

**NEW JERSEY SCHOOLS INSURANCE GROUP
MEMORANDUM**

Date: DRAFT

To: All NJSIG Employees

From: Jill Deitch, Esq.
Executive Director

Subject: NJSIG Remote Work Pilot Program

I. Background and Purpose:

The COVID-19 pandemic required NJSIG to shift to remote work and showed that our workforce is capable of effectively working from home. Many private companies and public sector employers, including several commercial insurance carriers and the State of New Jersey, are continuing to allow hybrid or fully remote work arrangements as a benefit to their employees outside of the COVID-19 context. Having staff work together in-office serves a valuable function to NJSIG and its operations, especially in terms of organizational cohesion, collaboration, and solidifying our shared sense of purpose. But accommodating some remote work will also allow NJSIG to remain competitive as an employer in the insurance market.

This remote work pilot program is separate and distinct from the remote working arrangements outlined in NJSIG's Guidance to mitigate the risk of spread of COVID-19 in the workplace (updated) memo, the most recent draft of which is dated April 21, 2022.

As a public entity, NJSIG takes seriously its responsibility to ensure that remote work does not negatively affect its efficiency or productivity. It is the purpose of this remote work pilot program to give NJSIG and its management team an opportunity to evaluate remote work in terms of effectiveness and productivity, and to create and determine the feasibility of an effective long-term remote work program for NJSIG and its employees.

II. Definitions

- 1) Alternative worksite – means a location in an employee's home, designated by the employee as the location they will use to perform their NJSIG work duties, or another location approved by NJSIG

- 2) Dependent care – means serving as the primary caregiver for any infant, child, elder, dependent adult, or other dependent that is unable to care for themselves
- 3) In-office – means on-site at NJSIG’s office located at 6000 Midlantic Drive, Suite 300 North, Mount Laurel, NJ 08054
- 4) Office – means NJSIG’s office located at 6000 Midlantic Drive, Suite 300 North, Mount Laurel, NJ 08054
- 5) Remote work – means performance of an employee’s NJSIG work duties at an alternative worksite

III. General Parameters

- 1) Effective date: This remote work pilot program will go into effect on September 12, 2022 and will continue for one year following adoption. After that, the program will be reevaluated to determine whether a remote work program will continue and under what conditions.
- 2) Operational need: For each job position, managers shall determine the total number of in-office days required to ensure that NJSIG is operating optimally, and no employee shall work remotely in excess of that number of days for their job position.
- 3) In-office minimum: All employees shall report in-person to the office no less than two days per week, absent exceptional circumstances. Any employee that wishes to work remotely in excess of three days per week should make that request in writing to the Executive Director, and include an explanation as to the nature of the request, as well as the exceptional circumstances that would justify such a request.
- 4) Weekday Team Day: To encourage communication, collaboration, and team-building across all departments, and excepting sick, vacation or other excused leave time, all employees shall report in person to the office on the same day of the week (specific weekday to be determined).
- 5) Eligibility: Whether an employee is permitted to participate in remote work is at the sole discretion of the Executive Director. Employees may be deemed ineligible to participate in remote work if:
 - a) The employee’s position requires regular onsite work activities that cannot be completed at an alternative worksite;

- b) The employee's alternate worksite does not meet the requirements of this remote work pilot program;
 - c) The employee violates the terms of this remote work pilot program;
 - d) The employee has an active disciplinary action related to unacceptable personal conduct, unsatisfactory job performance or grossly inefficient job performance;
 - e) The employee is on a performance improvement plan or has documented time or attendance issues (i.e., excessive tardiness, failure to properly record time, etc.);
 - f) The employee is unable to consistently demonstrate the ability to complete tasks and assignments on a timely basis; or
 - g) The employee receives disciplinary action or their performance decreases while participating in remote work.
 - h) Employees deemed ineligible for remote work may reapply for remote work 90 days after the satisfactory resolution of the event(s) and/or issue(s) for which they were deemed ineligible.
 - i) A period of full-time in-office work may be required for new employees prior to eligibility for remote work.
- 6) Tracking attendance: All employees shall track their daily attendance, both when working remotely and when working in-office, through the Paychex Flex or other designated timekeeping or internal recording system.
- 7) Remote Work Application Form and Agreement: All employees will be required to apply for remote work by completing and signing a Remote Work Application Form and Agreement, whereby they acknowledge receipt and understanding of this pilot program and agree to follow its terms and conditions.
- 8) Dependent care: All employees shall make dependable alternate arrangements for dependent care (i.e., childcare, eldercare, or care of any dependent adults) during their scheduled remote work hours. By completing and signing the Remote Work Application Form and Agreement, an employee certifies that they are not a primary caregiver for any dependent that is unable to care for themselves while the employee is working remotely. If a dependent is present during an employee's scheduled remote work hours, employees must have arrangements for the care of that dependent. If a situation arises where an employee working remotely must provide care for a dependent, the employee

must immediately notify their supervisor and take leave time or make alternate dependent care arrangements.

- 9) Remote work equipment: Starting September 12, 2022, NJSIG will no longer provide employees with any computers, laptop computers, tablets, smart phones, removable media, etc. for use at the employee's home or alternate work site. Any employees who have previously been provided with computers, laptop computers, tablets, smart phones, removable media, etc. in order to facilitate remote work assume temporary custodianship of such assets (which remain the property of NJSIG), and are responsible for the physical security and condition of these assets. When/if these assets come to the end of their useful life, it will be the employee's sole responsibility to repair or replace same.
- 10) Telephone/Internet accessibility: Telephone and internet accessibility is the sole responsibility of the employee.
- 11) Emergencies/Interruptions: If emergent circumstances occur at an employee's alternative worksite that impact the employee's ability to perform their work, the employee shall immediately notify their supervisor/manager. Likewise, in the event of an equipment failure or service interruption that negatively affects an employee's ability to work remotely, the employee shall immediately notify their supervisor/manager. In such a situation, the supervisor/manager may discuss alternate arrangements/options, direct the employee to report to the office, and/or direct the employee to take appropriate leave time.
- 12) Holidays: Employees scheduled to work remotely on an NJSIG holiday cannot utilize another day for remote work.

IV. Productivity and Performance

- 1) Remote work shall not decrease productivity or negatively affect NJSIG operations.
- 2) Performance requirements for remote work are the same as for in-office work.
- 3) NJSIG's core time (i.e., 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., per NJSIG Policy 6110) remains in effect for employees working remotely, and employees remain subject to all NJSIG policies and procedures while working remotely.
- 4) While working remotely, all employees shall:

- a) Commit to being available and focused on work;
- b) Remain flexible about any remote work arrangements to be able to respond to the needs of the organization, their supervisors, their co-workers, and their work;
- c) Have appropriate remote work space that can accommodate their work equipment, that is free from noise and distractions (e.g., by children, family, friends, television, cellphones, drop-ins, deliveries, solicitations, or other responsibilities), that is conducive to meetings as required, and that is devoted to work needs;
- d) Have high-quality, reliable telephone and internet accessibility; telephone and internet accessibility is the sole responsibility of the employee;
- e) Replicate their in-office workday by being available and accessible by both telephone and computer (including Zoom, GoToMeeting, and any other similar platform made available by NJSIG) during the set hours that they are working remotely;
- f) Ensure effective communication among all employees:
 - i) Remote work is not intended to promote an increased reliance on digital (email, text) communication;
 - ii) While working remotely, employees should make an effort to use telephone and video calls when working through a problem or challenge, sharing new ideas, collaborating on a project, trying to reach a consensus, or addressing a complex or sensitive topic;
- g) Use effective time management skills to consistently meet schedules and deadlines, and use organized work practices to facilitate successful remote work;
- h) Respond to emails and telephone calls promptly and professionally, and otherwise ensure good communication with supervisors, coworkers, contacts, NJSIG members, working partners, etc.;
- i) Reach out to supervisors or managers with questions or for clarification when encountering an issue that needs further guidance;
- j) Maintain a safe work environment and follow the same safety rules and practices applicable to in-office work;
- k) Follow the usual procedures for immediately reporting work-related illness or injury;

- l) Safeguard all NJSIG property and all confidential work-related information;
 - m) Position computer screens displaying sensitive or confidential information so that they cannot be viewed by others;
 - n) Attend all meetings as required, either in-person, by telephone, via Zoom, via GoToMeeting, etc.;
 - o) Participate in team-building exercises and events during work hours to encourage interdepartmental collaboration and communication; some teambuilding exercises and events may be deemed mandatory;
- 5) Supervisors/Managers:
- a) Flexibility: Supervisors/managers are authorized to adjust employees' remote work schedules based on operational need, and will give as much advanced notice as possible. Supervisors/managers are also authorized to direct an employee scheduled for remote work to report to the office in circumstances when necessary, i.e., to meet staffing and/or workload requirements, attend meetings, receive work assignments, participate in training, account for absences of other employees, in emergency situations, etc.
 - b) Availability: It is particularly important that supervisors/managers remain available to support the employees in their departments, and that supervisors/managers remain available to collaborate together, across departments. As such, supervisors/managers may find that they need to work in-office more frequently than the employees in their departments.
 - c) Productivity: Supervisors/managers must continually monitor and assess the job performance of employees working remotely to ensure optimum productivity. Supervisors/managers will work with their teams to establish quantifiable metrics for the work of their departments by which employee remote work productivity can be measured. Managers shall prepare and submit reports on employee remote work productivity to the Executive Director at intervals determined by the Executive Director. Supervisors/managers may recommend a reduction or elimination of remote work as a benefit for any employee who is not meeting performance expectations, fails to comply with the provisions of this pilot program, or otherwise fails to meet productivity expectations.
 - d) Schedules: Prior to the start of remote work, supervisors/managers shall establish specific remote work schedules, including days and times, with

each member of their team and memorialize it in writing (an email to the employee is sufficient).

- e) Remote-specific expectations: Supervisors/managers shall advise employees in writing (email is sufficient) as to any tasks and/or expectations that may differ from their normally defined tasks and/or expectations due to remote work.
- f) Team-building: Supervisors/managers are encouraged to plan intra- and inter-department team-building exercises (especially on Teamwork Tuesdays) to encourage interdepartmental collaboration and communication. Supervisors/managers are authorized to deem some teambuilding exercises and events, held during work hours, to be mandatory.
- g) Remote work plans: Supervisors/managers shall each create a remote work plan for their team to ensure (1) that employees have sufficient access to their supervisors during periods of remote work and (2) that employees remain productive and accountable during periods of remote work. Supervisors/managers shall memorialize their remote work plan with their team in writing (an email to the employees is sufficient). Remote work plans may, but are not required to, include one or more of the following:
 - i) Daily check-ins: When supervisors/managers are working remotely, or when members of their teams are working remotely, supervisors/managers may choose to conduct daily, brief meetings (i.e., 10 minutes via telephone or video), to check in with their team, set priorities for work projects, address any issues, etc.
 - ii) Office hours: Supervisors/managers may choose to designate one or more hour-long periods of “office hours” on the days that the supervisor/manager is working remotely, during which time the supervisor/manager could be available via telephone, Zoom, GoToMeeting, email, etc., to have unscheduled meetings with their team members to answer questions or conference issues;
 - iii) Regular in-person meetings: Supervisors/managers may choose to conduct regular in-person meetings, individually or in groups, with the members of their team at certain designated intervals (i.e., once per month, once every 60 days, etc.)
 - iv) Supervisors/managers may choose to memorialize the following in their team’s remote work plan:

- (1) By what means and how often the employee is expected to communicate with the office while working remotely;
 - (2) What work is expected to be accomplished remotely and in what timeframe;
 - (3) When and how meetings should take place while working remotely (i.e., via Zoom, with the use of video, etc.).
- v) Supervisors/managers are authorized to require end-of-day (or end-of-week) reports from their employees listing the work accomplished for the day (or week);
- vi) Supervisors/managers are authorized to require that certain meetings be held in-person and are authorized to require the use of video capability during work meetings.

V. No Entitlement; Termination of Remote Work

- 1) Remote work is not a universal employee benefit or entitlement. Employees have no right to remote work. Employees shall take no action in detrimental reliance on any perceived right to or expectation of remote work. The decision whether to allow an employee to participate in remote work is at the sole and exclusive discretion of the Executive Director.
- 2) Remote work may be terminated at any time based on NJSIG's operational needs, if employees are not meeting performance expectations, if employees fail to comply with the provisions of this pilot program, etc.
- 3) Failure to adhere to the provisions of this pilot program may result in an employee's removal from the remote work pilot program and/or in disciplinary action.