

Policy 529: Disconnecting from Work

Rationale:

NNCEA understands that due to work-related pressures, the current landscape of work, or the working environment, employees may feel obligated to perform their job duties outside their normal working hours. Work-related pressure and feeling an inability to disconnect from the job can lead to stress and deterioration of mental and physical health. This policy has been established to support employee wellness, minimize excessive sources of stress, and ensure that employees feel they can disconnect from their work outside their regular working hours.

Definitions

Disconnecting from work: Not engaging in work-related communications, including e-mails, telephone calls, video calls, or the sending or reviewing of other messages, to be free from the performance work for the company.

Regular working hours: Time agreed to by an employee, as stated in their employment

Guidelines

An employee's time outside regular working hours is meant for the employee to recharge and spend as they wish and should not be used to complete work-related tasks; however, there may be a lack of separation between home and work that makes it difficult for employees to truly disconnect.

NNCEA sees employee health and wellbeing as priorities while working and while away from work. The company is committed to increasing overall employee health and wellbeing and providing employees with a positive work-life balance. This policy is intended to promote that ideal by specifically detailing expectations related to disconnecting from work.

Disconnecting from Work

Employees are entitled to disconnect from work outside regular working hours without fear of reprisal. All scheduled breaks should be taken, and all annual leave and personal leave should be taken each year. Employees are encouraged to set clear boundaries between work and their personal lives, regardless of their working arrangement, whether that be onsite, flex work, remote work, or hybrid work.

Outside regular working hours and when disconnecting from work, employees:

- Should stop performing their job duties and work-related tasks.
- Are not expected or required to respond to work-related communication,
- Will not face repercussion or punishment for not communicating or for ceasing work, and
- Should respect co-workers' time and should not expect them to respond, communicate, or complete work.

Workload and Productivity

NNCEA understands that employees may want or need to work outside their regular working hours to meet a time-sensitive deadline or attend to an urgent matter or emergency; however, employees should not regularly or frequently work outside their scheduled hours to complete or catch up on work.

Employees who cannot manage their workload during their regular working hours should meet with their direct supervisor to evaluate their workload, priorities, and due dates.

Managers will work with employees to come up with a solution to ensure:

- The current workload does not result in the employee working excess hours and does not contribute to additional stress or burnout.
- Normal job duties can be completed during regular working hours, and
- Employees can remain productive and meet company goals and objectives.

Communication

Employees should not feel obligated to send or respond to work-related communication outside of regular working hours. NNCEA may occasionally send general communication to employees when they are not working, such as an employee's day off or scheduled vacation. Employees are not expected to respond to any company communication outside of their regular working hours, apart from unforeseen circumstances, such as an emergency.

Employees who do not reply to work-related communications outside regular working hours will not face negative effects on their employment.

Breaks and Time Off

Breaks are provided in accordance with employment standards and are intended to provide employees with time to recharge and enable them to work productively during regular working hours. Employees should take any scheduled or company-provided breaks during their shift and use that time to disconnect from work.

NNCEA understands the importance for employees to have personal time off. Employees must use their accrued paid vacation time or personal leave in full every year and should take the time for rest, relaxation, and personal pursuits. Employees are never obligated to complete work-related activities during scheduled time off. Knowing that, time management is the responsibility of employees and scheduled time off should not interfere with deadlines. Managers will work with other employees to delegate job-specific duties that must be completed while the employee is on vacation to maintain workflow and productivity. Employees should not be reluctant to take vacation due to workload unless there are limitations or restrictions because of a due date, project priority, scheduling conflict, or unforeseen circumstance that prevent an employee from taking a vacation at a specific time, in which case managers will help determine appropriate actions to take to meet deadlines and accommodate time off requests whenever possible.

Overtime

At time, NNCEA may have a business need that requires employees to work overtime. Overtime will always be approved and scheduled in advance. It may be requested by the employee or required in certain situations to ensure work is completed, however, employees should not work overtime unless directed by their manager. See the overtime policy for guidelines on overtime.

Review

This policy is reviewed and updated as needed or every three years. If any changes or updates are made, all employees will be given updated copies within 30 days of the updated version of the policy being prepared.