

WE ARE ALL FAMILY

As an employer, The City of Calgary is aware of the importance not only of the skills and experience employees bring to the workplace, but of their families and social connections. Our workforce is made up of people with different family structures from single parents to adoptive parents. The family is a central element of our lives offering companionship, security and support.

Family Structures and Dynamics

What does family look like to you? The family structure and dynamics varies amongst employees at The City of Calgary. Some families may consist of two parents and one or two siblings living under the same roof. For others, the extended family is very important where grandparents, aunts, uncles and even close friends may serve a more important role than the parents. The blended family, or step-families, same-sex families and adoptive parents are also types of families that are common today.

Within a family parents can be single (through divorce, death of spouse, or choice), same-sex, common-law, older (having children later in life), and younger (having children in their teens). Siblings may be close in age, or far apart. Families can also be a mixture of different ethnicities, religions, abilities, gender and sexual orientations. No wonder families are unique.

In 2011, [the number of census families](#) (defined as a married or common-law couple, with or without children, or a lone (single) parent family) in Calgary was 330,625. Within these census families, 73.4% were married couples, 12.5% common-law, and 14.1% lone parent. Over half of the couples had children at home.

Family diversity characterizes our past and present arrangements. Acknowledging diversity enables us to recognize the dynamic nature of families, interacting as they do with the ever-changing social, political, cultural and economic contexts that surround and shape daily life. (Mandell & Duffy (2000).

Statistics Canada noted that more than 340,000 children in Canada are growing up in mixed families and mixed unions, which increased 33.1% from 2001-2006.

Family and the Workplace

With the diversity of families today, The City of Calgary aims to create a supportive workplace for individuals to balance both family and work. Employees can bring different family obligations to the workplace and knowing the kinds of demands on their time due to family obligations can help us better support them. For individuals raising children, flexible work hours that allow them to pick up their children to and from day care and attend school events, can make their work-life balance more effective. Some individuals are caring for elderly parents and may require time for doctor's appointments or visits to the hospital. And others, the 'sandwich generation,' are doing both. The City has a number of policies that acknowledges these various family circumstances and tries to address work-life balance. These include Flexible Workplace arrangements, Parental Leave policies, the Respectful Workplace policy and the Health and Wellness policy.

Tips for Inclusive Behaviours

Employees and leadership:

- The City of Calgary supports a work environment that promotes a healthy work life balance. Employees are encouraged to think about what work-life balance means to them, and take appropriate action as needed.
- If you are encountering challenges in balancing your family obligations, speak with your manager or supervisor to discuss possible options, i.e. flexible work options (telecommuting, compressed work week and/or job share arrangements)
- Don't neglect your work-place family by ensuring that conflict, time pressures and workloads are managed with your manager or supervisor.
- To increase your awareness and understanding of your colleagues, consider using an interesting team building exercise where each person builds his or her family tree. You may be surprised when you see the branches.
- Consider bringing your Grade 9 child to work for The City's "Take Our Kids to Work Day", which occurs annually in early November. This program offers your child an opportunity to learn about the world of work and to gain an appreciation of your role at The City. To join the program, speak to your supervisor about your interest.

Managers or supervisors:

- If you are a manager or supervisor, have a conversation with your employees about their family obligations and look at alternatives or options to create a supportive workplace where possible. Employees with supportive leadership and work environments tend to have a higher morale and a good work-life balance.
- Please refer to the "More information" section below regarding family status as there may be a legal requirement to accommodate in cases involving family status.

More information?

City of Calgary links:

Additional family resources available at the City of Calgary offered through [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#), including an e-library, e-courses and resource locator for childcare, eldercare and parenting

[Flexible care options](#)

External resources:

[Major trends affecting families in the new millennium.](#) (Cliquet, R.)

[An article on Canadian families growing more diverse](#)

Step-parenting and blended family resources

(http://www.helpguide.org/mental/blended_families_stepfamilies.htm)

Alberta Human Rights Commission – Information Sheet- Family status and marital status

<http://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/FamilyMaritalStatus.pdf>

- Family status: is defined in the Alberta Human Rights Act as the status of being related to another person by blood, marriage or adoption.

- Employers' responsibilities: Employers are advised not to use or circulate job application forms or advertisements that state a limitation, specification or preference that discriminates on the basis of family status. An employer is required to make reasonable accommodation in situations where family status may interfere with an employee's ability to perform his or her duties in the workplace. However, if it can be shown that an employee cannot perform his or her duties because of family status, and the requirements of the job to be performed are shown to be bona fide occupational requirements, or if making accommodation would cause the employer undue hardship, the employer may refuse to employ, may re-deploy, or, if all else fails, may consider dismissing that employee.
- For example, an employee may request a change in work shifts because of family responsibilities. The employer should accommodate the request if at all possible. However, there may not be enough employees to meet the extra demand, thus placing additional stress on the other employees. Hiring more staff may not be financially possible. This may cause undue hardship for the employer. In such cases, the onus is on the employee to make other arrangements to take care of their family responsibilities in order to continue working in the same job.

Quote from Mandell, N. & Duffy, A. (Eds.). (2000). *Canadian families, diversity conflict and change* (2nd Ed.). Toronto: Harcourt Brace.