

# Working Remotely on a Voluntary Basis

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide the opportunity for PHC employees to work remotely on a voluntary basis – either at home or at an alternate designated non-PHC location in British Columbia - if they can do so effectively and safely, with their manager's approval.

Working remotely has benefits to the employee, to the organization and to the communities we live and work in. These benefits include:

For employees

- Improved work-life balance
- Increased satisfaction
- Reduced out of pocket expenses, such as transportation

For the organization

- Reduced sick time and absenteeism
- Enhanced recruitment and retention
- Increased ability to meet the needs of employees requiring accommodation
- Operational continuity
- Financial stewardship

For the communities we live and work in

- Shrinking our carbon footprint
- Supporting employees' work-life balance contributes to healthier communities

This policy outlines the criteria for determining if an employee can work remotely on a voluntary basis, the actions required to establish a Working Remotely Agreement, the roles and responsibilities of those involved, and the terms and conditions of working remotely on a voluntary basis.

### 1.2. Application

This policy does not apply to employees who work remotely as a condition of employment or as a requirement of their job.

### 1.3. Scope

This policy applies to working remotely under a PHC Working Remotely Agreement, by means of which an employee comes to an arrangement with their manager, so they may voluntarily work from home, or at an alternate designated non-PHC location in British Columbia, as part of their regular work routine.

Examples:

Satwinder has made a Working Remotely Agreement with her manager to work from home two days per week, and works on-site for three days. She values being able to work from home because on those two days, she does not have to do her hour-long commute to and from work. This saves her money and means she can volunteer at her children's school.

Frank retired, and now works part-time as a project manager. Because Frank lives in Nanaimo, he has made Working Remotely Agreement with his manager to work from home, with the commitment that he will come on-site when required.

#### **1.4. Exceptions**

This policy does not apply to working remotely on a temporary or occasional basis. For example, an employee may work from home due to a snowstorm, because they are required to self-isolate, or because of their need for a period of uninterrupted focused work. These temporary and occasional working remotely arrangements are a normal aspect of work, and are managed through the routine employee-employer relationship, typically through a conversation between the employee and their manager.

This policy does not apply to emergency situations, for example, a wildfire or earthquake that may necessitate some employees to work from home or an alternate location. In emergent situations, a senior leader, as part of their role and responsibilities, will direct, or provide the option for, an employee or group of employees to work from home in order to ensure their health and safety as well as the continuity of operations.

#### **1.5. Out of Scope**

Compressed Work Weeks and Extended Work Days are outside the scope of this policy.

Out-of-province and out-of-Canada arrangements are outside the scope of this policy.

## **2. Policy**

### **2.1. Policy Statement**

Providence Health Care supports its employees to work remotely on a voluntary basis – either at home or at an alternate designated non-PHC location in British Columbia – if the employee is able to do so effectively and safely, with their manager's approval.

### **2.2. Manager approval to work remotely**

A manager will determine whether to approve an employee to work remotely by assessing:

- how and where the employee's job is best performed,
- the individual employee's work preferences and performance abilities, and
- the suitability of the employee's designated remote work environment (typically their home).

Because working remotely is a voluntary arrangement, based on a manager's approval, it is neither a requirement nor a right. The manager's decision to approve an employee to work remotely will be determined on a case-by-case basis with the primary consideration being operational feasibility.

Providence Health Care has the right to refuse to make a working remotely option available to an employee.

### **2.3. Working Remotely Agreement**

The approved working remotely arrangement must be documented in a Working Remotely Agreement.

A Working Remotely Agreement will be made initially on a trial basis for three months. At the end of the trial period, the employee and manager will jointly review the arrangement and either continue the Working Remotely Agreement as is, modify the Working Remotely Agreement, or cancel it.

Thereafter, the Working Remotely Agreement shall be reviewed annually, or if there is a change in the employee's job duties, in the employee's work preferences or performance, or in the employee's remote work environment.

If the employee or manager proposes modifications to, or cancelation of, a Working Remotely Agreement, reasonable notice must be given.

Reasonable notice will be determined based on the departmental requirements and the employee's work duties.

Notwithstanding the above, the manager maintains the right to unilaterally modify or cancel a Working Remotely Agreement. Should a unilateral modification or cancellation to a Working Remotely Agreement occur, the manager will provide reasonable notice to the employee.

## **3. Procedure**

A step-by-step guide for developing, implementing and monitoring a Working Remotely Agreement is provided in the [PHC Working Remotely Toolkit](#)

## **4. Responsibilities**

### **4.1. Manager**

- Reviews the Working Remotely Policy and Toolkit
- Initiates and/or receives employee requests for a Working Remotely Agreement
- Reviews and completes all forms required for a decision
- Approves Working Remotely Agreements where appropriate, considering the nature of the job to be performed, the demonstrated performance of the employee, and the suitability of the proposed remote workspace
- Informs Records & Benefits of the Working Remotely Agreement by sending the completed Agreement and forms for filing in the employee's personnel file
- Fulfills that same supervisory accountabilities as when the employee is working on-site
- Ensures application of and adherence to Providence Health Care policies, Collective Agreements, Terms and Conditions of Employment, and department procedures, as applicable

- Monitors the Agreement and reviews with the employee annually or when there is a change in the employee's job duties, performance or remote work location

#### **4.2. Employee**

- Reviews the Working Remotely Policy and Toolkit
- Initiates discussion with their manager about a working remotely opportunity
- Discusses with their manager the nature of the job they perform, their demonstrated performance, and the suitability of their proposed remote workspace
- Completes all forms required for a decision
- Fulfills the same performance accountabilities when working remotely as when working on-site
- Is aware of and adheres to all Providence Health Care policies, Collective Agreements, Terms and Conditions of Employment, and department procedures, as applicable
- Reviews the Agreement with their manager annually or when there is a change in the employee's job duties, performance or remote work location

#### **4.3. Human Resources**

- Provides guidance, support and advice to managers and employees on the Working Remotely Policy and related processes
- Provides resources to support managers and employees to apply the policy successfully

#### **4.4. IMITS**

- Provides technical support to employees working remotely and their managers

### **5. Terms and Conditions**

The provisions of all relevant legislation, workplace policies and guidelines, Collective Agreements, and Terms and Conditions of Employment continue to apply when an employee is working remotely. Employee status, compensation, benefits and leave entitlements, work responsibilities, work hours, and eligibility for authorized overtime are not altered and are managed through existing practices/directives.

#### **5.1. Performance**

It is the expectation of Providence Health Care that employees working remotely will continue to meet their employment obligations. An employee has the same performance accountabilities when working remotely as they do when working on-site. Similarly, a manager has the same supervisory accountabilities to employees working remotely as they do to employees working on-site.

#### **5.2. Remote Workspace**

The employee shall designate a remote workspace.

The manager must approve the site chosen as the employee's remote workspace.

The employee shall maintain this workspace in a safe condition, free from hazards and other dangers to the employee and to PHC technology.

Providence Health Care has the right to make on-site visits (with 48 hours advance notice) to the remote work location for purposes of determining that the workspace is safe and free from hazards, and to maintain, repair, inspect, or retrieve PHC-owned technology, software, data or supplies.

### 5.3. Occupational Health and Safety

The employee's remote workspace will be considered an extension of the organization's work place. Therefore, when working remotely during work hours and while performing work-related functions in the designated remote workspace, the employee is covered by Worker's Compensation.

Reporting and investigation of incidents and hazards will follow the organizational process.

If a work-related injury occurs when working remotely, the employee must follow PHC's injury and incident reporting procedures, just as they would do at a PHC worksite.

The organization assumes no liability for injuries occurring in the employee's remote workspace outside the agreed-upon work hours or when the employee is performing non-work related activities.

If the remote workspace is in an employee's home, the organization 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.

### 5.4. Information Privacy and Security

Employees must ensure the privacy and security of PHC health and business information, as well as the security of data and technology, regardless of where they work, as outlined in the [PHC Information Privacy and Confidentiality Policy](#) and [PHC, PHSA and VCH Information Security Policy](#).

To comply with PHC's obligations under the [British Columbia Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#), any employee working with personal Information must only access the information from a location within Canada.

Employees who are working remotely, and are accessing PHC information, data or documents that contain personal information (employee, volunteer, credentialed staff, student or patient/resident/client) or confidential business information are required to use PHC secure remote access.

Employees are responsible for securing and protecting the property, documents and information belonging to the employer. If there are paper documents with any personal information, they must be stored in either a lock cabinet or a locked room that no other member of the household can access.

Employees will promptly report to their manager any circumstances or incidents which may compromise the confidentiality of any property, documents or information in connection with their employment.

### 5.5. PHC Secure Remote Access

PHC will provide employees secure remote access to the PHC network. The access to and use of the PHC network from a remote work location is limited to authorized persons and for purposes relating to the organization's operations.

If an employee has a PHC-issued laptop, the laptop shall have the appropriate security applications installed so that the employee will have secure access when working remotely. If the employee does not have a PHC-issued laptop and is using their personal computer, the employee shall have the appropriate applications installed to enable secure remote access.

### 5.6. PHC IMITS Service Desk

Employees working remotely will have access to the PHC IMITS Service Desk support.

For employees using their personal computers, PHC IMITS Service Desk support is limited to best effort.

### 5.7. Reimbursement of Employee Costs

Providence Health Care will provide a one-time, tax free reimbursement of up to \$500 to staff to assist in defraying the costs associated with the purchase of items that support working remotely. In order to qualify for the reimbursement, a *Working Remotely Agreement* must be submitted to Employee Records and Benefits. Eligible items are listed on the PHC Connect Intranet (to be developed).

Providence Health Care will not pay for, or reimburse staff for, any costs beyond the one-time reimbursement of up to \$500.

Reimbursement of work-related travel expenses shall be in accordance with the [PHC Travel and Business Expense Reimbursement Policy](#).

### 5.8. Office Supplies

Office supplies will be provided by the organization as needed.

Out-of-pocket expenses for other supplies will not be reimbursed.

### 5.9. Remote Office Procedures

The employee will reference their primary PHC worksite on business cards and other printed or electronic material. A home or personal address should not be publicly displayed.

In-person meetings may not take place at an employee's personal residence.

### 5.10. Working Alone or in Isolation Check-in Procedure

In situations when working remotely is considered working alone or in isolation, a check-in procedure is required. See [PHC Working Alone or in Isolation Policy](#).

A check-in procedure will be agreed upon by the employee and manager, and will be included in the Working Remotely Agreement.

### **5.11. Care of Dependents or Pets**

Working remotely is not designed to be a replacement for appropriate child care, elder care or pet care. The focus of working remotely must remain on job performance and meeting operational requirements.

### **5.12. Insurance**

If an employee is working from home, they are responsible for ensuring they have adequate and appropriate home insurance coverage and/or that working from home does not breach the terms of their household insurance policies.

### **5.13. Municipal/Regional/District Requirements**

If an employee is working from home, they must ensure that they comply with all municipal, regional and district bylaws and regulations. The onus is on the employee to determine this as well as to ensure that the working from home arrangement does not contravene any rental or lease agreements.

### **5.14. Taxes**

Providence Health Care will issue an annual Form T2200 to all employees who work remotely for 50% of their time or greater, that is, three days or more per week on a routine basis. It is the employee's responsibility to determine any income tax implications of maintaining a remote workspace, including a home workspace. The organization will not provide tax guidance nor will the organization assume any additional tax liabilities. Employees are encouraged to consult with the Canada Revenue Agency regarding income tax implications.

### **5.15. Data Collection, Research and Analysis**

The employee shall agree to participate in any and all data collection, research and analysis relating to Providence Health Care's Working Remotely initiative.

## **6. Compliance**

All employees are responsible for adhering to this policy and monitoring their activities in accordance with the policy. Abuse of this policy, or failure to comply with this policy, may result in the Working Remotely Agreement ending immediately.

## **7. Supporting Documents**

### **7.1 Related Policies**

- [British Columbia Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)
- [PHC Commitment to a Safe and Healthy Environment Policy](#)
- [PHC Incident Reporting for Employees Policy](#)
- [PHC Information Privacy and Confidentiality Policy](#)
- [PHC Information Technology, Acceptable Use Of Policy](#)

- [PHC Internet Access Policy](#)
- [PHC Managing Privacy Breaches Policy](#)
- [PHC Staff Mental Health and Mental Wellness Policy](#)
- [PHC Standards of Conduct Policy](#)
- [PHC Texting Policy](#)
- [PHC Theft, Fraud and Corruption Awareness Policy](#)
- [PHC Travel and Business Expense Reimbursement Policy](#)
- [PHC Working Alone or in Isolation Policy](#)
- [PHC and VCH Emailing Policy](#)
- [PHC and VCH Emailing Guidelines](#)
- [PHC, PHSA and VCH Information Security Policy](#)
- [PHC, PHSA and VCH IT Asset Security Policy](#)
- [PHC, PHSA and VCH Mobile Computing and Portable Storage Device Security Policy](#)
- [PHC, PHSA and VCH Remote Access Policy](#)

## **7.2 Guidelines/Procedures/Forms**

- [PHC Working Remotely Toolkit](#)
- [PHC Working Remotely Self-Reflection for Employees](#)
- [PHC Remote Workspace Assessment](#)
- [PHC Working Remotely Request](#)
- [PHC Working Remotely Position Assessment for Managers](#)
- [PHC Working Remotely Employee Performance Assessment for Managers](#)
- [PHC Working Remotely Agreement](#)
- [PHC Working Remotely Evaluation](#)
- [PHC Working Remotely Agreement Cancellation](#)



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