



Legislation Text

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Domestic Partners Eligibility for City Sponsored Benefits

The City Commission directed staff to study the issues related to adding domestic partner benefits to certain City sponsored benefit programs. Based on the data available, staff believes the following benefits should be extended to same-sex domestic partners:

- 1) Health Insurance and Flexible Benefits (as negotiated with vendors)
- 2) Personnel Policy # 8 - Sick Leave
- 3) Personnel Policy # 11 - Bereavement Leave
- 4) Personnel Policy # 18 - Employment of Relatives
- 5) Personnel Policy # 26 - Employee Assistance Program
- 6) Personnel Policy # 29 - Leave Bank

Initially, these benefits will be extended to all employees not covered under a collective bargaining unit. The implementation date will be January 1, 1999. The benefits will be applied to the various bargaining units upon the successful completion of negotiations with each union. After studying the various benefits, staff does not recommend the extension of the federally mandated programs of COBRA and FMLA until such time that the Federal Government sanctions their inclusion. Additionally, IRS regulations do not allow reimbursement from flexible spending accounts for expenses associated with the certified domestic partner.

The cost of the Health Benefit will be \$1282 (employee plus spouse or certified domestic partner) or \$1933 (family coverage) per certified domestic partner enrolled, depending on the level of coverage chosen. The cost of the other personnel policy benefit changes are undetermined at this time. Initially, the costs associated with these benefits will be borne as a part of a department's personal services budget and, in future years, will be included in salary and wage calculations. Once negotiations with the Union leadership is complete and additional enrollment data is known, staff will only request additional appropriations from the Commission should funds available in the FY 99-00 personal services contingency be insufficient to fill any unmet need. Based upon statistics gathered from other organizations implementing a similar program, staff believes the probability of needing an additional appropriation to be very small.

The City Commission: 1) approve extending same-sex Domestic Partners Benefits as suggested by staff; 2) authorize the City Manager or his designee to make appropriate changes to the Health Plan Document to incorporate same-sex Domestic Partner Benefits subject to review by the City Attorney as to form and legality; 3) approve changes to Personnel Policies #8, 11, 18, 26 and 29; and, 4) authorize the City Manager or designee to begin negotiations with each collective bargaining unit as provided by the labor agreements.