front of you?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reposition monitor
13.	Is your monitor positioned at least an arm's length away? Note: the monitor's location is dependent on the size of the monitor, the font, screen resolution and the individual user e.g. vision/use of bifocal spectacles etc.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reposition monitor Seek an alternative monitor if necessary e.g. flat screen that uses less space
14.	Is your monitor height slightly below eye level?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add or remove monitor stand Adjust monitor height
15.	Is your monitor and work surface free from glare?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Windows at side of monitor - cover windows Adjust overhead lighting Obtain antiglare screen
16.	Do you have appropriate light for reading or writing documents?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain desk lamp Place on left if right-handed – place on right if left handed
17.	Are frequently used items located within the usual work area and items which are only used occasionally in the occasional work area?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rearrange workstation



Item	Breaks	Yes	No	N/A	Suggested Actions
18.	Do you take postural breaks every 30 minutes? E.g. standing, walking to printer / fax etc.?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set reminders to take breaks
19.	Do you take regular eye breaks from looking at your monitor?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refocus on picture on wall every 30 minutes

Item	Accessories	Yes	No	N/A	Suggested Actions
20.	Is there a sloped desk surface or angle board for reading and writing tasks if required?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain an angle board
21.	Is there a document holder either beside the screen or between the screen and keyboard if required?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain document holder
22.	Are you using a headset or speakerphone if you are writing or keying while talking on the phone?				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain a headset if using the phone and keyboard

Item	Laptop	Yes	No	N/A	Suggested Actions
23.	In the event of using a laptop computer for prolonged periods of time use of; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A full sized external keyboard and mouse; Docking station with full sized monitor or a laptop stand 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain appropriate laptop accessories

Item	“Hot Desking” (when applicable)	Yes	No	N/A	Suggested Actions
24.	Provided time, support and supervision to make above adjustments.				

Following completion of this checklist, please discuss any concerns or requirements with your DOHS ergonomics specialist. All completed assessments should be submitted to your DOHS ergonomics specialist.

Person Completing Assessment

Name		Position	
Signature		Date	

DOHS Ergonomics Specialist

Name		Position	
Signature		Date	
Comments/ Recommendations			

Guiding Principles for Remote Work at the County

1. Protecting the health and safety of the public and our employees is a priority.
2. We will strive to create an environment that supports remote work for employees.
3. We will equitably review all requests for remote work consideration.
4. Understanding that not all work lends itself to a remote option we will consider options to changing work processes or procedures that could support a remote work option.
5. Recognizing that a strong social fabric contributes to our organizational effectiveness, we will create opportunities for remote workers to engage on a regular basis with management and colleagues.
6. Department Heads shall establish department standards around remote work based on the operational needs including minimum in person expectations.
7. 100% remote work positions are rare and must be approved by both the department head and the CAO office.
8. Managers will schedule regular check-ins with remote workers to offer appropriate support and management oversight of employee work.
9. Remote workers must maintain functional internet, responsiveness to calls and emails and other productivity standards in order to continue to work remotely.
10. Signed remote work agreements shall be completed for employees who are approved for remote work.
11. Remote work shall not impede the department's ability to serve the public.
12. Remote work will not require you to hire additional incremental staff.