

**THE FAIRFAX AREA COMMISSION ON AGING’S POLICY FOR PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS BY ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION**

**1. AUTHORITY AND SCOPE.**

a. This policy is adopted pursuant to the authorization of Va. Code § 2.2-3708.2 and is to be strictly construed in conformance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (VFOIA), Va. Code §§ 2.2-3700—3715.

b. This policy shall not govern an electronic meeting conducted to address a state of emergency declared by the Governor. Any meeting conducted by electronic communication means under such circumstances shall be governed by the provisions of Va. Code § 2.2-3708.2(A)(3).

**2. DEFINITIONS.**

a. “**COA**” means the Fairfax Area Commission on Aging.

b. “**Member**” means any member of the COA.

c. “**Remote participation**”, “**remotely participate**”, or “**participate remotely**” mean participation by a member of the COA via telephonic, video, or other audio or combined audio and video electronic communication method where the member is not physically assembled with the other members of the COA.

d. “**Meeting**” means a meeting as defined by Va. Code § 2.2-3701.

e. “**Notify**” or “**notifies**,” for purposes of this policy, means actual notice, including, but not limited to, email, text, telephone, or in-person notice.

**3. MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS**

Regardless of the reasons why the member is participating in a meeting from a remote location by electronic communication means, the following conditions must be met for the member to participate remotely:

a. A quorum of the COA must be physically assembled at the primary or central meeting location; and

b. Arrangements have been made for the voice of the remotely participating member to be heard by all persons at the primary or central meeting location. If at any point during the meeting the voice of the remotely participating member is no longer able to be heard by all persons at the meeting location, the remotely participating member shall no longer be permitted to participate remotely.

4. **PROCESS TO REQUEST REMOTE PARTICPATION**

a. On or before the day of the meeting, and at any point before the meeting begins, the requesting member must notify the COA Chair (or the Vice-Chair if the requesting member is the Chair) that they are unable to physically attend a meeting due to (i) a temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition that prevents the member's physical attendance or (ii) a family member's medical condition that requires the member to provide care for such family member, thereby preventing the member's physical attendance or (iii) a personal matter and identifies with specificity the nature of the personal matter ~~a personal matter or a temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition that prevents their physical attendanee at the meeting.~~

b. The requesting member shall also notify the Director of the Department of Family Services of their request, but their failure to do so shall not affect their ability to remotely participate.

c. If the requesting member is unable to physically attend the meeting due to a personal matter, the requesting member must state with specificity the nature of the personal matter. Remote participation due to a personal matter is limited each calendar year to two meetings or 25 percent of the meetings held per calendar year rounded up to the next whole number, whichever is greater. ~~to two times per calendar year.~~ There is no limit to the number of times that a member may participate remotely due to a temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition or that of a family member that requires the member to provide care.

d. The requesting member is not obligated to provide independent verification regarding the temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition or the family member's medical condition ~~the reason~~ that prevents their physical attendance at the meeting ~~they are not able to physically attend the meeting.~~

e. The Chair (or the Vice-Chair if the requesting member is the Chair) shall promptly notify the requesting member whether their request is in conformance with this policy, and therefore approved or disapproved.

5. **PROCESS TO CONFIRM APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL OF PARTICIPATION FROM A REMOTE LOCATION**

When a quorum of the COA has assembled for the meeting, the COA shall vote to determine whether:

a. The Chair's decision to approve or disapprove the requesting member's request to participate from a remote location was in conformance with this policy; and

b. The voice of the remotely participating member can be heard by all persons at the primary or central meeting location.

6. **RECORDING IN MINUTES:**

a. If the member is allowed to participate remotely due to a temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition, or a family member's medical condition that requires the member to provide care to the family member, the COA shall record in its minutes (1) the COA's approval of the member's remote participation; and (2) the remote location from which the member participated.

b. If the member is allowed to participate remotely due to a personal matter, such matter shall be cited in the minutes with specificity, as well as how many times the member has attended remotely due to a personal matter~~whether this is the first or second meeting of the calendar year in which the member has participated remotely due to a personal matter~~, and the remote location from which the member participated.

c. If a member's request to participate remotely is disapproved, the disapproval, including the grounds upon which the requested participation violates this policy or VFOIA, shall be recorded in the minutes with specificity.

7. **CLOSED SESSION**

If the COA goes into closed session, the member participating remotely shall ensure that no third party is able to hear or otherwise observe the closed meeting.

8. **STRICT AND UNIFORM APPLICATION OF THIS POLICY**

This Policy shall be applied strictly and uniformly, without exception, to the entire membership, and without regard to the identity of the member requesting remote participation or the matters that will be considered or voted on at the meeting.