



## **POLICY:**

### Telecommuting and Remote Work

#### **1.0 PURPOSE**

VHF considers telecommuting and remote work to be a viable alternative work arrangement in cases where individual, job, and supervisor characteristics are suited to such an arrangement. The Telecommuting and Remote Work Program allows employees to work from their home of record for all or part of their regular workweek.

VHF defines telecommuting and remote work as allowing employees to work outside their normal physical place of work (primary office, laboratory, clinic, or department location) on an agreed upon predefined predictable work schedule. By its nature, work performed away from the main office setting must lend itself to meaningful performance away from the main office, laboratory, clinic, or department. Telecommuting and remote work are voluntary work alternatives that may be appropriate for some employees and some jobs but not all employees or all jobs. Whether or not this is a viable alternative will be left to the discretion of the employee's supervisor. All telecommuting and remote work will be subject to rescission at the discretion of VHF Administration.

#### **2.0 SCOPE**

Telecommuting and remote work can be adhoc and of limited duration (such as working from home for a short-term project, an unexpected life event, during approved business travel) or regular, as will be described in the remainder of this document.

Please note, any request for a telecommuting or remote schedule due to health or medical related reasons should be referred to VHF Administration for immediate consultation.

All adhoc telecommuting and remote work arrangements are made on a case by case basis, focusing on VHF's needs first. Such adhoc arrangements are not the focus of this policy but are available with management consultation and specific written approval that stipulates the details of the limited duration adhoc telecommuting or remote work agreement.

Telecommuting and remote work are not designed to be a replacement for appropriate child or other dependent care. Although an individual employee's schedule may be modified to accommodate child and dependent care needs, the focus of the arrangement must remain on job performance and meeting business demands without distractions or creating an unprofessional work atmosphere. Prospective telecommuters and remote workers are encouraged to discuss expectations of telecommuting with family members prior to entering into the agreement.

### **3.0 POLICY**

1. Telecommuting and remote working non-exempt employees will be required to contemporaneously and accurately record all hours worked in a manner designated by VHF, which includes logging work shift start and end times and paid and unpaid meal break start and end times. VHF expects employees to accurately track time and submit timecards for all hours worked.
2. Telecommuting and remote working non-exempt employees must follow VHF's meal period, rest period, or record-keeping policies. Hours worked in excess of those specified in the employee's schedule (per day and per work week) in accordance with state and federal requirements, will require the advance approval of the supervisor and are subject to all overtime requirements.
3. "Trades" of telecommuting shifts, days, and times between employees are not allowed without written supervisory consent.
4. Employees entering into a telecommuting or remote work agreement may be required to forfeit exclusive use of their onsite workstation in favor of a shared arrangement to maximize VA's space needs.
5. The employee must establish an appropriate environment within their home for work purposes. Unless applicable law provides otherwise, VHF will not be responsible for costs associated with initial setup or continuing costs of the employee's home office such as remodeling, furniture or lighting, utilities, telecommunications and data installation, nor for repairs or modifications to the home office space.
6. VHF will supply the employee with reasonable and appropriate office supplies (pens, paper, etc.) for successful completion of job responsibilities as requested. VHF will also reimburse the employee for other business-related expenses such as long-distance phone calls, shipping costs, etc., that are reasonably incurred in accordance with job responsibilities and claimed through VHF's standard reimbursement policy and procedures.
7. All employees of must be entirely fit for duty or use PTO if they are not. Employees who are not feeling well may not opt to use telework in place of PTO. Ad-hoc telework will require supervisor approval prior to or at the beginning of the affected day.

Consistent with expectations of information asset security for employees working at VAPHS based locations, telecommuting and remote working employees will be expected to ensure the protection of proprietary company and research information accessible from their home office. Security steps include, but are not limited to:

1. Use of locked file cabinets and desks;

2.Regular password maintenance;

3.Any other steps appropriate for the job and the environment.

Official VA Research and VHF institutional documentation, including documentation that a research team may deem as official work records, may not be removed from the workplace. Employees are expected to check with their PI and the IRB on the nature and identity of such records. With supervisor approval, copies may be made of such records if deemed necessary in the performance of the employee's assigned tasks.

Injuries sustained by the employee while at their home work location and in conjunction with their regular work duties are normally covered by VHF's workers' compensation policy. Telecommuting and remote working employees are responsible for immediately notifying their supervisor and VHF of such work-related injuries in accordance with institutional workers' compensation procedures. Unless applicable law provides otherwise, VHF is not liable for any injuries sustained by visitors to the employee's work site and VHF is not responsible for injury to others at their telecommuting or remote work location.

Unless applicable law provides otherwise, the employee will be responsible for determining tax, licensing and other legal implications for the business use of the employee's home based on IRS and community (homeowner's association), local, state and federal government requirements and restrictions. Responsibility for complying with and fulfilling all obligations in these areas rests solely with the employee.

Unless applicable law provides otherwise, all necessary insurance protections, disclosures, coverage requirements and costs attributable to the telecommuting or remote work arrangement are the sole responsibility of the employee.

VHF will determine, with information supplied by the employee and the supervisor, the appropriate equipment needs (including hardware, software, modems, phone and data lines, facsimile equipment or software, photocopiers, etc.) for each arrangement on a case-by-case basis. VHF and VA OI&T (IT) departments may serve as resources in this matter.

1.Equipment supplied by VHF will be maintained by the institution and is to be used for business purposes. The employee will neither make personal use of nor allow others personal use of VHF equipment. Unless applicable law provides otherwise, the employee accepts financial responsibility for any VHF equipment that is lost, stolen or damaged because of gross negligence, or a willful or dishonest act.

- The telecommuter or remote worker may be asked to sign an inventory of all office property and to agree to take appropriate action to protect the items from damage or theft.
- Upon termination of employment all company property and records will be returned to VHF, unless other arrangements have been made.

2.Equipment supplied by the employee, if deemed appropriate by the institution, will be maintained by the employee. VHF accepts no responsibility for damage or repairs to employee-owned equipment.

3.VHF reserves the right to make determinations as to appropriate equipment, subject to change at any time.

Employees shall not use their personally owned vehicle for VHF business unless specifically directed by their supervisor or other manager to do so. If the use of a personal vehicle is required for the job, the employee and supervisor must contact VHF to discuss the process for company requirements.

All exceptions to the Telecommuting and Remote Work Agreement and the associated policy and procedure must be requested in writing by the responsible manager and approved in writing by the VHF Executive Director or delegate.

The availability of telecommuting or remote work as a flexible work arrangement for employees of VHF can be discontinued at any time at the discretion of the employer. Every effort will be made to provide 30 days' notice of such a change to accommodate commuting, child care and other problems that may arise from such a change. There may be instances, however, where no notice is possible.

#### **4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES**

VRFP Board of Directors: The Board of Directors is responsible for the overall policy, planning, and coordination of all VRFP activities within the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System.

Executive Director: The ED is responsible for developing, administering, and coordinating a business process that provides optimal internal controls for VRFP.

Operations Manager: The OM is responsible for ensuring all employees and supervisors follow policy

#### **5.0 PROCEDURES**

- A. An employee or supervisor may suggest telecommuting or remote work as a possible work arrangement.
- B. Employee and supervisor should read and discuss this policy and the related agreement with special attention to the factors below.
  1. The employee must agree to remain accessible and respond timely to communications and needs from other management, staff, and collaborators or supported groups. The employee must, within a reasonable time during the agreed upon work schedule, be accessible by phone, video, online chat, email or any other method agreed upon at the onset of the telecommuting or remote work agreement.
  2. The employee must have their own equipment and have CAG access to be eligible for telecommuting or remote work.
  3. An appropriate level of communication between the telecommuter or remote worker and supervisor will be agreed to as part of the discussion. The supervisor and telecommuter or remote worker will communicate at a level consistent with employees working at the office or in a manner and frequency that seems appropriate for the job and the individuals involved.

- 4. Employees who telecommute or work remotely may be required to report to their office location from time to time as part of their regular job to perform duties, receive training or participate in meetings. Notice of the need to report to the VAPHS location should be provided as early as practical to allow for the employee to make appropriate plans and arrangements.
- C. If after the discussion, the employee and supervisor agree to proceed with the arrangement, they will complete and sign the Telecommuting and Remote Work Agreement and submit it to VRFP's Admin Offices to review. The final decision to approve or deny the telecommuting or remote work request will rest with the VRFP Executive Director (ED) or delegate, who will evaluate the suitability of such an arrangement paying attention but not limited to the following areas:

**Employee Suitability** –the needs and work habits of the employee, compared to traits customarily recognized as appropriate for successful telecommuters and remote workers.

**Job Responsibilities** –the job responsibilities to determine if the job is appropriate for a telecommuting or remote work arrangement.

**Equipment needs** –necessary equipment, telecommunications, other secured computer/data network access and workspace design considerations.

**Telecommuting or Remote Work Schedule** –appropriate schedule and the general and specific assignments or tasks that are to be performed. Please note, ultimately the supervisor is the final decision maker as to final schedule.

- D. Upon execution by the ED, both the employee and supervisor will receive a fully executed copy of the agreement.
- E. Telecommuting and Remote Work Agreement must be executed prior to commencing formal telecommuting or remote working. In some cases, the commencement of telecommuting or remote working may be delayed if administratively necessary for purposes of establishing payroll in a new state or location. In cases, where an employee will work out of state due to relocation, the request should be made at least 2 months in advance so VHF has enough time to ensure payroll and HR functions can be administrated properly.

## 5.0 RELATED DOCUMENTS

Telecommuting and Remote Work Agreement

## 6.0 REVISION HISTORY

Revision Letter	Author	Revision Date	Description of Changes
A	A. Caffas		Original policy

RECERTIFICATION: This policy is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of March , 2023