



CHATHAM COUNTY POLICY FOR BENEFITS CONTINUATION WHILE ON UNPAID LEAVE

EFFECTIVE AUGUST 1, 2023

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Policy Statement

The Chatham County Policy for Benefits Continuation While on Unpaid Leave allows consistency in benefits administration, ensures accuracy, and manages costs for the employees and the Plan.

It is the policy of Chatham County that all benefits-eligible employees on an approved unpaid leave of absence may continue participation in the County-sponsored benefit plans, subject to the following provisions:

- Up to the first 24 months of an unpaid leave of absence, Chatham County will continue to pay the employer portion of premiums for health insurance, provided the employee continues to pay their share of the premiums.
- After the completion of 24 months from the start of the unpaid leave of absence, employee is no longer eligible to participate in the County-sponsored benefit plans. Employee may be eligible for continuation of Health, Dental, and Vision coverage under COBRA provisions if they wish to continue coverage.

Subject to all applicable laws and direction from legal counsel.

1. Qualified Leave Under FMLA

- a. Employees under a qualified FMLA leave may elect to terminate existing benefit plans for unpaid leave 31 days or greater. Coverage will continue at the same level and under the same conditions for unpaid leave less than 30 days.
- b. The County will continue the employee's existing benefit plans during the leave period at the same level and under the same conditions, provided the employee pays their share of premiums or employee elects to terminate coverage during the unpaid leave.
- c. Employees will receive a *Benefits Continuation While on Unpaid Leave* form upon FMLA leave approval (paid and unpaid) to designate which benefit plan(s) to continue or terminate in the event their unpaid leave exceeds 31 days.
 - i. Form must be completed and submitted to Benefits Representative within 30 days of FMLA leave approval.
 - ii. Failure to complete and submit form within 30 days of leave approval forfeits employee's right to terminate coverage while on unpaid leave and will be responsible for paying employee premiums for all existing benefits.
- d. If the employee elects to continue their existing benefit plan(s), they must pay the employee portion of premiums via Direct Bill.
- e. Any employee that elects to terminate their current benefit plan(s) will receive a *Benefits Reinstatement Return to Active Status* form to request reinstatement of any terminated benefit plan(s).

- i. Form must be completed and submitted to the Benefits Representative within 30 days of returning to active status.
 - ii. Failure to complete and submit form within 30 days of return to active status forfeits employee's right to reinstate terminated coverage and must wait until Open Enrollment or qualifying life event to re-enroll.
- f. Failure to make premium payments under Direct Bill may result in termination of coverage.
 - i. Coverage terminated during unpaid leave due to failure to make premium payments will automatically be restored when employee returns to active status.
 - ii. The employer may recover the employee's share of missed premium payments via Catch-Up once employee returns to active status.

2. Non-FMLA Qualifying Leave

- a. Employees under a non-FMLA qualifying leave (i.e., Military, Workers' Compensation, Medical, Educational, Personal, etc.) may elect to terminate existing benefit plans for unpaid leave 31 days or greater. Coverage will continue at the same level and under the same conditions for unpaid leave less than 30 days.
- b. The County will continue the employee's benefit plans during the leave period at the same level and under the same conditions, provided the employee pays their share of premiums or employee elects to terminate coverage during the unpaid leave.
- c. Employees will receive a *Benefits Continuation While on Unpaid Leave* form upon leave approval (paid and unpaid) to designate which benefit plan(s) to continue or terminate in the event their unpaid leave exceeds 31 days.
 - i. Form must be completed and submitted to Benefits Representative within 30 days of leave approval.
 - ii. Failure to complete and submit form within 30 days of leave approval forfeits employee's right to terminate coverage while on unpaid leave and will be responsible for paying employee premiums for all existing benefits.
- d. If the employee elects to continue their existing benefit plan(s), they must pay the employee portion of premiums via Direct Bill.
- e. Any employee that elects to terminate their current benefit plan(s) will receive a *Benefits Reinstatement Return to Active Status* form to request reinstatement of any terminated benefit plan(s).
 - i. Form must be completed and submitted to the Benefits Representative within 30 days of returning to active status.

- ii. Failure to complete and submit form within 30 days of returning to active status forfeits employee's right to reinstate terminated coverage and must wait until Open Enrollment or qualifying life event to re-enroll.
- f. Failure to make premium payments under Direct Bill may result in termination of coverage.
 - i. The employer may recover the employee's share of missed premium payments via Catch-Up for all reinstated coverage.

3. Short-Term Unpaid Leave (Less Than 30 Days) – *Catch-Up*

- a. Employees on unpaid leave less than 30 days (typically 3 pay periods or less) may not terminate their existing benefit plans and will pay for their missed premiums via **Catch-Up** upon their return to active status.
- b. Catch-Up allows employees to repay their missed premium payments in installments from their first paycheck up to six (6) paychecks upon their return to active status.
- c. Installment payment plans are set up based on the amount owed for each type of benefit deduction (i.e., Health, Dental, Vision, Group Life Insurance, and Legal). Each installment is added to the current biweekly premium and will all run concurrently until paid off.
 - i. FSA (Flex) is excluded from the installment payment plan as the repayment balance is dispersed over the remaining pay periods of the plan year.
- d. Catch-Up Installment Payment Rules:

Catch-Up Installment Payment Rules	
<i>Arrears Amount Owed (per Deduction)</i>	<i>Pay Period</i>
Up to \$200	1 Pay Period
\$200.01—\$400	2 Pay Periods
\$400.01—\$700	3 Pay Periods
\$700.01—\$1,000	4 Pay Periods
\$1,000.01—\$1,500	5 Pay Periods
\$1,501.01—or more	6 Pay Periods

- e. In the event a return to work date is not provided, it is the responsibility of the employee to contact the Benefits Representative to determine the best premium payment plan.

4. Extended Unpaid Leave (31 Days or Greater) – Direct Bill (Pay-as-you-go)

- a. Employees on unpaid leave 31 days or greater will automatically be enrolled in **Direct Bill**. Direct Bill is managed by a third party administrator and will directly invoice the employee monthly for all applicable premiums until they return to active status.
- b. Employee will remit monthly payments to the third party administrator and are due on the last day of each month. If payments are not received by the last day of the following month (the "30-day grace period"), then elected benefits may be terminated for lack of payment.
- c. Termination of benefits will be effective on the first date for which payment was due.
- d. In the event a return to work date is not provided, it is the responsibility of the employee to contact the Benefits Representative to determine the best premium payment plan.

5. Failure to Make Timely Premium Payments

- a. Failure to make payments under Direct Bill within a 30 calendar day grace period of the payment due date may result in retroactive termination of benefits effective the first date for which payment was due.
 - i. As a result of a retroactive termination, any paid claims by the plan for service dates that occur after the effective date of the termination of coverage, may be billed to the employee and will become the responsibility of the employee to repay the plan.
- b. Premium payments not paid on Direct Bill will be paid via Catch-Up once employee returns to active status.
- c. One-time payment extension of 30 days may be granted.
 - i. Employee making good faith effort to pay.
 - ii. Regular communication from employee to the Benefits Representative on circumstances and/or updates.

6. Pre-Payment Option

- a. Employees facing a foreseeable unpaid leave may have the option to pre-pay their existing benefit premiums prior to unpaid leave via payroll deduction.
- b. Pre-pay allows any qualifying pre-taxed benefit to be paid in advance on a pre-tax basis for the current calendar plan year.
- c. Pre-payment of post-tax benefits are paid in advance on a post-tax basis.
- d. Employees opting to pre-pay their benefit premiums must make arrangements with the Benefits Representative upon leave approval.

- i. Projected duration of unpaid leave must be provided to be eligible for the pre-payment option.
- ii. Payments paid in advance must cover the premium balance for the duration of the unpaid leave.
- iii. Benefit premiums not pre-paid prior to unpaid leave will be paid via Catch-Up once employee returns to active status.

7. Benefit Plans Eligible for Direct Bill and Catch-Up

- a. Health Insurance
- b. Dental Insurance
- c. Vision Insurance
- d. FSA (Flex)
 - i. Employees may elect to suspend FSA (Flex) premium payments during unpaid leave exceeding 31 days.
 - ii. The County will advance the employee's FSA contribution during leave allowing the account to remain active and accessible.
 - iii. Once employee returns to active status, the total amount owed is dispersed over the remaining pay periods of the plan year via Catch-Up.
- e. Group Life Insurance (MetLife)
 - i. Statement of Health (SOH) may be required for reinstatement if coverage is terminated for employee and/or spouse.
- f. Legal Plans (MetLife)

8. Voluntary Benefits Not Direct Billed

- a. Chatham County does not manage premium payment arrangements, terminations, and/or reinstatements for any of the voluntary benefit plans identified below while an employee is on unpaid leave.
 - i. Chatham County will disburse premiums paid via payroll deduction for employees on Pre-Pay and Catch-Up directly to the insurance carrier.
 - ii. Employees are responsible for managing their plans directly with the insurance carrier during the duration of their unpaid leave.
 - 1. Colonial Life
 - a. Short Term Disability
 - b. Accident
 - c. Cancer
 - d. Critical
 - e. Whole Life
 - f. Hospital Confinement
 - 2. Nationwide
 - a. Pet Insurance

9. Benefits Ineligible for Continuation While on Unpaid Leave

- a. FSA Dependent Care
 - i. Contributions cease until employee returns to active status.
 - ii. Account remains active and accumulated funds are accessible.
- b. Pension Retirement Plan
 - i. Contributions cease until employee returns to active status.
- c. 457b Retirement Plan – Empower
 - i. Contributions cease until employee returns to active status.

10. Benefits Continued by Chatham County While on Unpaid Leave

- a. Group Employee Life Insurance (Coverage will cease after 12 months)
- b. Group Dependent Life Insurance (Coverage effective until last working day)
- c. Group AD&D (Coverage effective until last working day)
- d. Long Term Disability
- e. EAP (Employee Assistance Program)

11. Retroactive Health Insurance Reinstatements

- a. Retroactive health reinstatements greater than 60 days require approval from the Underwriters at our COBRA third party administrator and are not guaranteed.
 - i. Retroactive reinstatements will only be considered if premium payments are less than 120 days past due.
 - ii. Employees on leave without pay must pay his/her past due premium balance in full for reinstatement consideration.
 - iii. Employees returning to active status may pay his/her past due premiums via Catch Up if the past due balance does not exceed 2 months (60 days).
 - iv. Employees over 4 months (120 days) past due on premium payments will not be eligible for reinstatement under any circumstances.

12. Required Forms

a. Benefits Continuation While on Unpaid Leave Form

- i. Any employee approved for leave (paid and unpaid) is required to complete and submit the *Benefits Continuation While on Unpaid Leave* form within 30 days of leave approval to the Benefits Representative.
 - 1. Form will be included with leave approval letter.
- ii. Elections on form will **only** be used in the event paid leave transitions into unpaid leave greater than 31 days for benefits continuation.
- iii. Failure to complete and submit form within 30 days of leave approval forfeits employee's right to terminate coverage while on unpaid leave.

- iv. In the event a return to work date is not provided, it is the responsibility of the employee to contact the Benefits Representative to determine the best premium payment plan.

b. Benefits Reinstatement Return to Active Status Form

- i. Employees have 30 days from the date of return to active status to complete and submit the *Benefits Reinstatement Return to Active Status* form to the Benefits Representative for reinstatement of any applicable voluntary and involuntary (lack of payment) terminated coverage.
 - 1. Form will only be mailed to employee if they elected to terminate coverage while on a qualified unpaid leave.
- ii. Involuntary terminated coverage is automatically reinstated upon return to active status for employees on an approved FMLA leave.
- iii. Reinstatement of voluntary terminated coverage will be effective the date employee returns to active status.
- iv. Voluntary Group Term Life Insurance policies may require a Statement of Health (SOH) for employee and/or spouse coverage to be reinstated.
- v. Coverage terminated due to lack of payment will require any past due balance to be paid via Catch-Up.

13. Benefits Options While on Leave Without Pay:

Benefit	Leave of Less Than 30 Days	Leave of 31 Days or Greater
Health/Dental/Vision	Catch-Up	Direct Bill
Voluntary Employee Life Insurance (MetLife)	Catch-Up	Direct Bill
Voluntary Dependent Life Insurance (MetLife)	Catch-Up	Direct Bill
MetLife Legal Plans	Catch-Up	Direct Bill
Flex FSA (Ameriflex)	Catch-Up	Direct Bill
Flex Dependent Care	No Contributions	No Contributions
Colonial: <i>Disability</i> <i>Accident</i> <i>Cancer</i> <i>Critical</i> <i>Whole Life</i> <i>Hospital Confinement</i>	Contact Colonial (Invoiced Directly)	Contact Colonial (Invoiced Directly)
Pet Insurance	Contact Nationwide (Invoiced Directly)	Contact Nationwide (Invoiced Directly)
Group Employee Life Insurance	Employer Paid*	Employer Paid*
Group Dependent Life Insurance	Employer Paid**	Employer Paid**
Group AD&D	Employer Paid**	Employer Paid**
Long Term Disability	Employer Paid	Employer Paid
EAP (Employee Assistance Program)	Employer Paid	Employer Paid
Pension	No Contributions	No Contributions
Empower Retirement 457b	No Contributions	No Contributions

*Coverage will cease after 12 months

**Coverage effective until last working day



Chatham County
Human Resources Department
123 Abercorn Street
Savannah, GA 31401

Benefits Continuation While on Unpaid Leave

SECTION 1: PERSONAL INFORMATION

Employee's Full Name: First M.I. Last Employee ID# (required)

Daytime Phone Number Email Address

Last Working Day: Expected Start Date of UNPAID Leave: Expected Return to Work Date:

SECTION 2A: BENEFIT ELECTIONS FOR UNPAID LEAVE 31 DAYS OR GREATER

- Continue Terminate Health Coverage
- Continue Terminate Dental Coverage
- Continue Terminate Vision Coverage
- Continue Terminate Voluntary Group Term Life Insurance (MetLife) - Employee Spouse Child(ren)
(Statement of Health (SOH) may be required for reinstatement if coverage is terminated)
- Continue Terminate MetLife Legal Plans
- Continue Suspend FSA (Flex) - Ameriflex
(By suspending, premiums are paid via Catch-Up upon return to pay status and not paid on Direct Bill)

SECTION 2B: BENEFIT ELECTIONS (MANAGED DIRECTLY THROUGH INSURANCE PROVIDER)

- Voluntary Benefits (Disability/Accident/Cancer/Critical/Whole Life/Hospital Confinement) Contact Colonial Life
- Pet Insurance Contact Nationwide

SECTION 3: MAKING PAYMENTS

UNPAID LEAVE LESS THAN 30 DAYS - NOT ELIGIBLE FOR TERMINATION OF BENEFITS

Employees on unpaid leave less than 30 days (typically 3 payrolls or less) will pay for their missed premiums via **Catch-Up**. Catch-Up allows employees to repay any missed premiums from their first paycheck or series of paychecks upon return to active status.

UNPAID LEAVE 31 DAYS OR GREATER

Employees on unpaid leave 31 days or greater will automatically be enrolled in **Direct Bill**. Anthem (Chatham's 3rd Party Administrator) manages Direct Bill and will invoice the employee monthly for all applicable premiums until employee returns to active status.

Payments are due on the last day of the month. If payments are not received by the last day of the following month ("30 day grace period"), then elected benefits may be terminated for lack of payment. Termination of benefits will be effective on the first date for which payment was due.

In the event a return to work date is not provided, it is the responsibility of the employee to contact the Benefits Representative to determine the best premium payment plan.

SECTION 4: AUTHORIZATION

I have read the Benefits Continuation While on Unpaid Leave document and understand the following:

- Form must be signed and submitted to Benefits Representative within 30 days of leave approval. I am responsible for paying employee premiums for all elected benefits if Benefits Representative does not receive my signed form.
- I understand unpaid leave less than 30 days is not eligible for termination of benefits and will be responsible for any missed premium payments via Catch-Up upon my return to active status.
- I agree to pay my employee premiums on Direct Bill for all elected benefits while on unpaid leave promptly and in full or coverage may be terminated.
- If I elected to terminate benefits during unpaid leave, I must complete and submit the Benefits Reinstatement form to the Benefits Representative within 30 days of returning to active status. I further understand that a Statement of Health (SOH) may be required for some coverage(s).
- All benefits are subject to the terms and conditions set forth in the applicable plan, program, or policy. Click [here](#) to view full policy.

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Submit Electronically

SIGNATURE OF EMPLOYEE

DATE

PLEASE SUBMIT COMPLETED FORM ELECTRONICALLY OR RETURN TO:

Human Resources, Attn: Angie Richardson, 123 Abercorn Street, Savannah, GA 31401 | FAX: (912)652-7958

For additional information, please contact Angie Richardson at (912) 652-7899 or arichardson@chathamcounty.org.



Chatham County
Human Resources Department
123 Abercorn Street
Savannah, GA 31401

Benefits Reinstatement Return to Active Status

SECTION 1: PERSONAL INFORMATION

Employee's Full Name: First M.I. Last Employee ID# (required)

Daytime Phone Number Email Address

Return to Work Date: Expected Date of First Paycheck:

SECTION 2A: BENEFIT PLAN REINSTATEMENT ELECTIONS (ONLY IF TERMINATED DURING LEAVE)

- Reinstatement Do Not Reinstatement Health Insurance
- Reinstatement Do Not Reinstatement Dental Insurance
- Reinstatement Do Not Reinstatement Vision Insurance
- Reinstatement Do Not Reinstatement Voluntary Group Term Life Insurance (MetLife) - Employee Spouse Child(ren)
(Statement of Health (SOH) may be required for reinstatement if coverage is terminated)
- Reinstatement Do Not Reinstatement MetLife Legal Plans
- Reinstated Upon Return FSA (Flex) - Ameriflex
(If elected to suspend, missed premiums will be reimbursed to the County via Catch-Up)

SECTION 2B: BENEFIT PLAN REINSTATEMENT (MANAGED DIRECTLY THROUGH INSURANCE PROVIDER)

- Voluntary Benefits (Disability/Accident/Cancer/Critical/Whole Life/Hospital Confinement) Contact Colonial Life
- Pet Insurance Contact Nationwide

SECTION 3: REINSTATEMENT TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Employees have 30 days from the date of return to active status to sign and submit completed form to the Benefits Representative for reinstatement of any voluntarily and involuntarily* (lack of payment) terminated coverage.
- Reinstatements only apply to coverage that was voluntarily and involuntarily terminated during unpaid leave.
- Reinstatement of voluntary terminated coverage will be effective the date employee returns to work.
Return to work date and/or employees paid in arrears may affect first pay date. Any missed premiums during the transition will be paid via Catch-Up.
- Coverage terminated due to lack of payment will require any past due balance to be paid via Catch-Up.
- Any missed FSA (Flex) premiums will be paid via Catch-Up and dispersed over the remaining pay periods for the plan election year.

*Excludes employees on an approved FMLA. Coverage is automatically reinstated and effective the date employee returned to work.

SECTION 4: AUTHORIZATION

I have read the Benefits Reinstatement Return to Active Status document and understand the following:

- Form must be signed and submitted to Benefits Representative within 30 days of return to active status to reinstate terminated benefits. I further understand that a Statement of Health (SOH) may be required for some coverage(s).
- Any premiums not paid in full upon my return to active status will be paid via Catch-Up.
- Coverage terminated due to lack of payment is automatically reinstated upon return to active status for employees on an approved FMLA leave.
- All benefits are subject to the terms and conditions set forth in the applicable plan, program, or policy. Click [here](#) to view full policy.

Submit Electronically

SIGNATURE OF EMPLOYEE

DATE

PLEASE SUBMIT COMPLETED FORM ELECTRONICALLY OR RETURN TO:

Human Resources, Attn: Angie Richardson, 123 Abercorn Street, Savannah, GA 31401 | FAX: (912)652-7958

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