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Policom, January 2020
Unemployment Rate in Gallatin County, MT

Shaded areas indicate U.S. recessions

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

fred.stlouisfed.org

1.6%
Bozeman Health ups wages for 1,100 workers

Sets new minimum wage at $15 an hour

BY KATHERYN HOUGHTON
Chronicle Staff Writer

Come January, Bozeman Health will have a $15 minimum wage, which health system officials said will lead to boosting the pay of roughly 1,100 employees.

Edie Willey, with Bozeman Health human resources, said the decision is part of an effort to retain workers and stems from employees saying the health system’s pay “is just not cutting it.”

She said the system’s base starting wage is $11.50.

“Over the last couple of years, we’ve heard repeatedly that our employees are having a hard time making ends meet in Bozeman and the cost of living keeps going up,” Willey said.

The increase, which will go in place Jan. 1, applies across Bozeman Health sites that include workers in Belgrade, Bozeman and Big Sky.

Bozeman Health has nearly 2,400 employees. Roughly 300 of those workers make less than $15 an hour.

Once the minimum wage kicks in, Willey said an additional 800 employees making between $15 and $20 an hour will also see an increase.

She said the change in pay will hopefully help the system hold onto workers in hard-to-keep positions within areas like food and cleaning services.

“We recognize the high cost of living is keeping many of our employees from being able to stay here in Bozeman,” Willey said. “I think any employee making less than $15 an hour, their loyalty is to making sure ends meet each month.”

Billings Clinic — which is planning an expansion in Bozeman — did not supply its base pay to the Chronicle Friday.

“Billings Clinic is committed to continuing to provide competitive pay rates and benefit packages in the areas where we have a presence, and we regularly evaluate and update those rates,” the health system said in an emailed statement.

Bozeman Health isn’t the only major employer in town to recently decide it’s time to set a minimum wage. The city of Bozeman adopted a plan last year to create an employee minimum wage. This year, that minimum hit $14 an hour.

Bozeman Health also announced this week it’s partnering with MyVillage, a business that helps establish in-home childcare programs. Willey said the deal will create daycare options for hospital employees for an average of $800 a month.
Gallatin County Stats

- 2012 to 2017, MTs fastest growing labor force 4.1%, or 2,370 people per year

- 7.1% work from home *(US Census est.)*

  *Many are moving to Montana with a job based elsewhere.*

- The average rent of available units are affordable to households earning $62,800 – Rental vacancy rates are running at 1%. (median household $59,397, 2017)

- Average childcare costs for two children range from 20-25% of total median family income in the Bozeman area. Childcare facilities only have the capacity to care for 33% of children under five.

US Census (American Survey)
Bozeman Area Labor Report, 2019
Bozeman Housing Assessment, 2019
WHATEVER
Just wash your hands.
tough and tender
Gallatin County to offer paid parental leave

By PERRIN STEIN
Chronicle Staff Writer

The Gallatin County Commission unanimously approved a paid parental leave policy on Tuesday to improve recruitment and retention of its 515 full- and part-time employees.

The new policy offers six weeks of paid parental leave for new parents. The policy applies to employees who have worked for the county for at least six months and gave birth or adopted a child on or after Jan. 1.

"I hope that our being able to implement this and have success with it will encourage other employers to adopt similar policies. One of the most exciting things for me is that we can be a leader in our community and show it's important to think about how we treat our employees," said commissioner Scott McFarlane. "One of the most exciting things for me is that we can be a leader in our community and show it's important to think about how we treat our employees."

Scott McFarlane, commissioner

"The option to take the leave expires six months after the birth or adoption of a child. If an employee leaves within three months of taking the paid parental leave, they must reimburse the county for the health benefits paid during their leave."

"I hope that our being able to implement this and have success with it will encourage other employers to adopt similar policies," said commissioner Scott McFarlane. "One of the most exciting things for me is that we can be a leader in our community and show it's important to think about how we treat our employees."

"We're in a really challenging environment for recruiting employees right now," he said. "We need to do everything we reasonably can to bring in and retain those employees."

Tori Galusha, a water quality tech specialist for the Gallatin Local Water Quality District and a committee member, said in a news release that the group created the paid parental leave policy to give parents time for family bonding and to help employees strike a work-life balance.

"We're in a really challenging environment for recruiting employees right now," she said. "We need to do everything we reasonably can to bring in and retain those employees."

Tori Galusha, water quality tech specialist for the Gallatin Local Water Quality District
Business Development Grants

• **Existing:** MT Department of Labor
  Target: less than 50 employees
  **Search:** MT incumbent worker training
  $2,000/. Once a year.

• **New:** MT Department of Commerce
  Target: New employees
  **Search:** MT worker training
  $2,500/$5,000. Primary Sector Business
Strategic Initiatives 2020-2015

- New Business Development Center
- Workforce & Business Retention
- Rural Community Development
- Community Impact Fund