**Diocese of St. Petersburg**

**pastoral Center**

## **Policy: Telecommuting and Remote Work Policy and Guidelines**

# Values

**+ The Pastoral Center seeks to support its co-workers in the vineyard by providing a work environment that is just, understanding, supportive, and values their skills and unique gifts, and unique circumstances.**

**+ We value opportunities which enable employees to better support our parishes, schools and ministries while addressing any personal desire to work from home.**

**+ We value a collaborative work environment and seek to create and work in a structured framework that do not enhance silo ministry.**

+ We value developing collegial and collaborative relationships with all the co-workers in the vineyard.

**+ We value being proactive in preparation, in the event climate, environmental or economic forces outside of the Pastoral Center, which may require access to our physical premises to be limited.**

# POLICY statement

**POLICY:**

It is the policy of the Diocese of St. Petersburg Pastoral Center that telecommuting arrangements are permitted when agreed upon by the employee, immediate supervisor and reporting Executive Director and approved by the Chancellor for Administration/COO or designee; when it is feasible that an employee could fulfill their job duties from an alternative location for a set period covered by the arrangement and when the telecommuting arrangement does not disrupt the operations and services of the Pastoral Center to parishes, schools and other diocesan entities. Telecommuting arrangements may be initiated by the employee or by the employer for any legitimate business purposes. The decision to authorize a telecommuting agreement is at the discretion of the supervisor, followed by the reporting Executive Director and by the Chancellor for Administration/COO or designee.

**Definition**

**Telecommuting** is defined as working remotely rather than at the Pastoral Center or other Diocesan entity. In this arrangement, some or all work is performed offsite to enable employees to achieve a more successful balance between work and responsibilities and their personal/family life. Pastoral Center employees are not required to telecommute unless there is a weather or facility emergency/prohibition. It may be a one-time occurrence or may be a long-term arrangement.

**Remote Work** is considered, for the purposes of the policy, working at an alternate diocesan, parish or school worksite, or at a conference site, if participating in or providing professional development.

**Considerations**

Some of the considerations prior to approving a request for telecommuting are:

* Does the nature of the work lend itself to telecommuting?
* Is the employee a good candidate for telecommuting?
* What is the impact on the overall service or ministry area and those who choose not to work away from the premises?
* Will the request to telecommute require the purchase of new equipment?
* Is the employee serving with good professional standing?

The success of a telecommuting arrangement is contingent upon the employees’ ability to be productive and deliver results, while not having a negative impact on our parishes, schools, and ministries or on those who choose to work in the Pastoral Center offices.

The Pastoral Center administration has the right to refuse to make telecommuting available to any Pastoral Center employee. Further, the availability of telecommuting as a flexible work arrangement can be discontinued at any time at the discretion of the supervisor(s). Every effort will be made to provide 30 days’ notice of such a change to accommodate the employee. There may be instances however when no notice is possible. This includes whether the demand for onsite service is required.

# GUIDELINES

The Pastoral Center’s guidelines for telecommuting are as follows:

**Compensation and Work Hours**

The employee’s compensation, benefits, work status and work responsibilities will not change due to telecommuting. The amount of time the employee is expected to work per day or pay period will not change because of telecommuting.

**Eligibility**

Successful telecommuters have the support of their supervisors. Employees will be selected based on the suitability of their jobs, an evaluation of the likelihood of their being successful telecommuters, and an evaluation of their supervisor’s ability to manage remote workers. Each department will make its own selections with final approvals made by the Chancellor for Administration/COO. It is important to note that while an individual employee may meet the guidelines of eligibility to telecommute, the needs of the ministry or service area must be considered as well and may take precedence.

**Categories of Telecommuting**

There will be 3 categories of telecommuting for full-time equivalent co-workers:

* **Full time telecommuting** is when the employee has a regular full-time schedule of 37.5 hours or more working from home. They are only required to come to the Pastoral Center or affiliated location for meetings, as requested by their supervisor. As a result, they will not be assigned to a specific office or workstation but will arrange to have a workspace when they are required to come into the office. A review of continuance of such an agreement will take place during the first 30 days, and then quarterly and a recommendation for continuance/ discontinuance will be given to the Chancellor for Administration/COO.
* **Part-time telecommuting** is when the employee works from home 22.5 hours (3 workdays) or less on a regular basis. They will continue to have a specific assigned office or workstation, though the assigned office or workstation most likely will be shared with/jointly assigned to others. A review of continuance of such an agreement will take place during the first 30 days, and then quarterly and a recommendation for continuance/discontinuance will be given to the Chancellor for Administration/COO.
* **Ad hoc telecommuting** is when an employee requests to telecommute on occasion with no regular schedule. They will continue to have an assigned office or workstation. If an employee continues to request work from home on a regular basis, a discussion will take place to determine if this work arrangement is acceptable based on the policies and guidelines.

**Equipment/Tools**

The Pastoral Center may provide specific tools/equipment for the employee to perform his/her current duties. This may include computer hardware, computer software, phone lines, email, voicemail, connectivity to host applications, and other applicable equipment as deemed necessary. The use of equipment, software, data supplies and furniture when provided by the Pastoral Center for use at the remote work location is limited to authorized persons and for purposes relating to Pastoral Center business. The Pastoral Center will repair equipment owned by the Pastoral Center. When the employee uses her/his own equipment, the employee is responsible for maintenance and repair of equipment. A loaner computer may be provided when available. Loaner computers will vary in performance and configuration. Loaners must be returned upon request.

**Workspace**

The employee shall designate a workspace within the remote work location for placement and installation of equipment to be used while telecommuting. The employee shall maintain this workspace in a safe condition, free from hazards and other dangers to the employee and equipment.

**Office Supplies**

Office supplies will be provided by the Pastoral Center as needed. Out-of-pocket expenses for other supplies will not be reimbursed unless by prior approval of the employee’s manager.

**Worker’s Compensation**

During work hours and while performing work functions in the designated work area of the home, telecommuters are covered by worker’s compensation.

**Liability**

The employee’s designated home workspace will be considered an extension of the Pastoral Center’s workspace. Therefore, the Pastoral Center will continue to be liable for job-related accidents that occur in the employee’s home workspace during the employee’s working hours.

The Pastoral Center will be liable for injuries or illnesses that occur during the employee’s agreed-upon work hours. The employee’s at-home work hours will conform to a schedule agreed upon by the employee and his or her supervisor. If such a schedule has not been agreed upon, the employee’s work hours will be assumed to be the same as before the employee began telecommuting.

The Pastoral Center assumes no liability for injuries occurring in the employee’s home workspace outside the agreed-upon work hours or workspace. The Pastoral Center is not liable for loss, destruction, or injury that may occur in or to the employee’s home. This includes family members, visitors, or others that may become injured within or around the employee’s home.

**Income Tax**

It will be the employee’s responsibility to determine any income tax implications of maintaining a home office area. The Pastoral Center will not provide tax guidance nor will the Pastoral Center assume any additional tax liabilities. Employees are encouraged to consult with a qualified tax professional to discuss income tax implications.

**Communication**

* Employees who are telecommuting must be available by phone and email during core hours. Telecommuters will still be expected to be available for staff meetings, and other meetings deemed necessary by management.
* There is a requirement of a daily check in with the employee and their supervisor when telecommuting.
* For those telecommuting full-time, weekly prayer meetings and work updates via internet meeting software (Zoom, Teams, etc.) will be required between the telecommuter, supervisor and other team members in order to foster collaboration and support.
* For those telecommuting full-time, part-time or ad hoc, there is the expectation that they should answer their workplace (office) phone and return calls and emails by the end of the business day or at the very latest by 11:59 am the next day.

**Specific guidelines**

* Supervisors must ensure work is being performed at a satisfactory level from employees who telecommute.
* Each service area or ministry must have appropriate coverage in the office on any given day.
* Employees who remain in the office must not bear any additional work due to their co-worker’s telecommuting schedule. If additional workload is too much to bear by those remaining to work at the office, the telecommuter will be required to return to onsite work before additional support will be authorized to be added.
* For ad hoc situations, employees who wish to telecommute must make their request at least two business days prior to the day they wish to work from home. Permission must be granted by their manager prior to telecommuting.
* Employees who experience a sudden situation that requires them to stay at home, that day, must notify their supervisor immediately to determine if a work from home arrangement is acceptable or if the employee needs to use a paid vacation day. Examples of this may include issues resulting from transportation, child or elder care, house, or apt maintenance, illness of a family member.
* Employees must access their files via “Log-me-in” or alternative new technology as provided by the Pastoral Center.
* Non-exempt hourly paid employees must use the Paylocity web punch to log their time. Location services for Paylocity should be in the “on” position on any mobile device when actively telecommuting or remote working.
* If a request for telecommuting involves the purchase of equipment, then budgetary restrictions may result in the denial of the request.
* The employee must insure they have the proper hardware (including a webcam) and software installed on their computer in order to participate in internet meetings.
* Telecommuting agreements with employees will be reviewed during the first 30 days, then every quarter to determine the success of the arrangement and make changes if appropriate.
* Telecommuting is not allowed for employees who are on FMLA, STD or if they are too ill to come into the office.
* It is of high value to get to know all employees and develop a collegial and collaborative relationship. Therefore, the general practice is to have employees work onsite at the Pastoral Center or at a designated diocesan entity during the first 90 days of a new position. Telecommuting privileges will be a rare exception and a demonstrated and compelling need must be provided before approval is granted.

The availability of telecommuting as a flexible work arrangement for employees 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 the employee. There may be instances, however, when no notice is possible.

As with all policies and guidelines, exceptions to this policy may be granted, with approval from the Chancellor for Administration/COO.

This policy supersedes any and all other previous telecommuting and remote work policies and arrangements.

Reviewed: July 18, 2022 Approved by: Bishop Gregory L. Parkes