CITY OF BELLINGHAM

JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE: **Benefits Specialist – Health & Welfare Programs** **E-PLAN SG:E2-5**

DEPARTMENT: **Human Resources** **CS:N FLSA:N EEO4CODE:PR**

JOB SUMMARY:

Works collaboratively but independently in carrying out complex work in administering benefit programs such as employee health and welfare benefits, Employee Wellness initiatives and LEOFF I Pension claims. Provides direct service to employees and retirees, develops employee communications and processes benefit changes and leave requests. Maintains current knowledge of employee benefits-related laws, regulations and trends. Works in a highly sensitive public setting with a variety of statutes, regulations and collective bargaining agreements.

SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIP:

Reports to the Benefits Manager. Work is performed under general supervision and the guidance of applicable federal and State statutes and regulations, collective bargaining agreements, and City and departmental policies and procedures. Oversees the daily work of department support staff, as assigned. May supervise employees, interns, volunteers, extra labor or temporary employees as assigned.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS OF THE JOB:

Employee Health & Welfare Benefits:

1. Performs day-to-day administration of employee health and welfare programs such as medical, dental, vision, life, disability, Section 125 Flexible Benefit plans, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and similar programs in accordance with federal and state laws, City of Bellingham Policies and Procedures and Collective Bargaining Agreements. Partners with Benefits manager to resolve complex benefit issues.

2. Responds to employee inquiries, provides benefit information and acts as liaison between the employee, benefits broker, insurance company and/or third-party administrators for City sponsored benefit programs. Provides benefit information at new hire orientation and conducts employee training as needed.

3. Maintains employee enrollment information; processes enrollments and changes including notification of third-party administrators. Assists with COBRA administration as needed. Informs employees of benefits eligibility as appropriate.

4. Reviews, reconciles, and processes benefit payments. Prepares and distributes reports and other documentation as required.

5. Maintains current knowledge of employee benefit-related laws and regulations. Assists with research and analysis of benefit plans to support Union negotiations, plan maintenance and improvement, and health benefit policy development.

6. Prepares, processes and validates Affordable Care Act (ACA) reports using reports and data from the Human Resources Information System (HRIS). Assists in preparation of 1095C's for employees and uploading of data to the IRS website.

7. Coordinates annual open enrollment process including the annual employee Benefits Fair.

8. Assists Benefits Manager with development of Requests for Proposal (RFP's) for health and welfare benefit vendors and benefits broker. Performs minimum qualifications reviews of responses and analysis of vendor proposals.

LEOFF I Claims Administration:

1. Coordinates LEOFF I Pension Board medical claims processing by verifying that primary coverages have been paid. Prepares requisitions for the Pension Board's approval that are within the scope of the policy, as required by law or have been granted as an exception to policy.

2. Maintains enrollment of retired LEOFF 1 Fire and Police Pension members in appropriate medical and vision plans. Verifies initial eligibility and identifies other primary insurance.

3. Receives and responds to inquiries from LEOFF I and other City employees regarding pending claims, appeals and payments.

4. Assists Benefits Manager in evaluating and implementing benefit plan changes for retired LEOFF 1 members.

5. Recommends policy language updates to Pension Board and updates and distributes policies as directed by the Board.

General:

1. Participates in planning and implementing employee Wellness campaigns.

2. Performs or directs the work of assigned staff to organize, update, maintain, purge and archive databases, files, records and other documents according to guidelines. Ensures maintenance of confidential information in compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

3. Develops policies, procedures and guidelines; recommends changes to management. Participates in the implementation or communication of approved policies and procedures.

4. Works closely with Benefits and Payroll staff and HR Account Managers to ensure coordination of all benefit programs administered by the City.

5. Provides technical guidance and direction to staff related to areas of responsibility.

ADDITIONAL WORK PERFORMED:

1. Provides support in administering leave programs and policies in accordance with federal and state employment laws, City of Bellingham Policies and Procedures and Collective Bargaining Agreements.

2. Assists with administration of the City's self-insured industrial insurance program as assigned. Assists employees with filing claims; coordinates with third-party claims administrator and payroll as needed.

3. Serves as back-up for other benefit programs, as assigned, to ensure continuity of service.

4. May supervise lower classified staff, as assigned.

5. Performs related work of a similar nature and level.

PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS (Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities):

Knowledge of:
- Employee health and welfare benefit programs and procedures.
- Financial systems, including Human Resources Information Systems.
- Application and interpretation of employment, benefit and leave laws and regulations especially those relating to Affordable Care Act (ACA) Section 125, FMLA, WA Paid Family & Medical Leave, and LEOFF 1 pension.
- Standard and business English usage, punctuation, spelling, grammar, and format.

Skill in:
- Excellent oral communications skills with groups and individuals.
- Strong public presentation skills.
- Problem analysis and decision-making.
- Interpersonal sensitivity, adaptability/flexibility, tolerance for ambiguity, stress tolerance, maintenance of composure, and the ability to solve problems with and for individuals and groups.
- Effective time management with ability to prioritize several tasks, work independently and to meet deadlines in an environment of frequent interruptions.
- Proficiency in computer applications including skill in using spreadsheets, word processing, and database management software.
- Supervisory skill including the ability to delegate, plan and organize the work of others.

Ability to:
- Maintain accurate and complete record system including the use of computer software applications and hardware.
- Maintain the confidentiality and privacy of privileged communications, including employee medical information.
- Evaluate, recommend and implement improvements to assigned program areas.
- Efficiently and accurately utilize a variety of standard office equipment and software applications.
- Support and promote programs and foster organizational culture that advance diversity, equity and inclusion goals across the City.
- Maintain consistent and punctual attendance.
- Ability and willingness to demonstrate the Public Service Competencies of Service Orientation, Results Orientation, and Teamwork and Cooperation.

- Physical ability to perform the essential functions of the job, including:
    - Frequently operate a computer and other office machinery such as a keyboard, mouse, phone and fax machine;
    - Frequently communicate accurate information and ideas with others;
    - Move between work sites;
    - Occasionally transport objects up to twenty-five pounds.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT:

Work is performed in an office environment with occasional fieldwork where City field or satellite work is conducted. Works extensively at a computer workstation. Occasional overnight travel to conferences and training sessions. May be required to work evening and weekend hours, as assigned.

EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS:

- Baccalaureate degree with major course work in human resources, public or business administration, or a related field.
- Two years of progressively responsible experience in employee health and welfare benefits administration.
- Relevant experience administering leave programs including FMLA preferred.
- Relevant experience with a public sector employer preferred.

OR

- An equivalent combination of education and experience sufficient to provide the applicant with the knowledge, skill and ability to successfully perform the essential functions of the job will be considered.

NECESSARY SPECIAL REQUIREMENT:

- Employment contingent upon passing a criminal background check.

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