



Issue 42

# County Administration Newsletter

*Vision & Stewardship*

September 2017

## Administration

On September 21st, the County Board approved the implementation of a new telecommuting policy which will go into effect January 2018. Simply stated, the policy will allow for certain employees, whom have been employed in good standing with the County for a minimum of two years, an opportunity to work offsite. An evaluation of the suitability will be conducted on a case-by-case basis and will be based upon the nature of the work that is performed.

What does this mean for staff? We recognize that this will not impact all staff throughout the organization. For those who do

complete the process, they will have increased flexibility in their work environment, as well as a greater level of accountability to the work that they carry out. Supervisors and Department Heads will continue to oversee their work and ensure responsibilities are met.

What does this mean for our organization?

The work environment is evolving quickly with advances in technology. Our organization needs to continue to move forward with societal trends if we want to stay competitive in attracting and retaining talented staff. Effectiveness and effi-

ciency when considering our use of space and resources is a driver of the program as well.

What does this mean to the community member that we serve?

This program will be approved and implemented on a case-by-case basis. Not all positions will be appropriate to work outside of their assigned department or off site. We will continue our commitment to public service.

Please see pages 4-7 of the newsletter to review the new policy.

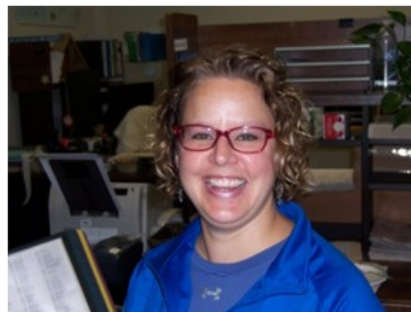
*-Nate*

## County Clerk

I would like to introduce Administrative Assistant Sabrina Naglosky. Sabrina is the newest staff member and the first face you see at the Office of the County Clerk. Sabrina was hired in March after long-time Deputy County Clerk Judy Dykstra moved on to County Treasurer and Kim Johnson filled Judy's shoes as Deputy County Clerk.

Sabrina comes to us from Shell Lake, WI where she worked for

10 years as the Business Office Director of Terraceview Living Center, Inc. Her family, husband of 15 years Steve, 13 year old daughter Madeline and 10



year old son Briar, are very active in the Shell Lake community. When not working in the County Clerk's office Sabrina can be found in the stands cheering on her children, as treasurer of the Shell Lake PTA, secretary of the Shell Lake Wrestling Club, hunting with her husband or hanging around the campfire with friends.

Sabrina has been a welcomed addition to the office. Thank you for your public service.

## Health & Human Services

Did you know that September 10<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> is recognized as National Suicide Prevention Week? And that September 10<sup>th</sup> is World Suicide Prevention Day?

The Burnett County Behavioral Health Department would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone that help is available and that asking family, friends, and loved ones about suicidal thoughts/depression, although difficult, is strongly encouraged. Giving a suicidal person the opportunity to express feelings can provide relief and release of negative feelings, and may prevent a suicide attempt.

Suicide remains a significant public health problem in Wisconsin, and nationwide. In 2014, (the most recent year for which full data are available) 42,773 suicides were reported, making suicide the 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death for Americans. In that year, someone in the country died by suicide every 12.3 minutes, with 1 of every 21 Americans being a survivor of suicide loss. In Wisconsin there were 769 suicides reported in 2014 and is the 11<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death.

If a situation arises where you are planning to speak with someone regarding thoughts of suicide/depression here are some suggestions:

When talking to a suicidal person

Do:

- Be yourself. Let the person know you care, that he/she is not alone. The right words are often unimportant. If you are concerned, your voice and manner will show it.
- Listen. Let the suicidal person unload despair, ventilate anger. No matter how negative the conversation seems, the fact that it exists is a positive sign.
- Be sympathetic, non-judgmental, patient, calm, accepting. Your friend or family member is doing the right thing by talking about his/her feelings.
- Offer hope. Reassure the person that help is available and that the suicidal feelings are temporary. Let the person know that his or her life is important to you.

If the person says things like, "I'm so depressed, I can't go on," ask the question: "Are you having thoughts of suicide?" You are not putting ideas in their head, you are showing that you are concerned, that you take them seriously, and that it's OK for them to share their pain with you.

But don't:

- Argue with the suicidal person. Avoid saying things like:

"You have so much to live for," "Your suicide will hurt your family," or "Look on the bright side."

- Act shocked, lecture on the value of life, or say that suicide is wrong.
- Promise confidentiality. Refuse to be sworn to secrecy. A life is at stake and you may need to speak to a mental health professional in order to keep the suicidal person safe. If you promise to keep your discussions secret, you may have to break your word.
- Offer ways to fix their problems, or give advice, or make them feel like they have to justify their suicidal feelings. It is not about how bad the problem is, but how badly it's hurting your friend or loved one.

Blame yourself. You can't "fix" someone's depression. Your loved one's happiness, or lack thereof, is not your responsibility. (Adapted from: *Metanoia.org*) HelpGuide.org suggests that: If a friend or family member tells you that he or she is thinking about death or suicide, and suicide attempt seems imminent, call a local crisis center (Burnett County 1-888-636-6655), dial 911, or take the person to an emergency room.

(Continued from Page 2)

Furthermore, it is reported that despite the desire for the pain to stop, most suicidal people are deeply conflicted about ending their own lives. They wish there was an alternative to committing suicide, but they just can't see one. This only reinforces the need to be proactive, talk with those around you, and offer assistance in getting badly needed help.

### Common Misconceptions About Suicide

**FALSE: People who talk about suicide won't really do it.**

Almost everyone who commits or attempts suicide has given some clue or warning. Do not ignore suicide threats. Statements like "you'll be sorry when I'm dead," "I can't see any way out," – no matter how casually or jokingly said may indicate serious suicidal feelings.

**FALSE: Anyone who tries to kill him/herself must be crazy.**

Most suicidal people are not psychotic or insane. They must be upset, grief-stricken, depressed or despairing, but extreme distress and emotional pain are not necessarily signs of mental illness.

**FALSE: If a person is determined to kill him/herself, nothing is going to stop them.**

Even the most severely depressed person has mixed feelings about death, wavering until the very last moment between wanting to live and wanting to die. Most suicidal people do not want death; they want the pain to stop. The impulse to end it all, however overpowering, does not last forever.

**FALSE: People who commit suicide are people who were unwilling to seek help.**

Studies of suicide victims have shown that more than half had sought medical help in the six months prior to their deaths.

**FALSE: Talking about suicide may give someone the idea.**

You don't give a suicidal person morbid ideas by talking about suicide. The opposite is true – bringing up the subject of suicide and discussing it openly is one of the most helpful things you can do.

Source: *SAVE – Suicide Awareness Voices of Education*

If you suspect someone is struggling with depression, or may be contemplating suicide, please speak with them. Encourage them to seek help and remind them that help is available.

Burnett County Crisis Line: 1-888-636-6655

National Suicide Prevention Helpline: [1-800-273-TALK](tel:1-800-273-TALK) (8255)

Burnett County Health and Human Services: 715-349-7600  
911 for those in immediate crisis

## Veterans' Services

Governor Walker signed the 2017/2018 WDVA Budget. In that budget, the CVSIO Grant is returned to its former version of an annual block grant with no limitations in how it can be used other than for the purpose of delivering service to veterans. The VA is currently in the process of standing up a new system called vets.gov. It will eventually replace myhealthvet.com and ebenefits.com which are both administered by DOD. During this process, veterans may experience some glitches in their current accounts. Eventually, veterans will be asked to establish a new vets.gov account.

### October:

7<sup>th</sup> Operation Enduring Freedom began (2001)  
13<sup>th</sup> Navy Day (1775)

### November:

10<sup>th</sup> USMC Day (1775)  
11<sup>th</sup> Veterans Day

### December:

7<sup>th</sup> Pearl Harbor Day (1941)  
8<sup>th</sup> WWII began, 1941 - US declares war on Japan  
11<sup>th</sup> Germany & Italy declare war on US (1941)  
12<sup>th</sup> Army Nat'l Guard B-day

Burnett County Veterans Service, 715-349-2179

## Burnett County Human Resources Manual Section A

### **Telecommuting Policy**

Burnett County is committed to creating a work environment and culture where the needs of our clients, employees, and organization are aligned. Therefore, we strive to be flexible in our approach to work styles and location. Burnett County offers employees the ability to perform certain job duties away from the central work site. This policy refers to those employees working a set schedule from a remote work area. Occasional work off-site; including work while traveling on County business, does not constitute telecommuting.

### Eligibility

The determination that a position may or may not be appropriate for a telecommuting arrangement is made on a case-by-case basis at the department level with approval from the County Administrator.

Departments evaluate whether a position is suitable for telecommuting based on the nature of the work that is being performed. Generally, requests to telecommute should be considered when:

- The employee's duties can be fulfilled within the telecommuting structure.
- Telecommuting fits with the needs of the department.
- Telecommuting provides for space savings or increased productivity.
- The employee has demonstrated sustained high performance, and the manager believes the employee can maintain the expected quantity and quality of work while telecommuting. In addition, the employee must have a minimum of two (2) years of service.
- The department can maintain quality of service for clients, employees, and members of the community.

Generally, requests to telecommute should not be considered when:

- The job requires the employee's physical presence or telecommuting would impair the department's efficiency.
- The employee's current job duties require frequent supervision, direction or input from others who are onsite.
- The employee's performance evaluations do not indicate sustained high performance or the ability to work independently.
- The employee has a documented attendance problem.

## Request Process

An employee requesting a telecommuting arrangement should complete an electronic *Telecommuting Request Form (Appendix E)*

The employee's direct supervisor and/or department head must review and approve the request prior to the review and approval of the County Administrator.

## Expectations

Telecommuting is not intended to permit staff to have time to work at other jobs, provide dependent care during work hours, or run their own businesses.

Employees who telecommute must comply with all Burnett County policies and department work rules.

Employees who telecommute are expected to have regularly scheduled work hours, to be fully accessible during those hours, and to attend necessary meetings and appointments in person.

Non-exempt employees who telecommute are required to obtain telecommuting approval from the department head and County Administrator, report their work hours and take required rest breaks and meal periods.

Employees entering into a telecommuting agreement may be required to forfeit use of a personal office or workstation in favor of a shared arrangement to maximize organization office space needs.

Employees must provide broad band internet access at their own expense.

The County will not be responsible for operating costs, home maintenance, or any other incidental costs associated with the use of the employee's residence for a telecommuting location.

Meetings with clients and or visitors conducting business with Burnett County will not be held in the employee's residence.

## HIPAA/Protected Health Information

Employees in a telecommuting arrangement must comply with all Burnett County policies and procedures concerning the handling of Protected Health Information, as well as use of computers, internet and email.

It is expected employees fully review and are familiar with these policies.

Employees will limit consumer specific information in their possession outside of County offices to only what is necessary to perform their duties.

The telecommuter's signed Burnett County Human Resources Policy Manual, Confidentiality and Ethics Agreement, and any other applicable computer, network, and telecommunication laws (regulated by the FCC), rules and permissions remain in full effect while telecommuting.

## Travel Expenses

A telecommuter is entitled to mileage reimbursement as indicated by the Internal Revenue Service:

The first one way trip of the day from home to another location for the purpose of paid employment is not reimbursable as a work expense and is considered the responsibility of the telecommuter.

This rule also applies to the last trip of the day from another location for the purpose of work to the home.

In the event the first trip and/or the last trip of the day is longer than the mileage between the employee's onsite work location and the employee's home, the employee will be reimbursed for the difference. If the first trip of the day is shorter than the normal distance from the onsite work location to the employee's home, this mileage would not be reimbursable.

## Location

Employees telecommuting must have a safe and ergonomically correct workspace in order to telecommute.

Employees are encouraged to conduct an ergonomic self-evaluation of their telecommuting location by using the *Office Ergonomic Evaluation (Appendix F)*.

Employees will work at a designated location as outlined in their telecommuting request.

## Equipment

Departments will work with the Information Technology department to determine, with information supplied by the employee and the supervisor, the appropriate equipment needs for each telecommuting arrangement on a case-by-case basis.

All equipment provided by Burnett County will remain the property of Burnett County and is subject to the same business use restrictions as if located at the organization's on-site work location.

The telecommuter will sign an inventory of all office property and agrees to take appropriate action to protect the items from damage or theft.

Upon termination of employment, all Burnett County property will be returned to the County.

## Liability

The County will not be liable for damages to the employee's property resulting from participation in the telecommuting program. Injuries sustained by the employee while at his or her telecommuting work location and in conjunction with his or her regular work duties are normally covered under Burnett County's workers' compensation policy, so long as no violation of policy occurred.

*(Liability Continued)*

Telecommuting employees are responsible for notifying the employer of such injuries in accordance with Burnett County Human Resources Policy Manual Chapter 7.13 Worker's Compensation.

The employee is liable for any injuries sustained by visitors to his or her work location. Employees will not meet with clients and/or visitors conducting business with Burnett County at the employee's telecommuting location.

By participating in the telecommuting arrangement, the employee agrees to hold the County harmless against any and all claims including injuries to others at the telecommuting location.

### Telecommuting Agreement

A completed *Telecommuting Agreement Form (Appendix G)* is required between the telecommuting employee and the department, and will be placed in the employee's personnel file.

The telecommuting agreement may be modified or terminated any time.

In all cases, telecommuting agreements must be reviewed annually, and modified as necessary.

### Appendices

Telecommuting Request Form (Appendix E)

Office Ergonomic Self Evaluation Guide (Appendix F)

Telecommuting Agreement Form (Appendix G)