

Sara Butler, City of Charlottesville  
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Sara Butler, Benefits Administrator, City of Charlottesville

Your job title is Benefits Administrator. What, in your own words, would you say you do?

I am responsible for directing and planning the day-to-day operations of the City's group benefit programs, including health, dental, disability, life insurance, employee assistance and FSAs. We are not part of the Virginia Retirement System, therefore a major responsibility of mine is the day-to-day operations of the City's Defined Benefit Pension Plans for general and public safety employees, a Defined Contribution Pension Plan, and a Deferred Compensation Plan.

What is the best part of your job? The most difficult part?

I enjoy the analytical part of the job—analyzing the programs important to the City and to employees, evaluating the usage, effectiveness and competitive trends. There is always an internal process that can be evaluated and revised to increase efficiency within our area of the HR Department. Researching

programs and negotiating contracts with vendors always proves interesting and I learn something new every time. The most difficult, or challenging, part of the job is compliance. Keeping up with all pertinent federal and state regulations affecting employee benefit and pension programs is a challenge. Currently, the regulations and requirements of the ACA are keeping me busy!

How does your job most directly impact the average person?

A benefits package is a very important part of employment and a critical tool for recruitment and retention. We want that part of an employee's job to be satisfactory and to run smoothly. If an employee or family member has a question or problem, we work to resolve it quickly so the employee can focus on their job. We see life happen every day when an employee needs help with things such as navigating insurance for a medical emergency or guidance in a disability situation. The decision to retire is a big one and I consult with employees at that stage of their career every week.

What is the most interesting project or work experience that you've had while with the City?

I consider myself lucky to have been part of many interesting projects over my 13 years with the City. When a project or initiative comes up, it almost always requires teamwork. Most recently, a team of employees from HR, finance, city attorney, treasurer and IT, under the guidance of the City Retirement Commission, worked together in some fashion to create and implement an additional retirement plan option for new employees. It truly took a team of people with varying skills and expertise to make that project a success.

What is a little-known fact about you?

I enjoy writing. In 2011, I published a children's book and the starring characters were my two sons, now ages 8 and 10. The story is set in my home state of Maine and was written in dedication to my late father. I hope to write again but finding the time is difficult!