



OGB EXTENDS BENEFITS TO SAME-SEX PARTNERS AND DEPENDENTS

BATON ROUGE – Today, July 10, 2015, the Office of Group Benefits (OGB) announced that all state employees, retired and active, will be allowed to enroll their same-sex spouse and/or eligible dependent(s) into the OGB health plan. This will be done through a limited enrollment period that will begin immediately and will remain open through August 11, 2015, with coverage beginning on August 1, 2015. The limited enrollment will cover same-sex marriages that have taken place prior to June 26, 2015, the date of the U.S. Supreme Court ruling.

The state has already begun providing coverage for newly married same-sex couples. These marriages fall under current IRS guidelines that allow coverage to be added for a newly-acquired spouse and the spouse's eligible dependent(s) within 30 days of their marriage.

OGB is subject to IRS guidelines for the administration of its health care plan including rules pertaining to qualifying events which allow for enrollment. The state has been in ongoing discussions to determine guidance for administering health benefits to same-sex spouses and their dependents who were married prior to June 26, 2015. While there has yet to be an official statement from the IRS on this particular matter, they had issued enrollment guidance in 2013 for similar situations where members of the population became eligible for health benefits. Even though IRS guidance on the recent court ruling has not been issued, their previous guidance in 2013 is acknowledged. Based upon this guidance, OGB finds it appropriate to offer coverage to same-sex couples who were married prior to June 26, 2015, the date of the court ruling.

"Our goal has been to provide coverage to anyone who is legally eligible and to do so in accordance with federal guidelines. Determining the appropriate time to have an enrollment specific to same-sex marriage, while ensuring compliance with IRS rules, has been a top priority," said Susan West, OGB Chief Executive Officer.

Active employees should complete an application form through their human resources department and should provide the required dependent verification documentation based upon the coverage requested (i.e. spouse – copy of the marriage certificate; spouse's dependent child(ren) – copies of marriage certificate and birth certificate). Social Security numbers should be provided on all newly enrolled persons.

Retired employees should submit a letter to OGB requesting coverage to be added and include the required dependent verification documentation. (i.e. spouse – copy of the marriage certificate; spouse's dependent child(ren) – copies of marriage certificate and birth certificate). Social Security numbers should be provided on all newly enrolled persons. The request can be mailed to OGB, P. O. Box 44036, Baton Rouge, LA 70804 or faxed to 225-342-9917.

Please contact OGB Customer Service with any questions at 1-800-272-8451, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday.