

<b>Title:</b> Disconnecting from Work	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Policy</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Procedure</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>SOP</b>
<b>Category:</b> General <b>Sub-category:</b> Human Resources: Terms and Conditions	<b>Distribution:</b> Organization Wide
<b>Endorsed:</b> VP, People & Culture <b>Signature:</b>	<b>Approval Date:</b> Apr. 1, 2022 <b>Reviewed/Revised Date:</b> <b>Next Review Date:</b> Apr. 1, 2025

CROSS REFERENCES: (IS-SUP-067-S) Cell, Smartphone & Pager Acquisition, (ADMIN-33) Senior Leader On Call

## 1. PURPOSE

Outline the expectations regarding communications received outside of scheduled working hours.

## 2. POLICY STATEMENT

Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre (the Hospital) recognizes that disconnecting from work related communications sits within the broader objective of ensuring the safety, health and wellbeing of employees. Every employee is entitled to time-off outside of their scheduled work hours without being disturbed, including not responding immediately to emails, telephone calls, text messages, or social media messages. While unforeseen circumstances may arise that require an employee to be contacted outside of normal working hours, this should be the exception rather than the norm. It is important to note that this does not refer to the contractual commitments that apply to some categories of employees due to the 24/7 nature of essential healthcare delivery.

## 3. SCOPE

All paid employees.

## 4. DEFINITIONS

Disconnecting from work is defined in the Employment Standards Act as “not engaging in work-related communications, including emails, telephone calls, video calls or the sending or reviewing of other messages, so as to be free from the performance of work”

## 5. PROCEDURE

Core working hours vary across the Hospital, as such some employees may send communications at a time which may be outside the regularly scheduled working hours of another employee. Where this is the case, unless business and operational needs dictate that an immediate response is required, employees should not feel obligated to respond to communications received outside of their regularly scheduled hours.

### 5.1. E-mail

E-mail correspondence should only be conducted during normal working hours, recognizing that some work patterns may differ and not everyone’s work hours are the same. The sender should give consideration into the timing of their e-mail and recognize that the recipient may not respond until it coincides with their regular workday.

Employees who regularly use e-mail for two way communication are required to use the “out-of-office” feature when absent from scheduled shifts such as when on vacation. The automatic response should indicate the date of return and an alternative individual’s contact information, if applicable.

### 5.2. Phone

Phone calls should only be conducted during normal working hours, recognizing that some work patterns may differ and not everyone’s work hours are the same. In any case, the sender should give

consideration into the timing of their phone call and recognize that the recipient may not be available or return the call until it coincides with their regular workday.

Employees with a direct phone extension are required to update their voicemail message when away from scheduled shifts such as when on vacation. The automatic response should indicate the date of return and an alternative individual's contact information, if applicable.

### **5.3. Management**

The Hospital recognizes that due to the 24/7 nature of essential health care delivery it is critical that leadership be accessible when away from the assigned work location, outside of scheduled working hours, and/or during times of emergency. For this purpose, Management is provided with a mobile phone or are compensated for using their personal devices. Management is not expected to be on-call at all times and are trusted to exercise their judgement in order to determine if communications received outside of their regularly scheduled working hours require an immediate response. If an urgent reply is requested, the sender will flag the e-mail as "High Priority" through GroupWise.

Management will provide a designated alternate contact for periods of time-off such as vacation and leave of absence as indicated in 5.1 and 5.2.

### **5.4. On-Call**

An on-call service is provided by the Hospital in certain departments after normal hours of operation, in order to provide urgent services. This policy does not preclude the Hospital's ability to have employees on stand-by and available for on-call work. Designated employees on-call will follow their department processes and will be compensated as per Hospital policy or applicable collective agreements.

### **5.5. Exceptions**

The Hospital understands that employees may want or need to work outside their regularly scheduled hours to meet a time-sensitive deadline, attend to an urgent matter, or due to unforeseen circumstances. However, employees should not regularly or frequently work outside their regularly scheduled hours to complete or catch up on work.

Although everyone should be mindful of the ability to disconnect, it is important that we are also mindful that situations can arise where it is not possible to deal with matters during normal working hours. This list is not exhaustive and there may be other situations when it is necessary to contact employees outside of their regularly scheduled normal working hours to meet the needs of the organization, including but not limited to:

- Checking availability for shifts
- Replace a shift vacancy
- Where an unforeseeable circumstance may arise
- Where an emergency may arise
- Where business and operational reasons require contact outside of normal working hours.

There may also be times where the expectations of certain positions require employees to be available for occasional events outside of regularly scheduled working hours that are planned in advance.

## **6. RELATED PRACTICES AND/OR LEGISLATIONS**

Employment Standards Act, 2000

Working for Workers Act, 2021, S.O. 2021, c. 35 - Bill 27

## **7. REFERENCES**

Applicable collective agreements.