

**NEW JERSEY SCHOOLS INSURANCE GROUP
MEMORANDUM**

Date: September 8, 2023
To: All NJSIG Employees and Staff
From: Jill Deitch, Esq.
Executive Director
Subject: NJSIG remote work pilot program – updated

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 of which is effective September 12, 2022. Any employees that do not participate in the pilot program must work in the office five days per week.

As a public entity, NJSIG takes seriously its responsibility to ensure that remote work does not negatively affect its efficiency or productivity. The purpose of this remote work pilot program is 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 designated by the employee in their home which 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.
- 6) Collaborative in-office tasks: means duties that can be done remotely but can be done more effectively in person, such as coaching, counseling, providing advice and feedback, building member and colleague relationships, negotiating and making critical decisions, teaching and training, or duties that otherwise benefit from collaboration.
- 7) Physical in-office tasks: means duties that require an employee to be physically on-site to do a task, interact with others, or use location-specific machinery or equipment, including, but not limited to:
 - a) Scanning;
 - b) Printing - checks, letters, envelopes, etc.;
 - c) Filling and securing envelopes and stamping mail;
 - d) Answering the front door and greeting visitors;
 - e) Receiving and signing for deliveries;
 - f) Opening packages;
 - g) Distributing mail and other receivables;

- h) Distributing office supplies and equipment;
- i) Managing office supplies and property;
- j) Onboarding new employees;
- k) Supporting, repairing, and maintaining physical office equipment, furniture, and other property;
- l) Assessing physical office needs (*i.e.*, observing whether there are sufficient office supplies, equipment, furniture, etc. for optimal performance);
- m) Signing or handwriting documents (checks, contracts, etc.);
- n) Reviewing checks and other physical/paper documents;
- o) Notarizing documents;
- p) Attending in-person meetings;
- q) Attending and/or providing trainings; and
- r) Supervisory observation of physical tasks.

III. General parameters

- 1) Effective date: This updated remote work pilot program will go into effect on September 11, 2023 and will continue for one year following adoption. Thereafter, the program will be reevaluated to determine whether a remote work program will continue and under what conditions.
- 2) Operational need: Based on the varied nature of their job functions, not all job positions will be amenable to remote work, let alone to the same extent. As outlined further in Section IV, for each job position, the managers who oversee those positions shall determine the minimum number of in-office days required to ensure that NJSIG is operating optimally. Employees occupying those positions shall report to the office no less than the minimum number of in-office days as determined by their managers and shall be permitted to work remotely no more than the remaining number of days (if any) for their job position, unless otherwise exempted under this program. For example, if a manager determines that a position requires three (3) in-office days to ensure that NJSIG is operating

optimally, then an employee occupying that position shall report to the office no less than three (3) days per week and shall be permitted to work remotely no more than two (2) days per week.

- 3) In-office minimum: Unless otherwise exempted under this program, all employees shall report to the office no less than the minimum number of in-office days listed for their job position on the job position grade and wage range document, which is effective September 1, 2023.
- 4) Teamwork Tuesday: 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 Tuesdays.
- 5) Remote work pilot program application and agreement: All employees will be required to apply for remote work by completing and signing a Remote Work Pilot Program Application and Agreement, whereby they acknowledge receipt and understanding of this pilot program and agree to follow its terms and conditions.
- 6) Eligibility: Whether an employee is permitted to participate (or continue to participate) in remote work is at the sole discretion of the Executive Director. Employees may be deemed ineligible to participate (or continue 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 alternative 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;
- g) The employee was assessed as below expectations in one or more categories in their most recent performance evaluation; or
- h) The employee receives disciplinary action or their performance decreases while participating in remote work.

Additionally, the Executive Director may require a period of full-time in-office work for new employees prior to eligibility for remote work.

- 7) Reapplying for remote work: Any employee deemed ineligible for remote work may reapply for remote work 90 days after their remote work privileges were revoked. Upon such reapplication, the employee's direct supervisor shall complete an interim performance evaluation for the employee, assessing the employee's performance from the time that remote work was revoked until the time of remote work reapplication. In order to be deemed eligible for remote work at that time, the employee must: (i) have satisfactorily resolved all issue(s) for which they were deemed ineligible for remote work and (ii) meet or exceed expectations in all performance evaluation criteria.
- 8) 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.
- 9) Dependent care: All employees shall make reliable alternate arrangements for the care of dependents unable to care for themselves (*i.e.*, infants, children, the elderly, dependent adults, etc.) during their scheduled remote work hours so that the employee will not be required to act as a primary caregiver for any such dependent while working remotely. If such a dependent is or will be present at the employee's home during an employee's scheduled remote work hours, employees must have reliable arrangements for the care of that dependent. If a situation arises where an employee working remotely must provide care for such a dependent, the employee must either (i) immediately notify their supervisor/manager and take leave time, or (ii) make alternate dependent care arrangements. The dependent care must also enable the employee to adjust their remote work schedule on short notice based on operational need. If such a need arises, supervisors/managers will give as much advance notice as possible under the circumstances. For example, an employee working remotely must be prepared to depart for the office within one hour of such a request by the

employee's supervisor/manager. By completing and signing the Remote Work Pilot Program Application and Agreement, an employee certifies that they have made reliable alternate arrangements for the care of dependents unable to care for themselves such that the employee (a) will not be required to act as a primary caregiver for any such dependent while working remotely, and (b) can adjust their remote work schedule on short notice based on operational need.

- 10) Remote work equipment: Employees are responsible for providing all equipment necessary to effectuate remote work, including, but not limited to, a desk, a chair, a computer, a webcam, and peripherals. All computer equipment must meet NJSIG's cyber security standards. NJSIG will no longer provide employees with any NJSIG-owned equipment or service any NJSIG-owned equipment, including, but not limited to, office furniture, computers, laptop computers, tablets, smart phones, removable media, etc., for use at the employee's alternate work site. Any employees who have previously been provided with NJSIG-owned equipment may continue to utilize this equipment (which remains the property of NJSIG) so long as NJSIG's operational needs do not require this equipment to be returned. However, employees are responsible for the physical security and condition of this equipment. Employees are also responsible for the service and/or replacement of this equipment: (i) if it is destroyed, damaged, or malfunctions while in the custody of the employee, and (ii) when it comes to the end of its useful life. The employee must return this equipment to NJSIG if it is destroyed, damaged, or malfunctions while in the custody of the employee, or when it comes to the end of its useful life. Employees may not dispose of this equipment under any circumstances. Failure to return this equipment when it is destroyed, damaged, or malfunctions, or when it comes to the end of its useful life, may result in disciplinary action.
- 11) Telephone/Internet accessibility: Telephone and Internet accessibility is the sole responsibility of the employee. Telephone and Internet service must be of sufficient speed and quality so as to permit uninterrupted telephone and video communication. Further, the employee is required to have Internet service at the alternative work site with a download speed of at least 30 Mbps and an upload speed of at least 5 Mbps.
- 12) 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. 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. Likewise, in the event of an equipment failure, service interruption,

or other issue specific to the remote work location that negatively affects an employee's ability to work remotely, the employee shall immediately notify their supervisor/manager. If an employee experiences an equipment failure, service interruption, or other issue specific to the remote work location that lasts longer than fifteen minutes, they must report to the office immediately (or, if approved, take appropriate leave time) and continue to report to the office until the equipment failure, service interruption, or other issue specific to the remote work location is resolved.

13) Leave time:

- a) Employees scheduled to work remotely on an NJSIG holiday cannot utilize another day for remote work.
- b) Employees may not schedule leave time in a manner intended to evade the in-office requirements of this remote work pilot program.
- c) Employees may not work remotely on days that they are scheduled to be in the office. An employee who is not reporting to the office on a day that they are scheduled to be in the office must utilize accrued leave time. Any request for an exception to this requirement should be directed to the Executive Director, and will only be granted for demonstrated exceptional circumstances.

14) Requests for exceptions:

- a) Written requests: Any employee that wishes to seek an exception to any of the requirements of the remote work pilot program must make that request in writing to the Executive Director. The written request shall describe the nature of the request, the duration of the request, and the exceptional circumstances that would justify such an exception. Failure to request an exception from any provision of this pilot program in advance may result in revocation of an employee's eligibility to participate in the remote work pilot program, and may result in disciplinary action.
- b) Accommodations: Any employee wishing to seek an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act must contact the Legal Department.

IV. Minimum in-office days

For each job position, the managers who oversee those positions shall determine the minimum number of in-office days required to ensure that NJSIG is operating optimally. Employees occupying those positions shall report to the office no less than the minimum number of in-office days as determined by their managers and shall be permitted to work remotely no more than the remaining number of days (if any) for their job position, unless otherwise exempted under this program. For example, if a manager determines that a position requires three (3) in-office days to ensure that NJSIG is operating optimally, then an employee occupying that position shall report to the office no less than three (3) days per week and shall be permitted to work remotely no more than two (2) days per week.

When managers are evaluating a job position's minimum required in-office days per week, they shall consider the following questions:

- 1) On average, how many hours per week are spent on collaborative or physical in-office tasks?
- 2) Are the collaborative or physical in-office tasks either known or so reasonably predictable that they can all be completed over the course of fewer than the five business days that normally comprise a work week?
- 3) Are the collaborative or physical in-office tasks so unpredictable that the person must be present and "on call" five days a week in case the need to perform the function arises?
- 4) Does the position require the employee to complete collaborative or physical in-office tasks that are time-sensitive?
 - a) If so, what is the longest amount of time those functions can wait to be completed? Can the employee wait to complete the function until their first in-office day the following week (which could be up to five days if, for example, an employee is in the office on Mondays and Tuesdays but then receives an in-office task on Wednesday), or does the employee have to complete the function sooner?
- 5) Can responsibility for completing the collaborative or physical in-office tasks be divided among employees who occupy the same or similar positions?

- a) If so, can those in-office functions be divided among employees who are scheduled to come into the office on different days, without unduly delaying completion of the function?
- 6) Can the collaborative or physical in-office tasks be completed alone, or do they require the assistance of one or more additional personnel (regardless of position)?
- 7) Does the position require close supervision in order to function effectively?

V. Productivity and performance

- 1) Performance requirements for remote work are the same as for in-office work.
- 2) Remote work shall not decrease productivity or negatively affect NJSIG operations.
- 3) NJSIG's core time (*i.e.*, 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., *see* 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 dependents, 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 (which 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, or 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, by computer (including Zoom, GoToMeeting, or any other similar platform made available by NJSIG), etc.; and

- o) Participate in team-building exercises and events during work hours to encourage interdepartmental collaboration and communication. Note that some teambuilding exercises and events may be deemed mandatory.

5) Supervisors/Managers:

- a) Flexibility: Remote work privileges notwithstanding, supervisors/managers shall require employees to report to the office whenever NJSIG's operational needs require it (*i.e.*, to meet staffing and/or workload requirements, attend meetings, receive work assignments, participate in training, account for the absences of other employees, in emergency situations, etc.). Similarly, supervisors/managers are authorized to adjust employees' remote work schedules based on NJSIG's operational need. Supervisors/managers shall give employees as much advance notice as possible when such changes are required.
- 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 week, once every two weeks, 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.*, Zoom, GoToMeeting, or any other similar platform made available by NJSIG).
- 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.

VI. 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 not take any 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) An employee's failure to adhere to each and every provision of this pilot program may result in removal from the remote work pilot program and/or disciplinary action in the sole discretion of the Executive Director.