

Overview of Domestic Partner Benefits at the City of Bellevue

Domestic Partner Definition

Domestic partner benefits as described in this overview are available to same sex or opposite sex domestic partners with a Washington state registered domestic partnership, and their eligible dependent children.

However, if a non-represented employee has a signed “Declaration of City of Bellevue Domestic Partnership” form on file with the Human Resources Department prior to January 1, 2021, that domestic partnership will be recognized until December 31, 2023, provided all terms of that particular Declaration of City of Bellevue Domestic Partnership Form continue to be valid. Effective January 1, 2024, only state registered domestic partnerships as defined in RCW 26.60 will be recognized. Represented employee domestic partnerships will be recognized pursuant to any pertinent agreements made with respective Unions and City policy.

Eligible Dependent Children of Your Domestic Partner

Eligible dependent children of domestic partners extends to age 26, regardless of the child’s marital status and includes his/her natural offspring, legally adopted children, or a legal ward provided there is a court order signed by a judge that grants guardianship as a specific date.

Eligibility does not extend to an adult child’s spouse or children.

Benefit Plans and Domestic Partner Coverage

The City of Bellevue extends the following benefits to domestic partners and the children of domestic partners:

- The employee has access to leave benefits because of a domestic partner or his/her dependents;
- Enrollment in the medical, dental and/or vision plans;
- Enrollment in the additional term life/AD&D insurance plan for domestic partners the same as spouses as outlined in the Standard Insurance Company Certificate of Group Life Insurance, Policy No. 641875-A; *children of domestic partners are not eligible as insureds unless the children are adopted by the employee;*
- Employee Assistance Program services; and
- COBRA Continuation Rights (see “Continuation of Coverage” for full details).
- Survivor Income benefits offered under MEBT

Note: Domestic partners generally do not qualify as eligible Internal Revenue Service dependents, so expenses are not eligible for reimbursement by either the Health Care or Daycare Care Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA’s). You may wish to consult your tax advisor.

Declaration of a Domestic Partnership Process

A properly completed Declaration of Washington State Registered Domestic Partnership form must be received and approved by the Human Resources Department in order to be eligible for any domestic partner benefits as described in “Benefit Plans and Domestic Partner Coverage” section of this overview. The approved domestic partnership will be considered effective the date the completed form is received in Human Resources.

Signing a Declaration of Washington State Registered Domestic Partnership form may have other legal and financial consequences unrelated to City of Bellevue benefit provisions. Employees should consult with an attorney and/or tax advisor prior to signing a declaration of domestic partnership if they have any questions regarding their eligibility to do so or their liabilities or responsibilities.

Any intentionally false or misleading statements made to receive benefits shall be cause for discipline up to and including termination, result in loss of benefits and an obligation to reimburse the City of Bellevue for any costs involved in providing benefits and coverage.

Information provided to the City of Bellevue for the purpose of determining an employee’s eligibility for City of Bellevue domestic partnership benefits will be held confidential as required by law.

The domestic partnership declaration form and this overview are located at <https://c2mb.aig.com/cityofbellevue/home/> then navigate to Benefit Enrollment and Changes > How to Make Changes: Qualifying Life Events.

How to Enroll in Health Coverage

If you wish to add your eligible domestic partner and/or his or her children to your health coverage, you must complete the enrollment within the timeframes described in “When You May Enroll in Domestic Partner Health Insurance” section of this overview.

In addition to submitting an approved Declaration of Washington State Registered Domestic Partnership form to Human Resources, you must also request enrollment online through Bellevue Benefits at: <https://cityofbellevuehr.workterra.net>.

To make the change, logon to Bellevue Benefits at <https://cityofbellevuehr.workterra.net>. In the bottom right hand corner, under Favorite Actions, select **Initiate Qualifying Event**. Select the Qualifying Event and enter the Life Event Date. Click **Save** and an enrollment window will open that will step you through the benefits that you are allowed to change specific to your life event. You will know that you have completed your changes in Bellevue Benefits when you click the **Finish** button at the bottom of the Confirmation Statement.

When You May Enroll in Domestic Partner Health Coverage

If you are eligible for City of Bellevue domestic partner benefits and wish to add your eligible domestic partner and/or his or her dependent children to your health coverage, you may do so only at the following times:

1. Within 30 days of you becoming eligible for the health coverage (with an effective date the same as yours);
2. During the annual open enrollment period, which is typically held each November for a January 1st coverage effective date; or
3. If you experience a life event (see “Life Events and Domestic Partner Coverage”).

The health coverage elections you make are generally effective for the entire calendar year provided you are eligible. Internal Revenue Service rules limit benefit changes during the year, except as provided under “Life Events and Domestic Partner Coverage” section of this overview and these limitations also apply to coverage selections for your domestic partner and his or her children.

Life Events and Domestic Partner Coverage

The health coverage elections you make are generally effective for the entire calendar year provided you are eligible. Unless you experience a qualified status change, or life event, during the year or leave employment, you will not be able to change your enrollment election until the next open enrollment period.

Examples of life events include:

- Declaration of Washington State Registered Domestic Partnership
- Birth or adoption of a child
- New dependents and spouse as a result of marriage
- Divorce, legal separation, annulment or termination of domestic partnership
- If you were covered under your spouse’s health insurance plan and lost coverage as a result of their termination of employment or reduction in hours

Life Events and Domestic Partner Coverage (continued)

You **may** request a change to your benefits through Bellevue Benefits:

- Within 60 days of birth, adoption or placement for adoption
- Within 30 days of marriage
- Within 30 days of declaration of domestic partnership
- Within 30 days of a gain or loss other coverage for you or your dependents

Health coverage will be effective the first day of the first day of the month following the date the life event, except for birth, adoption, or placement for adoption of a dependent child, which will be effective as of the date of birth or placement with you.

You **must** request a change to your benefits through Bellevue Benefits within 30 days of:

- Termination of domestic partnership
- Divorce, legal separation or annulment
- Dependent child no longer eligible due to age
- Death of a dependent child or spouse

These life events require you to make changes to your benefits because the dependents are no longer eligible for coverage under the health plans. Note: You certify in Bellevue Benefits that the family members you enroll in health benefits are eligible for coverage and failure to update changes to that information in a timely manner subjects you to repayment of any claims or premiums paid by the City and/or health plan as well as possible disciplinary action up to and including termination.

To make any changes due to a life event using the online enrollment system, login to Bellevue Benefits at <https://cityofbellevuehr.workterra.net>. Click on the **Make Changes** icon. Select the appropriate Life Event Type and enter the Life Event Date. Click **Save** and an enrollment window will open that will step you through the benefits that you are allowed to change specific to your life event. You will know that you have completed your changes in Bellevue Benefits when you click the **Finish** button at the bottom of the Confirmation Statement.

Effect on Your Taxable Income

The employee contribution from your paycheck will be the same as for married couples, however there are *two unique tax implications* you need to understand that apply only to domestic partners and/or domestic partner children.

1. The additional monthly employee contribution amount you will have deducted from your check on an *after-tax basis*; and
2. You will pay taxes on the monthly value of the City's contribution for coverage for domestic partners and/or children of domestic partners. Under the current Internal Revenue Code, if you enroll anyone who is not your tax dependent, the value of that person's health coverage is taxable to you and treated as income – otherwise known as imputed income. This amount will be shown on your pay checks throughout the year and will be reported on your W-2 form at the end of each calendar year. This additional taxable income will not be included when calculating other benefits, such as earnings for the MEBT plan.

Effect on Your Taxable Income (continued)

For more information about the taxable values for domestic partners and domestic partner child(ren), please visit <https://c2mb.ajg.com/cityofbellevue/home/> then navigate to Benefit Enrollment and Changes> How to Make Changes: Qualifying Life Events>Employee Contribution Rates.

It is important to make an informed decision because the medical, dental and/or vision coverage elections you make are generally effective for the entire calendar year provided you are eligible. The exception is if you experience a life event (see the "Life Events and Domestic Partner Coverage" section of this overview for more information).

If your domestic partner or child of a domestic partner qualifies as a tax dependent under Section 152 of the Internal Revenue Code, you may file the proper documentation with the IRS and seek a refund for taxes withheld.

Beneficiary Designations

You can name your domestic partner (or anyone else you wish) to receive benefits that may be payable in the event of your death. Plans from which a benefit may be payable include:

- Group Life / AD&D insurance (applies to employer provided and additional coverage purchased by the employee);
- Department of Retirement Systems (DRS) – PERS, LEOFF and PSERS 401(a) Plan;
- Municipal Employee Benefit Trust (MEBT) 401(k) plan;
- 457 Deferred Compensation Plan.

Termination of Domestic Partnership

If the domestic partnership ends (i.e. does not meet the criteria for domestic partnership in the Declaration of Washington State Registered Domestic Partnership form), **within 30 days** you must:

1. Submit a completed a Declaration of Termination of Domestic Partnership form to Human Resources. This form can be found at [https://c2mb.aig.com/cityofbellevue/home/Benefit Enrollment and Changes> How to Make Changes: Qualifying Life Events](https://c2mb.aig.com/cityofbellevue/home/Benefit%20Enrollment%20and%20Changes%20How%20to%20Make%20Changes%3A%20Qualifying%20Life%20Events).
2. Request a life event by using the online enrollment system, Bellevue Benefits <https://cityofbellevuehr.workterra.net>. See the “Life Events and Domestic Partner Coverage” section of this overview.

Failing to timely provide this declaration and request a life event may result in discipline up to and including termination from employment for permitting an ineligible former domestic partner or his/her children to receive benefits and an obligation to reimburse the City.

The domestic partner and his or her dependent children no longer eligible for domestic partner benefits, including participation in the medical, dental and/or vision plans except as eligible under COBRA (see “Continuation of Coverage”). Termination of your domestic partnership will not affect your beneficiary designations. If you wish to change beneficiary designations, you must do so separately.

After such termination, you must wait ninety (90) days before filing another Declaration of Washington State Registered Domestic Partnership form unless the termination is due to the death of the former domestic partner.

Continuation of Coverage

Continuation of health coverage means that if you decide to cover a domestic partner and/or his or her dependent children under the medical, dental, and/or vision plans and your domestic partnership ends by no longer meeting the criteria as specified in the Declaration of Washington State Registered Domestic Partnership form, your domestic partner and/or their dependent children can purchase temporary continuation of coverage.

Under current federal law, a domestic partner and his or her dependent children generally do not have rights to continuation of health coverage. The Bellevue City Council has authorized “COBRA-like coverage” for

domestic partners and their dependent children. Because this coverage is not actual COBRA coverage, the City's ability to provide COBRA-like coverage for health benefits provided by insurance carriers will be dependent on their agreement to provide this COBRA-like benefit. COBRA-like benefits will be provided under the City's self-insured plans. Cost for this continued coverage is equal to the full cost of the coverage (employee and employer contributions) plus a 2% administrative fee.

You will be asked to provide the current or last known address of your former domestic partner for continuation of coverage notification purposes when you submit the Declaration of Termination of Domestic Partnership form.

Policy Restrictions

There are policy restrictions that apply to employees with domestic partners and their dependents. Examples of these restrictions are:

- The prohibition against employment of a domestic partner or child of a domestic partner as a seasonal employee.
- The prohibition against employment of a domestic partner or child of a domestic partner in a direct line of supervision with the employee.
- With respect to the medical, dental, and vision plans, domestic partners who both work for the City of Bellevue may not elect double coverage or be eligible to receive the waiver incentives:
 - An employee may enroll as either an employee or a dependent, but not both. Because of special tax rules (see "Effect on Your Taxable Income") it may be less expensive for you and your domestic partner to enroll separately in the City of Bellevue medical, dental, and/or vision plans. You may want to consult a tax advisor to determine the impact on you.
 - If both mother and father are employees, their children will be covered as dependents of the mother or father, but not of both. If both domestic partners are employees, their children will be covered as dependents of either person, but not of both.
- The unavailability of sick leave for LEOFF I employees.

Assistance

For questions regarding *leave benefits*, please contact Human Resources at 425.452.6838.

For questions regarding *medical, dental, vision and/or life insurance*, please contact Lori Durringer 425.452.7866 or Michelle Robinson at 425.452.4585.