Emergency COVID-19 Telecommuting Process

During this state of emergency for COVID-19, the City of Los Angeles has created an expedited telecommuting process to support and to minimize health risks for our employees. When a department determines telecommuting is possible under the ever changing situation, employees can work remotely. While not all City employees have jobs that are suited to telecommuting, departments should be flexible in determining work duties that could be completed at home.

Application

Employees who are telecommuting must fill out the Emergency COVID-19 Telecommuting Application and Agreement as well as a Self-Certification Safety Checklist. These forms are available in PDF and also online, which can be digitally signed. Ideally, these forms should be completed prior to employees telecommuting, but if a situation requires immediate telecommuting, the form should be completed as soon as possible.

The online form requires the employee to create a free account with CityGrows to complete the form. After entering all the required information, the employee will be asked to provide their supervisor's email address. The supervisor will receive an email asking them to approve, ask for edits, or reject the application. Once the supervisor approves the application, the employee will receive an email confirming approval. The employee may return to their CityGrows account at any time and view their application (s) or download it as PDF. Unfortunately, once the supervisor signs and approves an application, they may no longer see their employee's application in CityGrows. If a supervisor would like to get a copy of their employee's application, they must ask for the PDF copy from their employee. For any technical issues regarding CityGrows, please contact Arin Abedian (arin.abedian@lacity.org).

Safety Responsibilities and Concerns

Telecommuting employees retain the safety responsibilities as stated in the Injury and Illness Prevention Program (**IIPP**) document: http://per.ci.la.ca.us/Safety/PersonnelDepartmentIIPP.pdf. Please save a copy of the IIPP at your alternate work location for your records. For any further safety-related questions or concerns, you may also contact the Occupational Safety and Health Division (OSHD) at per.safety@lacity.org.

Telecommuting employees must report all work-related injury or illness that occurs during approved telecommuting work hours, not including lunch time, to their immediate supervisor as soon as reasonably practicable, and no later than 24 hours after the injury or illness started. The **Employee's Report of Injury/Illness Form**, which can be found in the **IIPP**, should be used.

Remember there will be a period of adjustment while supervisors and employees figure out the best way to communicate about assignments and work duties. Here are some general guidelines to keep in mind.

Guidelines for Supervisors

- It is recommended that supervisors meet with their employees before the application is filled out so you have the opportunity to go over any specific guidelines and/or expectations. **Remember, supervisors will not receive a copy of the signed document automatically. To receive a copy of the application, please ask your employees.**
- Set Expectations

  - Assignments - Discuss assignments and tasks that can be done from an alternate location with employees. These may include alternate assignments or special projects the employee can work on if some of the regular duties cannot be completed during telecommuting
  - Check-ins - Discuss how frequently you would like to check-in with the employee. It is recommended this is done _at least_ once a day.   Determine which communication option(s) you would like to use to communicate with the employee while they are telecommuting (Email, phone calls, text messaging, Google Chat, etc.)

- Resources - Determine what resources are needed for telecommuting and whether the department is able to provide it since it will affect what work can be completed during telecommuting. For instance, ITA has made remote access to desktops available (See Resources)

- Review the Emergency COVID-19 Telecommuting Application and Agreement submitted by your employee through Citygrows. You will be notified by email when an employee has submitted an application.

    - The application will provide information on resources needed and how you will be communicating with one another.

- Tips & Considerations

    - Create benchmarks and expectations for success
    - Maintain a standard timeline for ongoing reviews of telecommuting arrangements
    - Use GoogleChat and Google Meet to easily schedule phone conferences or virtual meetings
    - Refer the employee to constructive tools if the employee is exhibiting performance issues during emergency telecommuting

        - A written performance improvement plan agreed upon with the employee along with more frequent check-ins.
        - Employee and Family Assistance Program (see Resources) and training to coach the employee on time management and other skills.
        - If these strategies are not effective, contact your HR or the Personnel Department for assistance.

    - Utilize the training for successfully working remotely in the resource section.

Guidelines for Employees

- Make sure you understand the expectations for work duties, assignments and deadlines. It is recommended you meet with your supervisor prior to filling out the application, so you have an idea of the expectations.
- Fill out the application on the City's website. You will be directed to fill out the application using a platform called **Citygrows**. You will need to fill out an application, as well as safety check-list.

Instructions for the application can be found at the beginning of this document. **Be prepared to download and share a copy of the telecommuting application with your supervisor, once it has been signed and approved.**

- If applicable, make sure you are comfortable with the technology needed to telecommute - don't be afraid to ask your supervisor for assistance
- Maintain good communication with your supervisor, coworkers, and clients in order to enable a smooth transition to an alternate work location while telecommuting.
- Make sure you have a safe space at your home to allow you to complete your work. Use the Emergency COVID-19 Telecommuting Self-Certification Safety Checklist to know what to look for in your workspace.
- Managing work with personal responsibilities: Telecommuting requires planning and discipline because it provides less structure and more freedom. Here are some basic suggestions to manage your work day successfully:

    - Set a work schedule and to-do list.
    - Explain your situation with the people at home and those that may disrupt your workflow with unscheduled visits (family, friends, and possibly neighbors) so they know that you are working from home..
    - Because of school closures during COVID-19, you may have to attend to children. It is important not to assume working at home means the ability to provide full-time childcare or elder-care. Taking care of others is not easy and may preclude you from having the time or energy to handle your job as well. In general, it is best to secure separate care for your loved ones during your work hours if possible so that you can focus your attention on your work. Hours during your day which must be spent engaged in child or elder care should not be included in hours worked time, but should instead be designated as either compensated time off (sick, vacation, etc.) or as paid leave, as instructed by your department.
    - Keep your supervisor informed of your work progress or any difficulties encountered.

- If you are having problems adjusting to telecommuting, discuss this situation with your supervisor so you can find a solution.
- There are trainings to assist you to be successful in working remotely in the resource section.
- This can be a stressful time, so if you need additional support, please don't hesitate to contact the Employee and Family Assistance Program. See Resources.

Resources

- The Support Plus Employee and Family Assistance Program is available to City Employees and all members of their household. Live representatives may be reached 24 hours, 7 day a week, at (800) 213-5813 or logging in to liveandworkwell.com. The access code for both is CityofLA.

- For safety-related questions, including ergonomic questions, or concerns, please contact the Occupational Safety and Health Division (OSHD) at per.safety@lacity.org.

- To access your desktop applications remotely, go to Connect2LACity.lacity.org and follow the instructions to download and install an app. This will provide you access to a custom set of applications chosen by your department and that are available via the intranet. You can log in and conduct your work. If you have a desktop at the office, leave it on and using the Connect2LACity service you can remotely access your desktop and all of the applications as if you were sitting at your desk. This includes PaySR, D-Time, and other City applications. **This system must first be set up by your IT team with ITA**.

- If your City email is Google mail, you can also access your account remotely without downloading anything to your computer. Go to: mail.lacity.org and enter your employee identification number and password as you normally would.

- Remote conferencing (voice, video, and screen sharing) is available via Google Hangouts – available free as part of your work Google Suite. For information on how to use it, go to support.google.com/hangouts. Google Hangouts provides support for up to 250 participants, meetings can be recorded, and additional features like chat, closed captioning, and a telephone option are included.

- Employees can also access training that Cornerstone and LinkedIn Learning have offered for free to respond to COVID-19 telecommuting situations, such as time management, productivity tips, and stress management. You can find the links to these resources as well as others at per.lacity.org/covid19d