

**37. WORKING FROM HOME DURING AN EMERGENCY:
[Modified 8/2020- BLENDED WORK FOR EXEMPT EMPLOYEES]**

[Modified 12/2020 - BLENDED WORK OPTION POLICY]

Working remotely can be informal, such as working from home for a short-term project or on the road during business travel, or a formal, set schedule for working away from the office as described below. Certain positions will require work to take place offsite as a part of normal operations, and such activities are not subject to the following provisions. Certain positions and job duties will not be suitable for remote working arrangements and are also not subject to the following provisions.

Any remote working arrangement made will be on a trial basis for the first month and may be discontinued at will and at any time at the request of either the employee or the agency. Every effort will be made to provide one week's notice of such change to accommodate commuting, child care, and other issues that may arise from the termination of a remote work arrangement. There may be instances, however, when no notice is possible.

In the course of normal business operations, most staff are expected to work onsite for an established number of "core hours" per week during normal business hours as defined in the *Blended Work Agreement*. If the following conditions are met, staff may elect to work offsite each week for a prescribed number of hours (equal to up to one day per week) where a week is defined as 12:01 am Saturday morning - 12 midnight Friday. Blended scheduling and/or optional remote work is not an employee right or benefit and may be discontinued at any time at the discretion of management. Employees can be called in at any time for in-person meetings or projects with as much notice as possible.

During emergency situations such as government mandated shutdown for inclement weather, natural disaster, pandemic, or other imposed circumstances, employees may be permitted to work remotely for extended hours following the protocols and procedures below.

Criteria

Individuals requesting formal blended work arrangements must have completed the 90 day probationary period with a satisfactory performance record. Blended work schedules are specifically documented on the *Blended Work Agreement*.

Some positions, responsibilities, and projects are more suitable than others for working offsite and/or during nontraditional hours and also may be necessary to maintain business continuity in the event of an emergency. Responsibilities that do not require face-to-face interaction, require minimal supervision, involve the extensive use of technology, and have clearly defined and easily measurable tasks are more appropriate activities during offsite working hours and will be documented in the *Blended Work Agreement*.

Before entering into any remote work agreement, **the employee will submit a request to their supervisor and to the human resources department (HR)**, who will evaluate the suitability of such an arrangement based on evaluation of the following areas:

- Employee suitability: The employee and supervisor will assess the needs and work habits of the employee, compared to traits customarily recognized as appropriate for successful remote work.
- Job responsibilities: The employee and supervisor will discuss the job responsibilities and determine if the job is appropriate for a blended work arrangement.
- Equipment needs, workspace design considerations, and scheduling issues: The employee and supervisor will review the physical workspace needs and the appropriate location(s) for remote work.

If **HR and supervisor** determine that an employee is a good fit for remote work, a draft *Blended Work Agreement* will be prepared and signed by employee and supervisor and filed in the employee's personnel file, and a one-month trial period will commence.

Evaluation of remote work performance during the trial period will include regular interaction by phone and email between the employee and supervisor, and regular face-to-face meetings to discuss work progress and problems. Evaluation of remote work performance beyond the trial period will be consistent with that received by employees working at the office in both content and frequency but will focus on the work output and timely completion of objectives.

Work Schedule

The supervisor will establish the employee's blended work schedule and the employee will document all time allocations during offsite working hours. Travel from the office to an offsite work location is not included in time worked. While working remotely, it is expected that employees maintain a near normal schedule including involvement in meetings, teleconferences etc. All arrangements must be made in advance to remove barriers to working offsite. Certain personal circumstances may permit a temporary extension of offsite working hours at the discretion of management and with Executive Director approval.

The supervisor will ensure that appropriate coverage for management functions is consistent during regular business hours. For example, at least **2** members of the Leadership Team will be onsite at the Athens office at all hours of operation. Remote offices will be similarly arranged per the discretion of associated Division Directors.

Documentation

The employee is required to complete their timesheet daily and may also be required to complete a time allocation log that details the tasks completed during all offsite and/or nontraditional working hours.

Equipment, Supplies, and Telephone/Data Connection

The employee must be able to provide for her/his own equipment, supplies, and telephone/internet connection in order to perform job duties. In special cases where it is in the best interest of the work unit, the agency may provide equipment necessary for the employee to perform the desired work at home or in another remote location. Agency equipment, software, data, and supplies may be used only for official COAD business and must be returned to the agency at the termination of the blended work arrangement or upon request by the agency. The employee is responsible for operating costs, maintenance, and any other cost associated with the use of an alternate work location. In the event of equipment failure or malfunction, the employee will immediately notify the supervisor. In the event of delay in repair or replacement, or any other circumstance which makes work offsite impracticable, the supervisor may require the employee to report to the regular work site or use accrued leave.

Security

All agency information security and records management and retention policies that apply at the regular worksite apply when the employee works remotely. Steps include the use of locked file cabinets and desks, regular password maintenance, and any other measures appropriate for the job and the environment.

Policies

Whether or not specifically articulated in these Procedures, blended work arrangements are subject to the same federal, state and agency laws, policies and procedures applicable to employees at the regular worksite.

Safety

Employees are expected to maintain a clean safe remote workspace, free from hazards. Injuries sustained by the employee in a remote office location in conjunction with his or her regular work duties are normally covered by the company's workers' compensation policy. Employees are responsible for notifying the employer of such injuries as soon as practicable. COAD is not liable for injuries to third persons, including family members, at the home worksite. COAD is not liable for damages to the employee's personal or real property.

Workers' Compensation

The employee is covered by workers' compensation during the performance of official business at the remote worksite during work hours. The employee must report work-related injuries immediately to the supervisor and will comply with all agency reporting requirements established for the purpose of reporting such claims.