



# Huron-Superior Catholic

## DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

### PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES WORKING FROM HOME

#### **Scope and Intention**

It is the expectation of the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board that all employees will conduct their duties at or from a board site, unless directed otherwise. However, the board recognizes that some unusual circumstances might require employees to work from home. These circumstances include, but are not limited to, emergency health and safety situations, such as a global pandemic or local disaster.

#### **Process and Eligibility**

Not all work performed lends itself to remote work. Where circumstances exist where employees might be required to work from home (e.g., global pandemic), the decision as to whether employees can and will be permitted to work from home rests with the Director of Education or his/her designate. Permission for employees to work from home might be withdrawn at any time, as the board's business needs require. In addition, employees permitted to work from home may, from time to time, be required to come to their usual work site, as required by the needs of the board.

#### **Designated Workspace**

It is the responsibility of employees to designate a remote workspace, which is typically a space at home (e.g., an office, spare bedroom). Ideally, this workspace should be quiet, comfortable, and free of distractions. No work should be performed outside of this designated workspace. Employees must communicate to their supervisors where the remote workspace is located. Depending upon the circumstances, supervisors might need to conduct an ergonomic assessment of the remote workspace to ensure its safety.

The designated workspace must be kept in a safe condition, free from hazards to both the employee and the equipment. Should employees sustain any injuries in their designated workspace and in conjunction with their regular work duties, the employees are responsible for notifying their supervisors of such injuries as soon as is practicable. The board will not be responsible for any injuries to employees or any third parties outside of the designated workspace or during the employee's non-working time.

## Employment Duties

Unless otherwise directed, employees who are eligible and permitted to work from home must fulfil the same expectations and adhere to the same policies and practices that they do when they are working in person. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Rules and Policies:** All of the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board rules, procedural guidelines, and policies apply to employees who are working from home. These policies include, but are not limited to, those regarding attendance, reporting absences, reporting health and safety incidents, confidentiality, and workplace safety. Working from home is not to be used in place of sick leave or short-term disability leave. The board is not responsible for any expenses related to working from home.
- **Designated Work Time:** Employees working from home must follow their regularly assigned work schedule. All arrangements for childcare, elder care, and other personal commitments (e.g., a tradesperson visiting the home to perform household repairs) must be arranged so as not to interfere with employees' regular work schedules. This includes taking an uninterrupted meal break of at least 30 minutes. Employees must be particularly cognizant of public perception related to working from home and refrain from accessing and posting on social media sites during their regular work hours, unless this is part of their regular employment duties.
- **Confidentiality and Security:** Employees working from home are bound by all confidentiality and/or security agreements with the board. While working remotely, employees are expected to ensure the protection of proprietary board information accessible from their home office. Steps include regularly maintaining passwords, locking file cabinets and desks to store sensitive information, and taking any other measures appropriate for the job and the environment of the designated workspace.
- **Communication and Virtual Classes / Meetings:** Employees working from home are expected to attend all essential meetings via board-approved web-conferencing platforms (e.g., Google Meet) and/or by phone. Employees must be available by phone and/or web-conferencing software during the workday. Supervisors might need to contact employees via such means throughout the day. Emails and voicemails must be checked and responded to within a reasonable time period (i.e., one to two working days).
- **Special Considerations:** It is the board's responsibility to ensure that all employees have access to the appropriate equipment and technology to fulfill their duties. If, while working from home, employees experience technical issues with their computer or Internet access that prevent them from working remotely, these employees must notify their supervisor immediately. Interruptions to work caused by hydro or Internet outages may require such employees to work from their regular office space for the remainder of the day, or until the outage is fixed. Additionally, should the board require employees to work from home and should these employees require specialized equipment, the board will work with them to find ergonomic solutions to address these requirements. This may include finding these employees alternative workspaces.

## **Health and Safety and Workspace Ergonomics**

Employees working from home must give due regard to workplace safety in all its forms. This includes, but is not limited to, office ergonomics. Employees are advised to adhere to the following recommendations:

- Everything used frequently should be within arm's reach.
- Anything that does not need to be accessed frequently, including printers, should be stored out of arm's reach to help keep the workspace free of clutter. Employees should stand up to retrieve such items, rather than straining to reach them.
- All cords, boxes, and books should be stored safely so they do not create trip hazards.
- Workspaces should be set at a comfortable temperature.
- A one to two minute physical break should be taken every 30 minutes throughout the day.
- Eye fatigue should be reduced by following the 20-20-20 rule: every 20 minutes, look 20 feet away for 20 seconds.
- Proper posture should be maintained and varied throughout the workday.

## **Additional Tips for Employees Working From Home**

- Maintain a morning routine by waking up at the same time and continuing a normal work routine.
- Repurpose commute time for self-care by engaging in praying, reading, meditating, journaling, or exercising.
- Dress for success. Dressing comfortably yet professionally helps get everyone in the right mindset to stay productive.
- Focus on nutrition. Maintain focus and energy by avoiding foods with sugars, artificial ingredients, or empty calories.
- Take time to go outside during break and meal times. Getting exercise outdoors is also a good way to recharge after the work day or before the work day begins.
- Use web-conferencing software to maintain a personal connection with others. For example, rather than emailing a colleague about a complex issue, a ten-minute web conference could lead both to a resolution to the issue and a deeper connection with others.