Policy Statement:
Telecommuting arrangements may be approved for exempt employees when it is in the best interest for the operational needs of PHS. The manager, Director of HR and the CEO will evaluate all requests and determine if such an arrangement is beneficial to the organization. If approved, telecommuting employees must meet all the guidelines specified and understand that the arrangement may be altered at the sole discretion of PHS at any time and for any reason.

Procedure:
The following policy outlines the requirements and consideration with respect to Telecommuting arrangements. Only regular full-time or part-time exempt employees are eligible for telecommuting arrangements. Generally, introductory employees will not be eligible for such arrangements. Telecommuting may be approved when it is in the best interest of PHS and when it will enhance the productivity of the employee. Nothing in this policy alters the employee’s at-will employment or otherwise guarantees employment for any specified period of time. As with all of its policies, PHS will implement this telecommuting policy without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability or any other category protected by law.

Definition
Telecommuting is the practice of working outside the primary worksite for approved periods of time to accomplish specific work objectives. Telecommuting is not an entitlement. Rather, it is a work alternative that PHS may offer to some, exempt employees when, at the sole discretion of PHS, it would benefit both the organization and the employee. All requests for a telecommuting arrangement will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Telecommuting includes alternative work arrangements available to employees whose duties are appropriate for such assignment. The decision to authorize these options is within management’s discretion (CEO, supervisor and HR will evaluate all requests) based on the nature of the work being performed and other business considerations. The arrangement is voluntary and participation does not alter or change an employee’s work relationship or relieve an employee from the obligation to observe all applicable PHS rules, policies, and procedures.

There are several levels of telecommuting:

1. Employee works two-four days remotely and the balance on site at PHS.
2. Employee works primarily on-site at PHS but works remotely on a scheduled basis (once per week or once per pay period).
3. Employee primarily works on-site at PHS but occasionally works remotely.
4. Employee primarily works off-site and works on-site on a scheduled basis (once per month or as scheduled by his/her supervisor).
Request for Telecommuting

Employees interested in a telecommuting arrangement must submit written requests (using the Telecommuting Agreement) to their supervisors. The request should indicate how such an arrangement will benefit both PHS and the employee and should explain how the employee would be accountable and responsible for his or her work, what equipment would be necessary to accomplish the employee’s duties remotely and how communication barriers can be overcome.

Evaluation of Request for Telecommuting

Telecommuting is not an appropriate option for all job types or for all employees. As such, PHS reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to evaluate each request pursuant to this policy on a case-by-case basis. In deciding whether to grant an employee’s request to telecommuting, the employee’s supervisor, in conjunction with HR and the CEO, will focus on how PHS’s business needs can best be accomplished. The decision to approve a particular telecommuting arrangement will be based on several factors, including but not limited to: position and job duties, performance history, related work skills and overall impact on the organization.

Positions that may be considered for a telecommuting arrangement are those that:

- Job function that can be performed at a remote site without diminishing the quality of the work or disrupting the productivity
- Do not require an employee’s presence at the regularly assigned place of employment on a daily or routine basis;
- Allow for an employee to be as effectively supervised as he or she would be if the job functions were performed at the assigned place of employment;
- Have an emphasis on the electronic production and/or exchange of information by means of computers, modems, fax machines or phones
- Involve measurable or quantifiable work products
- Have minimal need for specialized materials or equipment available only at the regularly assigned work site

Telecommuting is an alternative method of meeting the needs of the organization and is not a universal employee benefit. As such, PHS retains the right to refuse to enter into a telecommuting arrangement where such an arrangement is not appropriate. In addition, PHS may terminate a telecommuting arrangement at any time, for any reason. It is important that PHS maintain a high level of customer service to our members, prospective members and each other. A request for a telecommuting arrangement will not be approved if to do so would sacrifice customer service or if the arrangement would place an additional burden on staff working at the office.

It is not an appropriate use of this policy for employees to request to work from home because they are not feeling well on a particular day. Employees who are ill should take leave in accordance with PHS’s PTO policy. In addition, Telecommuting should not be used as an alternative to making other, outside daycare arrangements. Employees who regularly work remotely in accordance with an approved telecommuting arrangement should arrange for outside daycare for children in the home.

Occasional Request

Requests to work remotely on an occasional, ad hoc basis must have prior approval from the employee’s supervisor. Unless there is a last minute emergency, the request must be made at least 3-5 business days in advance to ensure appropriate coordination on-site at PHS. There must be a specific project or activity that will be worked on and there must be accountability once the employee returns to the office.

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Telecommuting Arrangements

The employee’s compensation, benefits, work status, work responsibilities, and the amount of time the employee is expected to work per day or per pay period will not change due to participation in a telecommuting arrangement (unless otherwise agreed upon in writing). The employee’s telecommuting hours will conform to a schedule agreed upon by the employee and the supervisor. Change to this schedule must be reviewed and approved in advance by the employee’s supervisor. At a minimum, a telecommuting employee must be available during the core business hours of 8 a.m. until 5 p.m.

Unless there is an appointment on their Outlook Calendar, Telecommuting employees must respond to messages within a reasonable timeframe and the same business day.

Telecommuting employees must:

- Share Outlook Calendar with all staff.
- Update Outlook Calendar of appointments (including lunch) and location daily
- Forward office phone to cell phone
- Answer cell phone with a professional greeting
- Maintain a professional voicemail message including first and last name

Except during scheduled meetings (posted in Outlook Calendar), Telecommuting employees must:

- Open, frequently check, and respond to Outlook email
- Be available for conference calls, video conference, or webinars
- Return to the office to participate in group programs (for example, staff meetings and retreats).

Home Office

Employees working at home should maintain a safe, separate workspace in which they can complete their work. Access to this workspace by non-employee residence of the house should be limited. Employees are reminded to report all work-related injuries immediately to PHS.

Employees must secure confidential, PHS information by use of computer passwords and/or lock on doors, desks, and filing cabinets. Telecommuting employees are reminded that they are prohibited from disclosing or using confidential PHS information for any purpose other than legitimate business purposes. Misuse of PHs confidential information may subject employees to discipline, up to and including termination.

Telecommuting employees are reminded that computers, computer files, the e-mail system, and software furnished to employees are PHS property intended for business use. PHS retains the right to monitor the use of computers, computer files, the e-mail system and software it provides and to prohibit the use of its computers and computer networks and software by non-employees. Abuse of PHS computers and computer networks and software will subject the employee to discipline, up to and including termination.

Review Period

Any telecommuting arrangement will be on a trial basis for the first three months, and may be discontinued at any time. Retaining telecommuting privileges will require the employee to maintain his/her status as a top performer and effective team member, who consistently delivers quality projects on time.

Terminating Telecommuting Arrangements

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Telecommuting employees are expected to perform at the same level of productivity as if they were working on-site. Should the productivity level of any employee who is telecommuting drop below an acceptable level, the telecommuting arrangement will be terminated and the employee will be expected to return to work in the PHS offices or clinics. The employee may also be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

References:
Employee Handbook pages 27-30

Policy Cross References: