Changing HR Landscape Amid COVID-19
TAAD Conference - 2021

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COVID-19

Stay Home
Stay Safe
Orders Issued from County Judges in Late March 2020
Communication

- HCAD pandemic plan
- Various processes
- Federal, state, county and city guidance
Communication

Purpose:
• Allay fear
• Eliminate rumor spreading
• Reduce unreliable and unsubstantiated information

How?
• Multiple medium
• Frequent
• Transparent
• Honest
How do you track time worked?

- WCAD has been working with a time keeping software that allows for remote check in/out for a few years now to allow appraisers to start work in the field and it helped with this as well.

How do you track employee productivity?

- System wide tracking of entry statistics available through your CAMA provider and other softwares used by various departments
Each department had to assess what equipment is needed for their employees

- IT department worked diligently to obtain equipment needed for average set up. Included keyboard, monitor, mouse, various cables necessary for hook up.
- Laptops were purchased in bulk for those that didn’t already have them
  - Cameras were necessary to communicate using various platforms.
- Taking home district equipment meant a sign out sheet was necessary
  - Each office in a box included an inventory sheet of equipment and the employee had to sign out the equipment.
INTERNET & PHONE CONNECTIVITY ISSUES

- How does an employee work from home with either no internet or limited internet capabilities
  - Bought cell phones to be used as mobile hotspots for those that needed them.
  - Signed out to these individuals
  - Some had to take PTO because they had no internet and no cell service in their area
  - Who is responsible for internet service?
    - WCAD decided employees that wanted to continue working during stay-at-home order and not take PTO would need to use their home internet

- How do you answer phone calls into office?
  - Switched to an internet phone provider
    - Allowed for calls to be answered remotely using laptop or cell phone which protected the privacy of the employee's phone number
HOW DO YOU COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR TEAM?

Answer: Microsoft Teams

- **Teams Messaging**
  - WCAD converted to using Microsoft Teams messaging a few years ago to stop using cell phone text messages as a form of communication for CAD purposes
  - Avoids sifting through personal vs. business texts for Public Information Requests (PIR)

- **Video Conferencing**
  - Teams was quickly adopted by staff to hold team meetings and disseminate information and assignments

- **Scheduled staff meetings**
  - Utilized scheduling feature to schedule WCAD wide meetings as well as department meetings which loads directly to your Outlook calendar with a reminder
COVID EXPENSE TRACKING

- WCAD had contingency/emergency funds available but not enough for expenses from COVID
  - Board of Directors approved expenditures monthly and extended availability of reserve funds to assist in purchases
  - Total COVID related expenses of over $43k were tracked

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Williamson Central Appraisal District

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<tr>
<th>Type</th>
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<th>Num</th>
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<td>Home Depot</td>
<td>6250-1 - COVID-19 - Nest indoor camera - listening to ARB hearings but maintaining a social distance</td>
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CARES ACT REIMBURSEMENT

Did you know it included state and local government funds?

- Federal funds were assigned to each state
- Texas distributed funds to each county and assigned county to administer disbursement
- WCAD applied to county for re-imbursement of our COVID related expenses and were reimbursed for $43k
Global Pandemic

A. Values and culture critical
   • 1st class customer service
   • Integrity
   • Accountability
   • Respect
   • Collaboration
   • Innovation

B. Essential business
   • In office vs remote work
   • Challenges
Challenges

• In office
  • Safety
  • Fairness

• Remote work
  • Contrary to culture
  • Trust
  • Performance management
  • Lack of in person social interactions
  • Emotional & mental health issues
Implementation Challenges

- Getting the information disseminated
- Clarification of FFCRA provisions
- Complexity of FFCRA
- Unclear guidance from DOL; creating our own process & forms
- Cultural change of the legacy mindset
- Exploitation of FFCRA
TRANSPORT FROM HOME TO THE OFFICE

Created a guide for employees so they would know the plan for safety upon their return to office

- What CAD is doing to protect them
  - Screening employees and all visitors
  - Day porter for constant sanitizing of surfaces
  - Traffic flow through office
- What can employee do to protect themselves and others
  - See below

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS

- Keep distance
  - Protect older people with sufficient distance
  - Keep your distance when standing in line
  - Keep away from events and meetings

- Wash hands thoroughly
  - Wash your hands for 20 seconds
  - Soap and water are most effective
  - Use hand disinfectant if soap and water are not available

- Avoid shake hands and contact
  - Even if it seems rude or unusual to you

- Sneeze into the crook of your arm or into a tissue
  - Discard paper tissues immediately after use AND wash your hands afterwards

- Stay at home with fever and cough
  - Contact your family doctor by telephone
THE EMPLOYEE WHO IS NOW A TEACHER

What can CAD do to assist those employees that must remain home and teach throughout

- Be flexible
- Track work productivity and allow them to check in and out of work as needed throughout the day
  - Require productivity for their 40 hours
COVID POLICY ON SYMPTOMS AND EXPOSURE/TESTING

COVID Policy (updated 01/19/2023)

1. If employee has symptoms, or has reason to believe they may have COVID, they should immediately self-isolate and not return to work until they have tested negative and/or the appropriate amount of time w/o symptoms has lapsed.
   - See Testing Flowchart

2. In the event of direct contact, employee should not return to the office (excluding employees who have had COVID-19 within the past 3 months) until they have tested negative and/or the appropriate amount of time w/o symptoms has lapsed. If employee has tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 3 months and recovered do not have to quarantine or get tested again as long as they do not develop new symptoms.
   - See Direct Contact Flowchart
   - If employee has had direct contact with someone known to have had COVID within the last 14 days, employee should wait 5 days before getting tested.
     - If employee chooses not to get tested, they may not return to work until at least the 10th day after contact was made AND have not had any COVID symptoms.
   - If employee has experienced symptoms after direct contact, see #1
   - If an employee has had direct contact AND been tested AND test results show negative, employee can return to work if they have been symptom free for at least 7 days.

3. If someone in employee’s household has been exposed, and is awaiting test results, employee should self-isolate until a negative test result is received. In the event of a positive test result from a cohabitant, employee should follow Direct Contact Flowchart.

4. An employee in self-isolation may work from home if:
   - They feel well enough to adequately perform their duties
   - Have communicated with their manager that they will be working remotely
   - Have been given assignments that they can complete remotely
   - If the above criteria cannot be met then employee will need to take PTO for the duration of their isolation

Definition of Direct Contact – CDC defines close (direct) contact as exposures adding up to a total of 15 minutes spent 6 feet or closer to an infected person.

COVID-19 Symptoms include but are not limited to: (1/22/2020)

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

I agree to do a symptoms check every morning before entering the office building. I will wear my mask and practice social distancing while in the building.

Signature

Printed Name  Date

This policy/flowchart can change due to CDC guidelines and/or at the discretion of the CHEF Approver.
COVID EXPOSURE AND TESTING

Getting Tested Flowchart

1. Get tested
2. Self-isolate while you wait for test result
3. Did you test positive for COVID?
   - Yes: Within the last 5 days, have you had direct contact with someone who has COVID?
     - Yes: Self-isolate
     - No: Return to office
   - No: Have you experienced COVID symptoms?
     - Yes: Has it been 7 days from time of contact?
       - Yes: Return to office
       - No: Have your symptoms improved?/NA
     - No: At least 10 days since onset of symptoms?/NA
     - No: Return to office
WHAT TO DO FOR APPRAISAL NOTICES AND PROTEST SEASON DURING A PANDEMIC?

No help from State officials on limiting appraisal growth because of COVID-19
WEBSITE ANNOUNCEMENTS ON COVID-19 RESPONSE BY OUR OFFICE

COVID-19 NEWS AND UPDATES POSTED ON OUR WEBSITE FOR PUBLIC

4/7/2020 8:00 AM
We will be mailing Notices Of Appraised Value on April 14th, 2020. Our office will remain closed to the public as recommended by government and health officials until further notice.

Please consider values as of January 1, per Tax Code 23.01(a), prior to the outbreak of COVID-19. Potential economic effects on values will be analyzed through the collection of sales transactions and other market data from March 24th (when the Williamson County Stay Home Stay Safe Order was issued) until the end of the year. Any market influence will be reflected in the January 1, 2021 appraisal.

Appraisal districts are held to high standards, set by the Texas Comptroller’s office, when it comes to adherence to the Tax Code. Because the Tax Code is set by the State Legislature, appraisal districts do not have the authority to deviate without explicit instruction from state officials.

WCAD will be issuing a press release in the coming days that outlines what we have done, as well as what appraisal districts across the state have done to attempt to make appraisals and the appeal process more responsive to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

We will be updating any documentation or procedures we have posted online in the coming days to correspond with changes being made due to the impact of COVID-19. Check back here or visit our support center for updates.

3/16/2020 4:30 PM
In the interest of public safety, WCAD has decided to close its doors to the public as of 5:00 PM on March 16th, 2020. We will continue to answer phones and online chats during regular business hours.

Read the full news release regarding suspended in-office services here.

3/16/2020 10:30 AM
WCAD’s top priority is the health and well-being of our employees and the property owners of Williamson County. We are closely monitoring updates from local, federal and world health communities, and are committed to being as responsive as possible as the situation evolves.

Due to coronaviruses (COVID-19) and in conjunction with recommendations made by the CDC, we are asking that citizens use online tools as much as possible to conduct appraisal district business. If you have questions, you are likely to find answers in our knowledge base.

In the event you are unable to find answers, you may use our online chat feature, submit a help ticket or call our office and a representative will help you.

6/2/2020 4:00 PM
WCAD is now open to the public.
In order to maintain social distancing, we are limiting the number of people allowed in the lobby at a time. We ask that upon arrival you follow the prompts on signs in our parking lot to check yourself into our Customer Service queue and await further instruction.

We continue to encourage customers to take advantage of our online services, but for your convenience a form drop-off has been installed in the front of our building between the double doors.

Protest hearings are currently being conducted virtually on a limited basis and we are continually expanding property eligibility. Eligible property owners will be notified via email and include urban, residential properties. Ineligible property owners and those who wish to have an in-person hearing will be scheduled at a later time.

For more information related to virtual hearings visit https://wcad.busted.ninja/virtual-hearings/

4/16/2020 10:00 AM
Appraisal Notices have been mailed and new updates regarding values and the appeal process in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic are available.

The Governor and Comptroller’s office (Property Tax Assistance Division) have been contacted, either directly or through the Texas Association of Appraisal Districts (TAAD), seeking various options that would limit value increases from last year and/or limit human contact during the appeal process.

- Limiting value increases was deemed property tax relief and as such would fail on the State Legislature. Therefore, per the Tax Code, property is to be valued as of January 1st
- The Attorney General has issued an opinion stating that non-physical damage, such as possible economic loss in value due to COVID-19 pandemic, does not qualify for the disaster related temporary tax exemption provided by section 11.35 of the Tax Code (full opinion: https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/sites/default/files/opinion-files/opinion/2020/kp-0299_0.pdf)
- WCAD is still waiting to hear back about possible ways of limiting contact during formal Appraisal Review Board (ARB) hearings, including allowing appraisal districts to initiate phone hearings, allowing virtual hearings and reducing the numbers of ARB members required per panel

What does this mean for property owners? WCAD has done everything the law will allow to respond to the current COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- Revised property as conservatively as possible while staying within the acceptable range allowed by the Comptroller
  - Protests based on perceived economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic will not see a reduction in value
- Cancelled the walk-in protest period during the month of April
HCAD Timeline

March 2020
Stay Home; Work Safe Order
- 85% remote work
- 15% in office work
- Plan to return to office – hearing season

Beginning June 2020
Alert Level 2
- Limited return to work
- Appraisers & Valuation Analysts - critical essential
- Mask order mandate

Late June 2020
Alert Level 1
- Remote hearings
- Limited opening to public

July 2020
Alert Level 1
- Critical essential EEs only in the office
- Continue remote work

Holiday Season 2020
Alert Level 1
- HCAD EEs positivity rate spikes

Present
Alert Level 1
- Continue remote work
- Critical essential EEs only in the office
Challenges

- COVID-19 fatigue
- Vacation and travel plans
- Interactions with property owners, tax agents and ARB members
- Contact tracing
- New employee onboarding
- Training and development
- Employee engagement – more important than ever
- Communication
Safety & Security

- Limited control over the public – property owners and agents
- Increase in domestic violence
- Wellness checks
Important remote working stats

- 77% of employees say they're more productive when working from home.
- 74% of remote workers think they're less likely to leave their firm.
- 23% of remote workers say they work long hours than they would on-site.
- 40% of employees think flexible remote working is best perk.

Challenges in remote working

- More than half of remote employees feel disconnected from office employees.
- 22% of remote employees report that unplugging after work is difficult.
- 19% of remote employees report loneliness as their biggest challenge.
Working Remotely

Pros & Cons

What's the biggest benefit you see to working remotely?

- 32% Ability to have a flexible schedule
- 26% Flexibility to work from anywhere
- 21% Not having to commute
- 11% Ability to spend time with family
- 7% Ability to work from home
- 3% Other

Source: State of Remote Report 2020

buffer.com/state-of-remote-2020

What’s your biggest struggle with working remotely?

- 20% Collaboration and communication
- 20% Loneliness
- 18% Not being able to unplug
- 12% Distractions at home
- 10% Being in a different timezone than teammates
- 7% Staying motivated
- 5% Taking vacation time
- 3% Finding reliable wifi
- 5% Other

Source: State of Remote Report 2020

buffer.com/state-of-remote-2020
How to Succeed as a Remote Worker

1. Experiment with Your Work Setup
2. Create Work/Home Boundaries
3. Prepare for Your Meetings
4. Create Accountability for Yourself
5. Be Visible at Work
6. Communicate Clearly and Effectively
7. Work on Your Health
8. Set Clear Responsibilities
9. Talk with Your Team
10. Take Time to Socialize
WHAT DOES 2021 HAVE IN STORE FOR US???
EEOC published guidance on employer mandatory COVID-19 policies on December 16th, 2020.

- Employers CAN REQUIRE vaccine to work in the office!
  - Must accommodate medical or religious issues
  - Can’t terminate but you must make accommodations
  - Will you require them?
Post COVID
Prepare for the “New Normal”

Post-COVID “new normal” is not the same as pre-COVID “normal”
The New Normal
Operational changes

• What’s transferable and not?
• What are we doing now that will benefit internal and external customers?
• Prepare for the impact of changes
Return to the Office

- Cultural shift – back to pre-COVID or what is the new normal?
- Psychological impact – shifted priorities & needs
- Social interactions
- Children – school, day care
- Elderly parents
- Autonomy
- Remote work
Impact on the District

- Be proactive
- Assess and redefine values
- Assess and identify desired culture and nurture
- Employee engagement – understand the shifted needs and norms
- Wellness programs
- Communication with the community
- New processes
- New competencies required for the new norm
- Training & development

"It is not the strongest of the species that survive nor the most intelligent but the one most responsive to change.

Charles Darwin (1809 – 1882)"
Stress in America 2020

- Greater in 2020 vs 2019
- Multiple sources of stress
  - COVID-19
  - Education – remote learning
  - Feeling of isolation
  - Cabin fever
  - Violence
  - Safety & security
  - Chaotic changes
- Generational differences
- Positive: 71% feel hopeful about their future
Check on Your Resilience

- Don’t just cope; build skills to be resilient – responsive vs reactive
- Your mental and emotional wellbeing – positivity
- Performance – build emotional intelligence, improve relationships, maintain work/life balance and get enough rest
- Create “me time” and take care of yourself
- Build your inner strength
- Be positive – daily thanks
Solutions for Managing Stress Toolbox

- Relaxing Activities (Hobbies you enjoy)
- Physical Activity
- Breathing
- Meditation (Headspace)
- Being more mindful (Be Here Now)
- Positive Thinking
- Expressing Gratitude
- Humor
Question and Answer Time

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