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Susanne R. Young, Secretary

To: Appointing Authorities, Elected Officials, and State Employees
Cc: Judicial and Legislative Branches
From: Susanne Young, Secretary of Administration
Date: May 14, 2021
Subject: Remote Work Option for State Employees Extended

Background:

Appointing authorities and State employees were informed on March 1, 2021 that they should expect to work remotely when able to do so until at least June 1, 2021, due to the pandemic.

Over the course of the pandemic, many state employees never worked remotely due to the nature of their duties. Others have returned to the worksite when one or more of the following criteria rendered continued telework inappropriate: more than 25% of their job duties required a return to an office setting, home internet speeds or other connectivity issues were insufficient to support full execution of duties, or home office ergonomics or other conditions in the home environment were unsuitable for full-time work.

As of April 1, 2021, employees who preferred to return to the worksite could do so, with appointing authority approval and adherence to health guidance. The Administration noted that additional information would be provided to the state workforce by May 15, 2021.

The purpose of this memo is to advise that through September 1, 2021 those employees who are able to telework, consistent with the expectations identified above, may do so, and those who would like to return to the worksite may do so as well, with approval of the appointing authority. The rest of this memo explains the path forward and the planning process for returning to the worksite this fall, with full consideration of requests to telework under the State's existing telework policy.

The Vermont Forward Plan:

On April 6, 2021, Governor Phil Scott released the [Vermont Forward Plan](#) to identify the path, milestones, and projected timeline for a phased return to unrestricted travel, business operations, and gatherings.

Per the Vermont Forward Plan, nearly all sectors have already moved to [Universal Guidance](#) which currently includes the following mandatory mitigation measures: staying home if sick, wearing a mask, ensuring physical distancing, practicing good hygiene, and following the state's travel guidance. Again, State employees who are directed to return to the worksite or wish to return to the worksite and have obtained supervisor and/or appointing authority permission, must adhere to that guidance.



Appointing Authorities shall refer to the [Universal Guidance](#) and the Department of Building & General Services (BGS) Return to Work Guidance and worksite protocols when considering any request to return to the worksite. Considering the good news from the CDC yesterday, that vaccines clearly work and that fully vaccinated individuals will not need to wear masks or maintain physical distance moving forward, we expect to follow the universal guidance that applies to the workplace, in whatever way it changes as a result of this development. Please note, at this time, it is anticipated that on or before July 4, 2021 all mandatory mitigation measures will be lifted.

If the number of employees who prefer to return to the worksite cannot be accomplished in a manner that complies with the Universal Guidance in effect at the time, supervisors should consider temporary workstations, if possible, or a staffing schedule that alternates days in and out of the office. No special fit-ups of offices are contemplated during the transition. Again, we currently expect the requirements of Universal Guidance to be lifted on or before July 4, 2021.

Remote Work Future Status:

Through September 1, 2021, employees who are able to perform their job duties while working remotely may continue to telework, with approval of the appointing authority. Beginning September 1, employees who wish to continue some form of remote work must submit a request under existing [Policy 11.9 Telework](#). While these requests are being prepared and evaluated, continued remote work will be permitted until a determination is made; employees should expect to be working under an approved telework agreement or working on-site by November 1, 2021.

Between now and September 1, appointing authorities, agency and department leadership, and supervisors will prepare for anticipated employee interest in formally requesting to work remotely, post-pandemic. State employees should expect that going forward remote work opportunities will be available, subject to clearly defined and measurable productivity metrics to ensure that we continue, or exceed, the current level of service to Vermonters.

Next Steps:

Throughout the summer, leadership and supervisors will develop plans for voluntary telework at the agency, department, and program level. Individual employee requests to voluntarily telework will be reviewed, as a whole, to ensure programmatic needs are met. Depending upon the type of work and extent of remote work requested, approval will be in a manner that ensures maximum productivity and program effectiveness. It is expected that this will be an interactive process and employee feedback will be part of the planning.

Another guidance update will be provided to employees in August.

During the pandemic, State Government needed to adapt quickly to be able to continue to deliver services to the public in a productive and valuable way while working remotely. To best serve Vermonters in a post-pandemic environment, Governor Scott expects us to take full advantage of what we have learned and apply the existing telework policy more broadly, to provide services that consistently exceed the expectations of Vermonters.

Thank you to all who contributed their time to this ongoing discussion. The Administration looks forward to a productive planning process this summer – and working with each of you to make State Government more modern, efficient, productive, and valuable than ever before.

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