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Commissioner, District 5

Katherine Miller
County Manager

MEMORANDUM

To: Santa Fe County Employees
From: Elias Bernardino, Deputy County Manager 
Date: June 7, 2021
Re: Timeline for Return to Working in the Office

We appreciate you for working so hard to help us continue to support Santa Fe County (County) constituents despite the challenging circumstances brought on by the COVID-19 public health emergency. The Board of County Commissioners, Elected Officials, and County Leadership notices how much time and effort you have put into adapting to all of the changes that came with the public health emergency, including changes in your own lives while continuing to be exceptional. Part of the County's response to the public health emergency was the adoption of the Emergency Alternate Work Arrangements Policy (the Policy), which facilitated many employees temporarily working remotely to facilitate social distancing and to accommodate, where possible, ongoing work when employees were unable to be at work for reasons associated with the public health emergency.

Now that the transmission rates for COVID-19 have decreased, all counties in the State have achieved Turquoise status, vaccinations are available for those twelve years old and up, and the County's and State's vaccination rates continue to climb, the bases for many temporary alternate work arrangements approved pursuant to the Policy are waning. Therefore, it is time to transition our workforce back to the workplace. As specified in Section 5(G) of the Policy, the County can revoke approval of a temporary alternate work arrangement at any time, and this memo revokes all such arrangements, in accordance with the schedule set forth herein and except as otherwise provided herein.

The County has established a transition timeline for County employees who are still working remotely to return to the office. It consists of three phases, as follows:

Phase One – Planning (06/07/21 to 07/02/21):

- During Phase One, County management will work with staff on logistics and creating a staggered schedule to ensure that there is an even distribution of the number of staff present in the office each day during Phase Two and Three while ensuring that staff work the minimum number of days in the office.

Phase Two – Minimum of Two Days In Office Per Workweek (07/03/21 to 07/30/21):

- All employees will return to work in the office a minimum of two days per workweek the pay period beginning July 03, 2021. Work schedules will remain staggered.

- All employees who will still be working partially remotely during Phase II must complete an updated paperless Alternate Work Arrangement Request Form by June 25, 2021. *Please note: Remote schedules will be evaluated based on operational needs, and the above reflects the minimum required days in the office. Some Offices, Departments, or Divisions may require more days in the office or end remote work arrangements altogether.*

Phase Three – Minimum of Five Days in the Office Per Pay Period (07/31/21 to TBD):

- Beginning the pay period that begins July 31, 2021, all employees will return to the office a minimum of three days one workweek and two days the other workweek, for a minimum of five days in the office each pay period.
- All employees who will still be working partially remotely during Phase Three must complete an updated paperless Alternate Work Arrangement Request Form by July 23, 2021. *Please note: Remote schedules will be evaluated based on operational needs and the above reflects the minimum required days in the office. Some Offices, Departments, or Divisions may require more days in the office or end remote work arrangements altogether.*

In limited circumstances, there may still be a basis for an employee to be granted a temporary alternate work arrangement under the Policy that deviates from the minimum days in the office established above for Phase Two and Phase Three. For example, an employee who is the caregiver of a child under the age of twelve (and, therefore, ineligible to be vaccinated) may remain eligible for an alternate work arrangement until in-person learning resumes in the fall. Those employees who believe they are still eligible under the Policy for an alternate work arrangement that deviates from the minimum days in the office established above for Phase Two and Phase Three, and who desire to be considered for such an arrangement, must submit new Alternate Work Arrangement Request Forms pursuant to the Policy in time for the request to be considered before July 3.

The County has determined that, through laptop sharing and augmentation of our inventory of laptops, employees who took a desktop home to accommodate remote work will be able to continue working from home for some part of each week during Phase Two and Phase Three.

Returning to work may create some anxiety among those who have worked remotely during the pandemic. Be assured that the County takes employee safety very seriously and that we will continue to take measures that will help keep everyone safe in the workplace, based upon the evolving public health guidance. At this time, these measures include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Enhanced cleaning and disinfection
- Social Distance between desks and workspaces where feasible
- Minimizing face-to-face contact to the degree possible amongst workers
- Implementing virtual communication platforms
- Employee and visitor health screening
- Cloth face-covering requirements for those who are not fully vaccinated
- Providing cloth face coverings and PPE as appropriate
- Encouraging workers to stay home if they are sick
- Implementing a policy that allows employees to utilize all leave types when feeling sick
- Encouraging respiratory etiquette

We also continue to ask that employees follow a few simple, yet effective guidelines while in the office, including:

- Washing your hands frequently and for at least 20 seconds
- Complying with cloth face covering and social distancing requirements if you are not fully vaccinated
- Staying home if you are sick or experience symptoms of COVID

Additionally, I'd like to remind you about our valuable employee assistance programs (EAP), which are available to all employees to help manage stress and stressors during the pandemic. Finally, I want to thank you for your service to the County during these difficult times. As difficult as this has been, I'm confident that we are a stronger team.

Please contact our Human Resources and Risk Management Director Sonya Quintana at 505.995.6507 or squintana@santafecountynm.gov if you have any questions about returning to the office.