

a nontaxable basis with employer contributions. Also, note that section 125(d)(2) provides that a cafeteria plan may not offer a benefit that defers the receipt of compensation (other than the opportunity to make elective contributions under a qualified cash or deferred arrangement) and may not operate in a manner that enables participants to defer the receipt of compensation.

[T.D. 8073, 51 FR 4318, Feb. 4, 1986]

**§ 1.125-4 Permitted election changes.**

(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 (g) of this section. Section 125 does not require a cafeteria plan to permit any of these changes. See paragraph (h) of this section for special provisions relating to qualified cash or deferred arrangements, and paragraph (i) of this section for special definitions used in this section.

(b) *Special enrollment rights—(1) In general.* A cafeteria plan may permit an employee to revoke an election for coverage under a group health plan during a period of coverage and make a new election that corresponds with the special enrollment rights provided in section 9801(f).

(2) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the application of this paragraph (b):

*Example 1.* (i) Employer *M* provides health coverage for its employees pursuant to a plan that is subject to section 9801(f). Under the plan, 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*, is married to *B* and they have a child, *C*. In accordance with *M*'s cafeteria plan, Employee *A* elects employee-only health coverage before the beginning of the calendar year. During the year, *A* and *B* adopt a child, *D*. Within 30 days thereafter, *A* wants to revoke *A*'s election for employee-only health coverage and obtain family health coverage for *A*'s spouse, *C*, and *D* as of the date of *D*'s adoption. Employee *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 ac-

cident or health plan in order to provide coverage effective as of the date of *D*'s adoption.

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

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

(ii) *M*'s cafeteria plan may permit *E* to change *E*'s salary reduction election to reflect the change to family coverage under *M*'s group health plan because the marriage would result in special enrollment rights under section 9801(f), pursuant to which an election of family coverage under *M*'s group health 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. (*E*'s marriage to *F* is also a change in status under paragraph (c) of this section, as illustrated in *Example 1* of paragraph (c)(4) of this section.)

(c) *Changes in status—(1) In general—(i) Change in status rule.* A cafeteria plan may permit an employee to revoke an election during a period of coverage with respect to a qualified benefits plan to which this paragraph (c) applies and make a new election for the remaining portion of the period (referred to in this section as an election change) if, under the facts and circumstances—

(A) A change in status described in paragraph (c)(2) of this section occurs; and

(B) The election change satisfies the consistency rule of paragraph (c)(3) of this section.

(ii) *Application to accident or health plans and group-term life insurance*

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*plans.* This paragraph (c) applies to plans providing accident or health coverage and plans providing group-term life insurance coverage.

(iii) *Application to other qualified benefits.* [Reserved]

(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 the following: marriage; death of spouse; divorce; legal separation; and annulment.

(ii) *Number of dependents.* Events that change an employee's number of dependents, including the following: birth; death; adoption; and placement for adoption.

(iii) *Employment status.* Any of the following events that change the employment status of the employee, the employee's spouse, or the employee's dependent: a termination or commencement of employment; a strike or lockout; a commencement of or return from an unpaid leave of absence; and a change in worksite. In addition, if the eligibility conditions of the cafeteria plan or other employee benefit plan of the employer of the employee, spouse, or dependent depend on the employment status of that individual and there is a change in that individual's employment status with the consequence that the individual becomes (or ceases to be) eligible under the plan, then that change constitutes a change in employment under this paragraph (c) (e.g., if a plan only applies to salaried employees and an employee switches from salaried to hourly-paid with the consequence that the employee ceases to be eligible for the plan, then that change constitutes a change in employment status under this paragraph (c)(2)(iii)).

(iv) *Dependent satisfies or ceases to satisfy eligibility requirements.* Events that cause an employee's dependent to satisfy or cease to satisfy eligibility requirements for coverage on account of attainment of age, student status, or any similar circumstance.

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

(3) *Consistency rule—(i) Application to accident or health coverage and group-*

*term life insurance.* An election change satisfies the requirements of this paragraph (c)(3) with respect to accident or health coverage or group-term life insurance only if the election change is on account of and corresponds with a change in status that affects eligibility for coverage under an employer's plan.

(ii) *Application to other qualified benefits.* [Reserved]

(iii) *Application of consistency rule.* If the change in status is the employee's divorce, annulment or legal separation from a spouse, the death of a spouse or dependent, or a dependent ceasing to satisfy the eligibility requirements for coverage, an employee's election under the cafeteria plan to cancel accident or health insurance coverage for any individual other than the spouse involved in the divorce, annulment or legal separation, the deceased spouse or dependent, or the dependent that ceased to satisfy the eligibility requirements for coverage, respectively, fails to correspond with that change in status. Thus, if a dependent dies or ceases to satisfy the eligibility requirements for coverage, the employee's election to cancel accident or health coverage for any other dependent, for the employee, or for the employee's spouse fails to correspond with that change in status. In addition, if an employee, spouse, or dependent gains eligibility for coverage under a family member plan (as defined in paragraph (i)(5) of this section) as a result of a change in marital status under paragraph (c)(2)(i) of this section or a change in employment status under paragraph (c)(2)(iii) of this section, an employee's election under the cafeteria plan to cease or decrease coverage for that individual under the cafeteria plan corresponds with that change in status only if coverage for that individual becomes applicable or is increased under the family member plan. However, if the change in status is a change in the employee's marital status under paragraph (c)(2)(i) of this section or a change in the employment status of the employee's spouse or dependents under paragraph (c)(2)(iii) of this section, an election to increase, or an election to decrease, group-term life insurance or disability income coverage corresponds with that change in status.

(iv) *Exception for COBRA.* If the employee, spouse, or dependent becomes eligible for continuation coverage under the group health plan of the employee's employer as provided in section 4980B or any similar state law, a cafeteria plan may permit the employee to elect to increase payments under the employer's cafeteria plan in order to pay for the continuation coverage.

(4) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the application of this paragraph (c):

*Example 1.* (i) Employer *M* provides health coverage (including a health FSA) for its employees through its cafeteria plan. Before the beginning of the calendar year, Employee *A* elects employee-only health coverage under *M*'s cafeteria plan and elects salary reduction contributions to fund coverage under the health FSA. Employee *A* marries *B* during the year. Employee *B*'s employer, *N*, offers health coverage to *N*'s employees (but not including any health FSA), and, prior to the marriage, *B* had elected employee-only coverage. Employee *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) Employee *A*'s marriage to *B* is a change in status under paragraph (c)(2)(i) of this section, pursuant to which *B* has become eligible for coverage under *M*'s health plan under paragraph (c)(3)(i) of this section. Two possible election changes by *A* correspond with the change in status: Employee *A* may elect family health coverage under *M*'s plan to cover *A* and *B*; or *A* may cancel coverage under *M*'s plan, if *B* elects family health coverage under *N*'s plan to cover *A* and *B*. Thus, *M*'s cafeteria plan may permit *A* to make either election change.

(iii) Employee *A* may also increase salary reduction contributions to fund coverage for *B* under the health FSA.

*Example 2.* (i) Employee *C*, a single parent, elects family health coverage under a calendar year cafeteria plan maintained by Employer *O*. Employee *C* and *C*'s 21-year old child, *D*, are covered under *O*'s health plan. During the year, *D* graduates from college. Under the terms of the health plan, dependents over the age of 19 must be full-time students to receive coverage. Employee *C* wants to revoke *C*'s election for family health coverage and obtain employee-only coverage under *O*'s cafeteria plan.

(ii) *D*'s loss of eligibility for coverage under the terms of the health plan is a change in status under paragraph (c)(2)(iv) of this section. A revocation of *C*'s election for family coverage and new election for em-

ployee-only coverage corresponds with the change in status. Thus, *O*'s cafeteria plan may permit *C* to elect employee-only coverage.

*Example 3.* (i) Employee *E* is married to *F* and they have one child, *G*. Employee *E* is employed by Employer *P*, and *P* maintains a calendar year cafeteria plan that 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, *E* elects family health coverage for *E*, *F*, and *G*. *E* and *F* divorce during the year and *F* loses eligibility for coverage under *P*'s plan. *G* does not lose eligibility for health coverage under *P*'s plan upon the divorce. *E* now wants to revoke *E*'s election under the cafeteria plan and elect no coverage.

(ii) The divorce is a change in status under paragraph (c)(2)(i). A change in the cafeteria plan election to cancel health coverage for *F* is consistent with that change in status. However, an election change to cancel *E*'s or *G*'s health coverage does not satisfy the consistency rule under paragraph (c)(3)(iii) of this section regarding cancellation of coverage for an employee's other dependents in the event of divorce. Therefore, the cafeteria plan may not permit *E* to elect no coverage. However, an election to change to employee-plus-one-dependent health coverage would correspond with the change in status, and thus the cafeteria plan may permit *E* to elect employee-plus-one-dependent health coverage.

*Example 4.* (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 who work in the respective service areas of the two HMOs. Employee *A*, who works in the service area of HMO #1, elects the HMO #1 option. During the year, *A* is transferred to another work location which is outside the HMO #1 service area and inside the HMO #2 service area.

(ii) The transfer is a change in status under paragraph (c)(2)(iii) of this section (relating to a change in worksite), and, under the consistency rule in paragraph (c)(3) of this section, the cafeteria plan may permit *A* to make an election change to either the indemnity option or HMO #2.

*Example 5.* (i) Employer *S* maintains a calendar year cafeteria plan that allows employees to elect coverage under an accident or health plan providing indemnity coverage and coverage under a health FSA. Prior to the beginning of the calendar year, Employee *B* elects employee-only indemnity coverage, and elects salary reduction contributions of \$600 during the year to fund coverage under the health FSA for up to \$600

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of reimbursements for the year. Employee *B*'s spouse, *C*, has employee-only coverage under an accident or health plan maintained by *C*'s employer. During the year, *C* terminates employment and loses coverage under that plan. *B* now wants to elect family coverage under *S*'s accident or health plan and increase *B*'s FSA election.

(ii) *C*'s termination of employment is a change in status under paragraph (c)(2)(iii) of this section, and the election change satisfies the consistency rule of paragraph (c)(3) of this section. Therefore, the cafeteria plan may permit *B* to elect family coverage under *S*'s accident or health plan and to increase *B*'s FSA coverage.

*Example 6.* (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 \$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. Employee *D* has a spouse and a child. Before the beginning of the year, *D* elects \$10,000 of group-term life insurance coverage. During the year, *D* is divorced.

(ii) The divorce is a change in status under paragraph (c)(2)(i) of this section. Under paragraph (c)(3)(iii) of this section, either an increase or a decrease in coverage is consistent with this change in status. Thus, *T*'s cafeteria plan may permit *D* to increase or to decrease *D*'s group-term life insurance coverage.

*Example 7.* (i) Employee *E* is married to *F* and they have one child, *G*. Employee *E*'s employer, *U*, maintains a cafeteria plan under which employees may elect no coverage, employee-only coverage, or family coverage under a group health plan maintained by *U*, and may make a separate vision coverage election under the plan. Before the beginning of the calendar year, *E* elects family health coverage and no vision coverage under *U*'s cafeteria plan. Employee *F*'s employer, *V*, maintains a cafeteria plan under which employees may elect no coverage, employee-only coverage, or family coverage under a group health plan maintained by *V*, and may make a separate vision coverage election under the plan. Before the beginning of the calendar year, *F* elects no health coverage and employee-only vision coverage under *V*'s plan. During the year, *F* terminates employment with *V* and loses vision coverage under *V*'s plan. Employee *E* now wants to elect family vision coverage under *U*'s group health plan.

(ii) *F*'s termination of employment is a change in status under paragraph (c)(2)(iii) of this section, and the election change satisfies the consistency rule of paragraph (c)(3) of this section. Therefore, *U*'s cafeteria plan may permit *E* to elect family vision coverage

(covering *E* and *G* as well as *F*) under *U*'s group health plan.

*Example 8.* (i) Before the beginning of the year, Employee *H* elects to participate in a cafeteria plan maintained by *H*'s employer, *W*. However, in order to change the election during the year so as to cancel coverage, and by prior understanding with *W*, *H* terminates employment and resumes employment one week later.

(ii) In this *Example 8*, under the facts and circumstances, a principal purpose of the termination of employment was to alter the election, and reinstatement of employment was understood at the time of termination. Accordingly, *H* does not have a change in status under paragraph (c)(2)(iii) of this section.

(iii) However, *H*'s termination of employment would constitute a change in status, permitting a cancellation of coverage during the period of unemployment, if *H*'s original cafeteria plan election for the period of coverage was reinstated upon resumption of employment (for example, if *W*'s cafeteria plan contains a 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).

(iv) If, instead, *H* terminates employment and cancels coverage during a period of unemployment, and then returns to work more than 30 days following termination of employment, the cafeteria plan may permit *H* the option of returning to the election in effect prior to termination of employment or making a new election under the plan. Alternatively, the cafeteria plan may prohibit *H* from returning to the plan during that plan year.

(d) *Judgment, decree, or order*—(1) *Conforming election change.* 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 as defined in section 609 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-406 (88 Stat. 829))) that requires accident or health coverage for an employee's child or for a foster child who is a dependent of the employee. A cafeteria plan will not fail to satisfy section 125 if it—

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

(ii) Permits the employee to make an election change to cancel coverage for the child if the order requires the

spouse, former spouse, or other individual to provide coverage for the child.

(2) *Example.* The following example illustrates the application of this paragraph (d):

*Example.* (i) Employer *M* maintains a calendar year cafeteria plan that allows employees to elect no health coverage, employee-only coverage, employee-plus-one-dependent coverage, or family coverage. *M*'s employee, *A*, is married to *B* and they have one child, *C*. Before the beginning of the year, *A* elects employee-only health coverage. Employee *A* divorces *B* during the year and, pursuant to *A*'s divorce agreement with *B*, *M*'s health plan receives a qualified medical child support order (as defined in section 609 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974) during the plan year. The order requires *M*'s health plan to cover *C*.

(ii) Under this paragraph (d), *M*'s cafeteria plan may change *A*'s election from employee-only health coverage to employee-plus-one-dependent coverage in order to cover *C*.

(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., becomes enrolled) under Part A or Part B of Title XVIII of the Social Security Act (Medicare) (Public Law 89-97 (79 Stat. 291)) or Title XIX of the Social Security Act (Medicaid) (Public Law 89-97 (79 Stat. 343)), 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 a prospective election change to cancel or reduce coverage of that employee, spouse, or dependent under the accident or health plan. In addition, if an employee, spouse, or dependent who has been entitled to such coverage under Medicare or Medicaid loses eligibility for such coverage, the cafeteria plan may permit the employee to make a prospective election to commence or increase coverage of that employee, spouse, or dependent under the accident or health plan.

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

(g) *Special requirements relating to the Family and Medical Leave Act.* An employee taking leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) (Public

Law 102-530 (88 Stat. 829)) may revoke an existing election of group health plan coverage and make such other election for the remaining portion of the period of coverage as may be provided for under the FMLA.

(h) *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 section 401(k) and (m) and the regulations thereunder.

(i) *Definitions.* Unless otherwise provided, the definitions in paragraphs (i)(1) through (8) of this section apply for purposes of this section.

(1) *Accident or health coverage.* Accident or health coverage means coverage under an accident or health plan as defined in regulations under section 105.

(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.

(4) *Disability income coverage.* Disability income 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, and does not provide for 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

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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).

(j) *Effective date.* This section is applicable for cafeteria plan years beginning on or after January 1, 2001.

[T.D. 8878, 65 FR 15550, Mar. 23, 2000]

### § 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):

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(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