

## **ARTICLE IX: HEALTH INSURANCE CONTINUATION FOR ELIGIBLE RETIREES**

**A.** The County of Albany provides continuation of health insurance benefits (medical/surgical, hospitalization, and prescription drug) for retirees who meet specific established criteria.

**1.** Eligibility Criteria and Contribution Requirements. Separate eligibility criteria and contribution requirements have been established for retiring full and part time employees. It is the intention of Albany County to continue to provide health insurance benefits to employees who are already eligible and receiving benefits as retired employees as of the effective date of these Rules.

### **a. Retiring Full-Time Employees.**

**(1) Eligibility Criteria.** All of the following criteria must be met on the day of separation from County service:

**(a)** The employees with an employment date after the adoption of these rules must have at least fifteen (15) years of full time equivalent service with Albany County.

**(b)** The employees with an employment date prior to the adoption of these rules, must have ten (10) years of full time equivalent service with Albany County.

**(c)** The employee was eligible to participate in the health insurance benefits program during each year of his or her years of qualifying Albany County service (i.e., service was as a regular employee as defined by the Rules and Regulations for Albany County Employees); and

**(d)** the employee is age fifty five (55) or older.

**(e) NOTE:** Employees hired after 1/1/89 and prior to the adoption of these rules and regulations would be eligible for partial health insurance benefits. Employees with at least five (5) years of County service but less than ten (10) years would receive continuation health insurance at the following rate:

Employee - fifty percent (50%) employee contribution

Spouse - seventy percent (70%) employee contribution

**(f)** For the purposes of Article IX, Section A(1)(a), an employee who qualifies as a veteran may apply up to three (3) years of their military service to be credited towards reaching the fifteen (15) years of full time equivalent service with Albany County required to be eligible for health insurance benefits in retirement.

**(2) The service indicated in eligibility criterion one (1), (above),** need not be continuous and uninterrupted if reinstatement to County service following a period of separation was within twelve calendar months following the date of separation. In such circumstances, an employee's benefits date (as defined by these Rules) shall be used to determine length of service achieved by the employee.

**(3) The service indicated in eligibility criterion one, (1) (above),** may include periods of part-time County service, however, such periods of part-time County service shall be pro-rated to their full time equivalent.

**(4) Contribution Requirements.** A full-time employee who meets all the eligibility criteria indicated above must contribute toward his or her retiree continuation coverage at a percentage rate commensurate to that required when he or she was an active employee.

**(a)** Contribution requirements are due on the 15th of the month preceding the month of coverage. When a retiree who is required to contribute toward the premium of his or her health insurance coverage falls more than two months behind in his or her contribution payments, the County may terminate coverage. Under ordinary circumstances, once coverage is terminated for failure to meet the contribution requirement, it may not later be restored. Retirees may provide the name of a relative or friend who should also receive any contribution billing and warning notices issued by the County. Such designations shall be in writing.

**(b)** The contribution criteria indicated above need only be met by an employee once. If, for example, a retiree not normally required to contribute toward the premium of his or her continuation coverage elects to accept a regular part-time/full time County appointment, he or she will be required to contribute 50% (or full time rate) of his or her health insurance premium as an active employee. However, when such employee later elects to again cease employment with Albany County, the contribution requirement shall revert back to that required of the retiree as a retired full-time employee (*i.e.*, in this example, no premium contribution would be required.)

**(c)** Employees who have twenty or more years of full-time service with Albany County who leave County service prior to being age eligible for New York State Employees' Retirement System benefits shall be permitted to participate in the County's group medical insurance programs, provided that the County's medical insurance providers allow the participation of said employees. Under these circumstances, the employee would be required to pay one hundred per cent (100%) of the contribution towards the cost of his or her medical insurance until the he or she is age-eligible for NYS Employees' Retirement System benefits or has other comparable health insurance coverage. Employees must contact the Department of Human Resources for application and verification of benefit eligibility.

#### **Retiring Part Time Employees.**

**(1) Eligibility Criteria and Contribution Requirements.** The Albany County Legislature has established the following part-time health insurance eligibility groups.

#### **Group "A"**

**(a) Group Definition.**

- Began work prior to January 1, 1993.
- Regularly scheduled to work at least seventeen (17) hours per week.
- On December 8, 1997, was a part-time County employee scheduled to work at least seventeen (17) hours per week.

**(b) Eligibility Criteria.** On the day of separation from County service, the employee must meet all of the following criteria:

- 5 calendar years of County service.
- Age 55 or older.
- Enrolled in County health insurance.

**(c) Premium Contribution Requirement.**

- There is no premium contribution requirement for this group.

### **Group "B"**

**(a) Group Definition.**

- Began work on or after January 1, 1993, and before December 9, 1997.
- Regularly scheduled to work at least seventeen (17) hours per week.
- On December 8, 1997, was a part-time County employee scheduled to work at least seventeen (17) hours per week.

**(b) Eligibility Criteria.** On the day of separation from County service, the employee must meet all of the following criteria:

- 10 calendar years of County service.
- Age 55 or older.
- Enrolled in County health insurance.

**(c) Premium Contribution Requirement.**

- Members of this group must contribute 50% of their combined medical, hospitalization, and prescription drug premiums.

### **Group "C"**

**(a) Group Definition.**

- Began work for the County before December 8, 1997.
- Regularly scheduled to work less than seventeen (17) hours per week.
- On December 8, 1997, was a part-time County employee.

**(b) Eligibility Criteria.** On the day of separation from County service, the employee must meet all of the following criteria:

- 5 calendar years of County service.
- Age 55 or older.
- Enrolled in County health insurance.

**(c) Premium Contribution Requirement.**

- Members of this group must contribute 100% of their combined medical, hospitalization, and prescription drug premiums.

**Group "D"**

**(a) Group Definition.**

- Began work on or after December 9, 1997.
- Regularly scheduled to work at least seventeen (17) hours per week.

**(b) Eligibility Criteria.** On the day of separation from County service, the employee must meet all of the following criteria:

- Have completed 10 years of equivalent full-time County service.
- Age 55 or older.
- Enrolled in County health insurance.

**(c) Premium Contribution Requirement.**

- Members of this group must continue to contribute toward their combined medical, hospitalization, and prescription drug premiums at the percentage rate required when they were actively employed (50%).

**Group "E"**

**(a) Group Definition.**

Began work on or after December 9, 1997.

Regularly scheduled to work less than seventeen (17) hours per week.

**(b) Eligibility Criteria.** On the day of separation from County service, the employee must meet all of the following criteria:

- Have completed 10 years of equivalent full-time County service.
- Age 55 or older.
- Enrolled in County health insurance.

**(c) Premium Contribution Requirement.**

- Members of this group must continue to contribute toward their combined medical, hospitalization, and prescription drug premiums at the percentage rate required when they were actively employed (100%).

**Group "F"**

**(a) Group Definition**

- Began work on or after these Rules are adopted

**(b) Eligibility Criteria.**

- Employees must have completed fifteen (15) years of equivalent full-time County service. Calculation of full time service uses a standard work week of not less than thirty five (35) hours per week.
- Age 55 or older.
- Enrolled in County health insurance

**B. Important Terms and Conditions.** The following terms and conditions are applicable to all retiring employees, both full-time or part-time.

**1. Employees Participating in Health Insurance Buy-Out.** The health insurance buy-out option may not be continued in retirement. Retirees enrolled in the health insurance buy-out have thirty (30) days from their last day worked in which to re-enter the County health insurance program and qualify for retiree health insurance benefits. After thirty (30) days from the last day worked, benefits are considered forfeited.

**2. Dental Insurance.** Dental insurance is not continued in retirement. A limited period of dental insurance continuation may be available to new retirees through COBRA, however.

**3. Spousal/Dependent Coverage.** Spouses and eligible dependents of County retirees (employees) remain covered as long as the retiree maintains an active enrollment. At the time of death of a retired, or active, County employee, spouse and dependent coverage may be extended as follows:

Spouses and eligible dependents will be covered for a three (3) month period. At the end of three months spouses and eligible dependents have the option of electing COBRA benefits or as specified in b.

For all full-time employees or retirees with a minimum of fifteen (15) years of full-time equivalent County service coverage will be extended with a premium contribution as follows:

<b>Years of Completed Full Time Equivalent County Service</b>	<b>Number of Years Eligible for Continuation of Health Insurance Benefits</b>	<b>Premium Contribution Rate</b>
15 - or more	Continuous	Same Contribution Rate as Employee or Retiree

Coverage for spouses and dependents may not be reinstated after a lapse in coverage with the County Health Insurance Plan.

**1. Medicare Coordination.** When a retiree becomes eligible for Medicare coverage, the retiree must apply for (both parts "A" and "B") of such coverage. Failure to apply for both parts of Medicare may result in forfeiture of Albany County retiree health insurance continuation privileges. The Department of Human Resources may require documentation substantiating a retiree's enrollment in Medicare.

**2. Open Enrollment.** Like active employees, retirees may elect to change their health insurance option during the designated "open enrollment period." Retirees interested in changing their selected health insurance option should contact the Benefits Unit of the Division of Personnel Services during the month of October to request any required change forms. Changes will be effective on January 1 of the next year.

**3. Annual Revision of Rates.** Retirees who are required to pay premium contributions should expect annual adjustments in the dollar amounts of their contributions. Generally, new premium rates are effective for each carrier on January 1.

**4. Notification of Change of Address.** It is very important that retirees regularly update their addresses with both their insurance carrier and the Benefits Unit of the Division of Personnel Services. Failure to keep one's address up to date may lead to the inadvertent cancellation of coverage. Periodically, important mailings concerning health insurance benefits are distributed to County retirees.