

**WAC 415-110-610 What are my retirement benefit options?** Upon retirement for service under RCW 41.35.420 or 41.35.680, or for disability under RCW 41.35.440 or 41.35.690, you must choose to have the defined benefit portion of your retirement allowance paid to you by one of the options described in this section.

(1) **Which option will pay my beneficiary a monthly allowance after my death?** Options described in subsection (2)(b) through (d) of this section include a survivor feature. The person you name at the time of retirement to receive a monthly allowance after your death is referred to as your "survivor beneficiary." Upon your death your survivor beneficiary will be entitled to receive a monthly allowance for the duration of his or her life. Your monthly retirement allowance will be actuarially reduced to offset the cost of the survivor feature. See WAC 415-02-380 for more information on how your monthly allowance is affected by choosing a survivor feature.

(2) **What are my benefit options?**

(a) **Option one: Standard allowance (no survivor feature).** The department will pay you a monthly retirement allowance throughout your lifetime. Your monthly retirement allowance will cease upon your death.

(b) **Option two: Joint and whole allowance.** The department will pay you a reduced monthly retirement allowance throughout your lifetime. After your death, the department will pay your survivor beneficiary a monthly allowance equal to the gross monthly retirement allowance you were receiving.

(c) **Option three: Joint and one-half allowance.** The department will pay you a reduced monthly retirement allowance throughout your lifetime. After your death, the department will pay your survivor beneficiary a monthly allowance equal to one-half of the gross monthly retirement allowance you were receiving.

(d) **Option four: Joint and two-thirds allowance.** The department will pay you a reduced monthly retirement allowance throughout your lifetime. After your death, the department will pay your survivor beneficiary a monthly allowance equal to two-thirds (66.667%) of the gross monthly retirement allowance you were receiving.

(3) **Do I need my spouse's consent on the option I choose?** If you are married, you must provide your spouse's notarized signature indicating consent to the retirement option you select. If you do not provide spousal consent, the department will pay you a monthly retirement allowance based on option three (joint and one-half allowance) and record your spouse as the survivor beneficiary as required by RCW 41.35.220. If your survivor beneficiary has been designated by a dissolution order according to subsection (4) of this section, which was filed with the department at least thirty days before your retirement date, spousal consent is not required.

(4) **Can a dissolution order require that a former spouse be designated as a survivor beneficiary?** Yes. A dissolution order may require that a former spouse be designated as a survivor beneficiary. The department is required to pay survivor benefits to a former spouse pursuant to a dissolution order that complies with RCW 41.50.790.

(5) **What happens if I choose a benefit option with a survivor feature and my survivor beneficiary dies before I do?** Your monthly retirement allowance will increase, provided you submit proof of your survivor beneficiary's death to the department. The increase will begin accruing the first day of the month following the death. Your increased monthly allowance will be:

- (a) The amount you would have received had you chosen the standard allowance option at the time of retirement; plus
- (b) Any cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) you received prior to your survivor beneficiary's death, based on your original option selection.

**Example:**

Agnes retires from SERS Plan 2 in 2006. Agnes chooses a benefit option with a survivor feature and names Beatrice, her daughter, as her survivor beneficiary. As a result, Agnes's monthly allowance is reduced from \$2,000 (standard allowance) to \$1,750. Beatrice dies in 2011. Agnes's monthly allowance will increase to \$2,191.05, which equals the amount she would have received had she chosen the standard allowance option, plus the COLAs she has received (based on her prior monthly allowance).

Year	Standard Allowance	Survivor Option plus COLAs	COLA incr. (3% max)	\$ Increase
2006	2,000.00	1,750.00		0.00
2007		1,750.00	.02	35.00
2008		1,785.00	.03	53.55
2009		1,838.55	.025	45.96
2010		1,884.51	.03	56.54
2011	2,000.00	1,941.05	—	—
			Total COLAs	191.05
Original Option One Monthly Allowance		+ Total COLAs	= New Monthly Allowance	
\$2000		+ \$191.05	= \$2,191.05*	

\* In the future, Agnes's COLAs will be based on her increased monthly allowance.

(6) **May I change my benefit option after retirement?** Your choice of a benefit option is irrevocable with the following three exceptions:

(a) **Return to membership.** If you retire and then return to membership for at least two years of uninterrupted service, you may choose a different retirement option upon your subsequent retirement. See RCW 41.35.060.

(b) **Postretirement marriage option.** If you select the standard allowance option at the time of retirement and marry after retirement, you may select a benefit option with a survivor feature and name your current spouse as survivor beneficiary, provided that:

(i) Your benefit is not subject to a property division obligation pursuant to a dissolution order. See WAC 415-01-500;

(ii) The selection is made during a one-year window, on or after the date of the first anniversary and before the second anniversary of your postretirement marriage;

(iii) You provide a copy of your certified marriage certificate to the department; and

(iv) You provide proof of your current spouse's birth date.

(c) **Removal of a nonspouse survivor option.** If you select a benefit option with a survivor feature and name a nonspouse as survivor beneficiary at the time of retirement, you may remove that survivor beneficiary designation and have your benefit adjusted to a standard allowance. You may exercise this option one time only.

(7) **Who will receive the balance of my accumulated contributions, if any, after my death?**

(a) **Plan 2 members:**

(i) If you do not have a survivor beneficiary at the time of your death, and you die before the total of the retirement allowance paid equals the amount of your accumulated contributions at the time of retirement, the balance will be paid:

(A) To the person or entity (i.e., trust, organization, or estate) you have nominated by written designation, executed and filed with the department.

(B) If you have not designated a beneficiary, or if your designated beneficiary is no longer living or in existence, then to your surviving spouse.

(C) If not paid according to (a)(i)(A) or (B) of this subsection, then to your estate.

(ii) If you have a survivor beneficiary at the time of your death, and your survivor beneficiary dies before the total of the retirement allowance paid equals the amount of your accumulated contributions at the time of retirement, the balance will be paid:

(A) To the person or entity (i.e., trust, organization, or estate) your survivor beneficiary has nominated by written designation, executed and filed with the department.

(B) If your survivor beneficiary has not designated a beneficiary, or if the designated beneficiary is no longer living or in existence, then to your survivor beneficiary's spouse.

(C) If not paid according to (a)(ii)(A) or (B) of this subsection, then to your survivor beneficiary's estate.

(b) **Plan 3 members:** The defined benefit stops upon your death or upon the death of your survivor beneficiary, if applicable. As a Plan 3 member, you do not contribute to the defined benefit portion of your retirement allowance. The defined contribution portion of your benefit will be distributed according to WAC 415-111-310.

(8) For more information, see RCW 41.35.220.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 41.50.050(5). WSR 13-18-034, § 415-110-610, filed 8/28/13, effective 10/1/13. Statutory Authority: RCW 41.50.050(5), 41.35.220. WSR 05-23-062, § 415-110-610, filed 11/14/05, effective 12/15/05.]