

(2) *Benefit package option.* A benefit package option means a qualified benefit under section 125(f) that is offered under a cafeteria plan, or an option for coverage under an underlying accident or health plan (such as an indemnity option, an HMO option, or a PPO option under an accident or health plan).

(3) *Dependent.* A dependent means a dependent as defined in section 152, except that, for purposes of accident or health coverage, any child to whom section 152(e) applies is treated as a dependent of both parents, and, for purposes of dependent care assistance provided through a cafeteria plan, a dependent means a qualifying individual (as defined in section 21(b)(1)) with respect to the employee.

(4) *Disability coverage.* Disability coverage means coverage under an accident or health plan that provides benefits due to personal injury or sickness, but does not reimburse expenses incurred for medical care (as defined in section 213(d)) of the employee or the employee's spouse and dependents. For purposes of this section, disability coverage includes payments described in section 105(c).

(5) *Family member plan.* A family member plan means a cafeteria plan or qualified benefit plan sponsored by the employer of the employee's spouse or the employee's dependent.

(6) *FSA, health FSA.* An FSA means a qualified benefits plan that is a flexible spending arrangement as defined in section 106(c)(2). A health FSA means a health or accident plan that is an FSA.

(7) *Placement for adoption.* Placement for adoption means placement for adoption as defined in regulations under section 9801.

(8) *Qualified benefits plan.* A qualified benefits plan means an employee benefit plan governing the provision of one or more benefits that are qualified benefits under section 125(f). A plan does not fail to be a qualified benefits plan merely because it includes an FSA, assuming that the FSA meets the requirements of section 125 and the regulations thereunder.

(9) *Similar coverage.* Coverage for the same category of benefits for the same individuals (e.g., family to family or single to single). For example, two

plans that provide coverage for major medical are considered to be similar coverage. For purposes of this definition, a health FSA is not similar coverage with respect to an accident or health plan that is not a health FSA. A plan may treat coverage by another employer, such as a spouse's or dependent's employer, as similar coverage.

(j) *Effective date*—(1) *General rule.* Except as provided in paragraph (j)(2) of this section, this section is applicable for cafeteria plan years beginning on or after January 1, 2001.

(2) *Delayed effective date for certain provisions.* The following provisions are applicable for cafeteria plan years beginning on or after January 1, 2002: paragraph (c) of this section to the extent applicable to qualified benefits other than an accident or health plan or a group-term life insurance plan; paragraph (d)(1)(ii)(B) of this section (relating to a spouse, former spouse, or other individual obtaining accident or health coverage for an employee's child in response to a judgment, decree, or order); paragraph (f) of this section (rules for election changes as a result of cost or coverage changes); and paragraph (i)(9) of this section (defining similar coverage).

[T.D. 8878, 65 FR 15550, Mar. 23, 2000, as amended by T.D. 8921, 66 FR 1840, Jan. 10, 2001; T.D. 8921, 66 FR 13013, Mar. 2, 2001; T.D. 8966, 66 FR 52680, Oct. 17, 2001]

#### § 1.125-4T Permitted election changes (temporary).

(a) *Election changes.* A cafeteria plan may permit an employee to revoke an election during a period of coverage and to make a new election only as provided in paragraphs (b) through (i) of this section. See paragraph (j) of this section for special provisions relating to qualified cash or deferred arrangements.

(b) *Special enrollment rights.* A cafeteria plan may permit an employee to revoke an election for accident or health coverage during a period of coverage and make a new election that corresponds with the special enrollment rights provided in section 9801(f), whether or not the change in election is permitted under paragraph (c) of this section.

(c) *Changes in status for accident or health coverage and group-term life.* (1) *In general.* A cafeteria plan may permit an employee to revoke an election for accident or health coverage or group-term life insurance coverage during a period of coverage and make a new election for the remaining portion of the period if, under the facts and circumstances—

(i) A change in status occurs; and  
(ii) The election change satisfies the consistency requirement in paragraph (c)(3) of this section (consistency rule for accident or health coverage) or (c)(4) of this section (consistency rule for group-term life insurance coverage).

(2) *Change in status events.* The following events are changes in status for purposes of this paragraph (c):

(i) *Legal marital status.* Events that change an employee's legal marital status, including marriage, death of spouse, divorce, legal separation, or annulment;

(ii) *Number of dependents.* Events that change an employee's number of dependents (as defined in section 152), including birth, adoption, placement for adoption (as defined in regulations under section 9801), or death of a dependent;

(iii) *Employment status.* A termination or commencement of employment by the employee, spouse, or dependent;

(iv) *Work schedule.* A reduction or increase in hours of employment by the employee, spouse, or dependent, including a switch between part-time and full-time, a strike or lockout, or commencement or return from an unpaid leave of absence;

(v) *Dependent satisfies or ceases to satisfy the requirements for unmarried dependents.* An event that causes an employee's dependent to satisfy or cease to satisfy the requirements for coverage due to attainment of age, student status, or any similar circumstance as provided in the accident or health plan under which the employee receives coverage; and

(vi) *Residence or worksite.* A change in the place of residence or work of the employee, spouse, or dependent.

(3) *Consistency rule for accident or health coverage.* (i) *General rule.* (A) An employee's revocation of a cafeteria

plan election during a period of coverage and new election for the remaining portion of the period (referred to below as an "election change") is consistent with a change in status if, and only if—

(1) The change in status results in the employee, spouse, or dependent gaining or losing eligibility for accident or health coverage under either the cafeteria plan or an accident or health plan of the spouse's or dependent's employer; and

(2) The election change corresponds with that gain or loss of coverage.

(B) A change in status results in an employee, spouse, or dependent gaining (or losing) eligibility for coverage under a plan only if the individual becomes eligible (or ineligible) to participate in the plan. A cafeteria plan may treat an individual as gaining (or losing) eligibility for coverage if the individual becomes eligible (or ineligible) for a particular benefit package option under a plan (e.g., a change in status results in an individual becoming eligible for a managed care option or an indemnity option). If, as a result of a change in status, the individual gains eligibility for elective coverage under a plan of the spouse's or dependent's employer, the consistency rule of this paragraph (c)(3)(i) is satisfied only if the individual elects the coverage under the spouse's or dependent's employer. See the *Examples* in paragraph (k) of this section for illustrations of the consistency rule.

(ii) *Exception for COBRA.* Notwithstanding paragraph (c)(3)(i) of this section, if the employee, spouse, or dependent becomes eligible for continuation coverage under the employer's group health plan as provided in section 4980B or any similar State law, the employee may elect to increase payments under the employer's cafeteria plan in order to pay for the continuation coverage.

(4) *Consistency rule for group-term life insurance coverage.* Except as provided in this paragraph (c)(4), the provisions of paragraph (c)(3)(i) of this section apply to group-term life insurance coverage. In the case of marriage, birth, adoption, or placement for adoption, a cafeteria plan can allow an election change to increase (but not to reduce)

the amount of the employee's life insurance coverage. In the case of divorce, legal separation, annulment, or death of a spouse or dependent, a cafeteria plan may allow an election change to reduce (but not to increase) the amount of the employee's life insurance coverage.

(d) *Judgment, decree, or order.* This paragraph (d) applies to a judgment, decree, or order ("order") resulting from a divorce, legal separation, annulment, or change in legal custody (including a qualified medical child support order defined in section 609 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974) that requires accident or health coverage for an employee's child. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (c) of this section, a cafeteria plan may—

(1) Change the employee's election to provide coverage for the child if the order requires coverage under the employee's plan; or

(2) Permit the employee to make an election change to cancel coverage for the child if the order requires the former spouse to provide coverage.

(e) *Entitlement to Medicare or Medicaid.* If an employee, spouse, or dependent who is enrolled in an accident or health plan of the employer becomes entitled to coverage (i.e., enrolled) under Part A or Part B of Title XVIII of the Social Security Act (Medicare) or Title XIX of the Social Security Act (Medicaid), other than coverage consisting solely of benefits under section 1928 of the Social Security Act (the program for distribution of pediatric vaccines), a cafeteria plan may permit the employee to make an election change to cancel coverage of that employee, spouse or dependent under the accident or health plan.

(f) *Changes in status for other qualified benefits.* [Reserved]

(g) *Significant coverage or cost changes.* [Reserved]

(1) *Employer's plan.* [Reserved]

(2) *Plan of spouse's or dependent's employer.* [Reserved]

(h) *Cessation of required contributions.* [Reserved]

(i) *Special requirements concerning the Family and Medical Leave Act.* [Reserved]

(j) *Elective contributions under a qualified cash or deferred arrangement.* The provisions of this section do not apply with respect to elective contributions under a qualified cash or deferred arrangement (within the meaning of section 401(k)) or employee contributions subject to section 401(m). Thus, a cafeteria plan may permit an employee to modify or revoke elections in accordance with sections 401(k) and 401(m) and the regulations thereunder.

(k) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules of this section. In each case involving an accident or health plan, assume that the plan is subject to section 9801(f) (providing for special enrollment rights under certain group health plans).

*Example 1.* (i) Employer M provides health coverage for its employees under which employees may elect either employee-only coverage or family coverage. M also maintains a calendar year cafeteria plan under which qualified benefits, including health coverage, are funded through salary reduction. M's employee, A, elects employee-only health coverage before the beginning of the calendar year. During the year, A adopts a child, C. Within 30 days thereafter, A wants to revoke A's election for employee-only health coverage and obtain family health coverage, as of the date of C's adoption. A satisfies the conditions for special enrollment of an employee with a new dependent under section 9801(f)(2), so that A may enroll in family coverage under M's accident or health plan in order to provide coverage for C, effective as of the date of C's adoption.

(ii) In this *Example 1*, M's cafeteria plan may permit A to change the employee's salary reduction election to family coverage for salary not yet currently available. The increased salary reduction could reflect the cost of family coverage from the date of adoption. (The adoption of C is also a change in status, and the election of family coverage is consistent with that change in status. Thus, under the change in status provisions of paragraph (c) of this section, M's cafeteria plan could permit A to elect family coverage prospectively in order to cover C for the remaining portion of the coverage period.)

*Example 2.* (i) The employer plans and permissible coverage are the same as in *Example 1*. Before the beginning of the calendar year, Employee A elects employee-only health coverage under M's cafeteria plan. A marries B during the plan year. B's employer, N, offers health coverage to N's employees, and, prior to the marriage, B had elected employee-only coverage. A wants to revoke the election for employee-only coverage, and is considering electing family health coverage

under M's plan or obtaining family health coverage under N's plan.

(ii) In this *Example 2*, A's marriage to B is a change in status. Two possible election changes by A would be consistent with the change in status: to cover A and B by electing family health coverage under M's plan, or to cancel coverage under M's plan (with B electing family health coverage under N's plan in order to cover A and B). Thus, M's cafeteria plan may permit A to make either change in election. (M's cafeteria plan could also permit A to change A's salary reduction election to reflect the change to family coverage under M's group health plan in accordance with paragraph (b) of this section because the marriage would also create special enrollment rights under section 9801(f), pursuant to which an election of family coverage under M's plan would be required to be effective no later than the first day of the first calendar month beginning after the completed request for enrollment is received by the plan.)

*Example 3.* (i) Employee G, a single parent, elects family health coverage under a calendar year cafeteria plan maintained by Employer O. G and G's 21-year old child, H, are covered under O's health plan. During the year, H graduates from college. Under the terms of the health plan, dependents over the age of 19 must be full-time students to receive coverage. G wants to revoke G's election for family health coverage and obtain employee-only coverage under O's cafeteria plan.

(ii) In this *Example 3*, H's loss of eligibility for coverage under the terms of the health plan is a change in status. A revocation of G's election for family coverage and new election of employee-only coverage is consistent with the change in status. Thus, O's cafeteria plan may permit G to elect employee-only coverage.

*Example 4.* (i) Employee J is married to K and they have one child, S. A calendar year cafeteria plan maintained by Employer P allows employees to elect no health coverage, employee-only coverage, employee-plus-one-dependent coverage, or family coverage. Under the plan, before the beginning of the calendar year, J elects family health coverage for J, K, and S. J and K divorce during the year and, under the terms of P's accident or health plan, K loses eligibility for P's health coverage. S does not lose eligibility for health coverage under P's plan upon the divorce. J now wants to revoke J's election under the cafeteria plan and elect no coverage.

(ii) In this *Example 4*, the divorce is a change in status. A change in the cafeteria plan election to cancel health coverage for K is consistent with that change in status. However, the divorce does not affect J's or S's eligibility for health coverage. Therefore, an election change to cancel J's or S's health

coverage is not consistent with the change in status. The cafeteria plan, however, may permit J to elect employee-plus-one-dependent health coverage.

*Example 5.* (i) The facts are the same as *Example 4*, except that, before the beginning of the year, Employee J elected employee-only health coverage (rather than family coverage). Pursuant to J's divorce agreement with K, P's health plan receives a qualified medical child support order (as defined in section 609 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act) during the plan year. The order requires P's health plan to cover S.

(ii) In this *Example 5*, P's cafeteria plan may change J's election from employee-only health coverage to employee-plus-one-dependent coverage in order to cover S.

*Example 6.* (i) Before the beginning of the coverage period, Employee L elects to participate in a cafeteria plan maintained by L's Employer, Q. However, in order to change the election during the coverage period so as to cancel coverage, and by prior understanding with Q, L terminates employment and resumes employment one week later.

(ii) In this *Example 6*, under the facts and circumstances, in which a principal purpose of the termination of employment was to alter the election and reinstatement of employment was understood at the time of termination, L does not have a change in status. However, L's termination of employment would constitute a change in status, permitting a cancellation of coverage during the period of unemployment, if L's original cafeteria plan election was reinstated upon resumption of employment (for example, because of a cafeteria plan provision requiring an employee who resumes employment within 30 days, without any other intervening event that would permit a change in election, to return to the election in effect prior to termination of employment).

*Example 7.* (i) Employer R maintains a calendar year cafeteria plan under which full-time employees may elect coverage under one of three benefit package options provided under an accident or health plan: an indemnity option or either of two HMO options for employees that work in the respective service areas of the two HMOs. Employee T, who works in the service area of HMO #1, elects the HMO #1 option. During the year, T is transferred to another work location which is outside the HMO #1 service area and inside the HMO #2 service area.

(ii) In this *Example 7*, the transfer is a change in status and, under the consistency rule, the cafeteria plan may permit T to make an election change to either the indemnity option or HMO #2, or to cancel accident or health coverage.

*Example 8.* (i) A calendar year cafeteria plan maintained by Employer S allows employees to elect coverage under an accident or health plan providing indemnity coverage and under a flexible spending arrangement (FSA). Prior to the beginning of the calendar year, Employee U elects employee-only indemnity coverage, and coverage under the FSA for up to \$600 of reimbursements for the year to be funded by salary reduction contributions of \$600 during the year. U's spouse, V, has employee-only coverage under an accident or health plan maintained by V's employer. During the year, V terminates employment and loses coverage under that plan. U now wants to elect family coverage under S's accident or health plan and increase U's FSA election.

(ii) In this *Example 8*, V's termination of employment is a change in status. The cafeteria plan may permit U to elect family coverage under S's accident or health plan, and to increase U's FSA coverage.

*Example 9.* (i) Employer T provides group-term life insurance coverage as described under section 79. Under T's plan, an employee may elect life insurance coverage in an amount up to the lesser of his or her salary or \$50,000. T also maintains a calendar year cafeteria plan under which qualified benefits, including the group-term life insurance coverage, are funded through salary reduction. Before the beginning of the calendar year, Employee W elects \$10,000 of life insurance coverage, with W's spouse, X, as the beneficiary. During the year, a child is placed for adoption with W and X. W wants to increase W's election for life insurance coverage to \$50,000 (without changing the designation of X as the beneficiary).

(ii) In this *Example 9*, the placement of a child for adoption with W is a change in status. The increase in coverage is consistent with the change in status. Thus, W's cafeteria plan may permit W to increase W's life insurance coverage.

(1) *Effective date.* This section is applicable for plan years beginning after December 31, 1998, and on or before November 6, 2000.

[T.D. 8738, 62 FR 60166, Nov. 7, 1997; 63 FR 8528, Feb. 19, 1998; T.D. 8878, 65 FR 15553, Mar. 23, 2000]

**§ 1.127-1 Amounts received under a qualified educational assistance program.**

(a) *Exclusion from gross income.* The gross income of an employee does not include—

(1) Amounts paid to, or on behalf of the employee under a qualified educational assistance program described in § 1.127-2, or

(2) The value of education provided to the employee under such a program.

(b) *Disallowance of excluded amounts as credit or deduction.* Any amount excluded from the gross income of an employee under paragraph (a) of this section shall not be allowed as a credit or deduction to such employee under any other provision of this part.

(c) *Amounts received under a non-qualified program.* Any amount received under an educational assistance program that is not a "qualified program" described in § 1.127-2 will not be excluded from gross income under paragraph (a) of this section. All or part of the amounts received under such a nonqualified program may, however, be excluded under section 117 or deducted under section 162 or section 212 (as the case may be), if the requirements of such section are satisfied.

(d) *Definitions.* For rules relating to the meaning of the terms "employee" and "employer", see paragraph (h) of § 1.127-2.

(e) *Effective date.* This section is effective for taxable years of the employee beginning after December 31, 1978, and before January 1, 1984.

[T.D. 7898, 48 FR 31017, July 6, 1983]

**§ 1.127-2 Qualified educational assistance program.**

(a) *In general.* A qualified educational assistance program is a plan established and maintained by an employer under which the employer provides educational assistance to employees. To be a qualified program, the requirements described in paragraphs (b) through (g) of this section must be satisfied. It is not required that a program be funded or that the employer apply to the Internal Revenue Service for a determination that the plan is a qualified program. However, under § 601.201 (relating to rulings and determination letters), an employer may request that the Service determine whether a plan is a qualified program.

(b) *Separate written plan.* The program must be a separate written plan of the employer. This requirement means that the terms of the program must be set forth in a separate document or documents providing only educational