

WSPRS Plan 1 Handbook

Washington State Patrol Retirement System

September 2020

WASHINGTON STATE
Department of Retirement Systems





Washington State Patrol Retirement System (WSPRS) — Plan 1

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Welcome to the Washington State Patrol Retirement System



WSPRS Plan 1 summary

WSPRS Plan 1 is a defined benefit plan.

When you meet plan requirements and retire, you are guaranteed a monthly benefit for the rest of your life.

Your monthly benefit will be based on your earned service credit and compensation while a member of WSPRS Plan 1.

In most cases, this formula will be used to calculate your monthly benefit:

$$2\% \times \text{service credit years} \times \text{Average Final Salary} = \text{monthly benefit}$$

In most cases, **Average Final Salary** (AFS) is the average of your 24 consecutive highest paid service credit months. Your benefit can be no higher than 75% of your AFS.

You and your employer each contribute a percentage of your salary or wages to help fund the plan.

The Pension Funding Council adopts contribution rates and periodically adjusts them to reflect the overall cost of the plan. The Legislature has the final decision on contribution rates.

You are vested in the plan when you have five years of service credit.

Once you are **vested**, you have earned the right to a future monthly benefit. If you leave your job and withdraw your contributions, however, you give up your right to a benefit.

As an active member, you are eligible to retire with a full benefit at:

- Any age with at least 25 service credit years
- Age 55 or older with at least five service credit years

If you are an inactive member, you can retire with a full benefit beginning at age 60.

If the unexpected happens — disability or death before retirement — a benefit might be available.

If you become totally incapacitated and leave your job as a result, you might be eligible for a Washington State Patrol disability benefit.

If you die before you retire, your spouse, registered **domestic partner** or minor child, if applicable, could be eligible to receive a benefit based on your years of service credit.

Log in to or sign up for online access to your retirement account.

Track your contributions and service credit. Read the latest newsletter. Update your **beneficiary** information or email address. Use your individual data to estimate your monthly benefit. And when you're ready, apply for retirement. You can get started at drs.wa.gov/oa.

How to contact the Department of Retirement Systems

The Washington State Department of Retirement Systems (DRS) administers the Washington State Patrol Retirement System (WSPRS) and the Deferred Compensation Program (DCP).

To contact DRS

<p>Call </p> <p>360.664.7000 800.547.6657 TTY 711</p>	<p>Write </p> <p>Department of Retirement Systems PO Box 48380 Olympia, WA 98504</p>	<p>Email </p> <p>General inquiries: drs.contact@drs.wa.gov</p> <p>Send a secure message through your online account: drs.wa.gov/oa</p>
<p>Visit </p> <p>6835 Capitol Blvd. SE Tumwater, WA 98501</p> <p>See the DRS website for directions.</p>	<p>Hours </p> <p>Monday - Friday 8 am to 5 pm Pacific Time</p>	<p>Website </p> <p>drs.wa.gov</p> <p>You can also send email through the Contact Us page on the DRS website.</p>

To contact DCP

<p>Call </p> <p>888.327.5596 TTY 711 Fax 844.449.2551</p>	<p>Contact the DRS record keeper, Voya Financial for assistance with your investment account. You can also log into your investment account and chat live with an associate.</p> <p>Visit drs.wa.gov/rk for more information.</p>
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Privacy of your information

We are committed to protecting the privacy of your personal account information, including your Social Security number, which we use to track your account and submit required reports to the IRS. We will not disclose your information to anyone unless we are required to do so by law. If you have insurance coverage through the [Washington State Health Care Authority](#) (PEBB or SEBB for example), we could share your information with HCA to better serve you.

Handbook summary

This handbook is not a complete description of your retirement benefit. State retirement laws govern your benefit. If any conflicts exist between the information shown in this handbook and what is contained in current law, the law governs.

Glossary

Terms highlighted in **bold** print appear in the glossary of terms on page 15.

How your plan works

Overview

WSPRS Plan 1 is a 401(a) **defined benefit** plan. When you retire, you will receive a monthly benefit for the rest of your life that is based on your earned service credit and your **Average Final Salary** (AFS). Even though the contributions your employer makes help to fund the plan overall, they don't factor into the monthly defined benefit you will receive.

Membership in WSPRS Plan 1

Full-time officers commissioned before Jan. 1, 2003, are eligible for WSPRS Plan 1 membership.

Previous membership in another Washington state public service retirement system

Membership in another of Washington's public service retirement **systems** (including the city retirement systems of Seattle, Tacoma or Spokane) can affect your:

- Eligibility for WSPRS Plan 1 membership
- Eligibility to retire
- Benefit calculation

If you have ever been a member in another of Washington's public service plans, it is important that you contact us to confirm your eligibility and discuss your retirement options.

Contributing to the plan

When you retire, the monthly benefit you receive will have been funded over time by your contributions, your employer's contributions and investment earnings. The Pension Funding Council adopts contribution rates and periodically adjusts them to reflect the overall cost of the plan. The Legislature has the final decision on contribution rates.

You are required to contribute a percentage of your salary or wages to your retirement plan. In some circumstances, this includes overtime pay and payments for unused leave. The following table lists whether your employer can report the payment types as salary:

Payments reportable as salary

Payment Type	Reportable?
Overtime related to RCW 47.46.040(4) earned before July 1, 2001, and on or after July 1, 2017	Yes
Overtime related to RCW 47.46.040(4) earned between July 1, 2001, and June 30, 2017	No
Any amount of voluntary overtime earned before July 1, 2001, and up to 70 hours of voluntary overtime on or after July 1, 2017	Yes
Voluntary overtime earned between July 1, 2001, and June 30, 2017	No
Fringe benefits	No
Lump sum payments for deferred sick leave	No
Up to 240 hours of unused annual leave if you were commissioned before July 1, 2001	Yes
Up to 80 hours of holiday pay if you were commissioned before July 1, 2001	Yes
Differential military pay	Yes

If you have questions about the compensation your employer reports for you, please contact your employer.

Your employer's contributions are also based on a percentage of your salary or wages. They are not matching funds, and you cannot withdraw them if you leave public service.

Earning service credit

Service credit is based on the number of hours you work, which your employer reports to DRS. When you retire, your service credit is a part of your monthly benefit calculation.

You receive one service credit month for each calendar month in which you are compensated for 70 or more hours of work. No more than one month of service credit can be earned each calendar month, even if more than one employer is reporting hours you work.

Noninterruptive military service credit

No-cost service credit is available for people who served in the U.S. military before becoming WSPRS members. To receive credit, you must have:

- At least 25 years of WSPRS Plan 1 service credit
- Received an honorable discharge

If you qualify, you can apply for this service credit at any time before retirement. For more information, read [WSPRS Plan 1 Non-Interruptive Military Service Credit](#).

Designating your beneficiary

The **beneficiary** information you give DRS tells us the person(s) you want to receive your remaining benefit, if any, after your death. You can submit or update your beneficiary information at any time before retirement in your [online retirement account](#). Sign up for or log in to your account. Then select **My Account** > **View/Edit** (beside **Beneficiary**). You have the option of submitting a paper [Beneficiary Designation](#) form instead, if you prefer.

If you don't submit this information, any benefits due will be paid to your surviving spouse or minor child. If you don't have a surviving spouse or minor child, we will pay your estate.

Be sure to review your beneficiary designation periodically and update it in your online retirement account if you need to make a change. If you marry, divorce or have another significant change in your life, be sure to update your beneficiary designation because these life events might invalidate your previous choices.

State-registered **domestic partners**, according to RCW 26.60.010, have the same **survivor** and death benefits as married spouses. Contact the [Secretary of State's Office](#) if you have questions about domestic partnerships.

When you will be vested

Once you have at least five years of **service credit** in WSPRS, you have a **vested** right to a retirement benefit.

If you leave WSPRS employment before you're eligible to retire, you can choose to either leave your contributions in the plan, where they will continue to earn interest, or you can withdraw your contributions.

If you decide to withdraw your contributions, you give up your right to a future WSPRS retirement benefit. See "Returning to public service" on page 7 to find out more about re-establishing your benefit rights in certain circumstances.

When you will be eligible to retire

You are eligible to retire with a full benefit at:

- Any age with at least 25 years of service credit
- Age 55 or older with at least five years of service credit

Unless you are the chief of the State Patrol, you must retire no later than the first of the month following the month you turn 65.

How your monthly benefit will be calculated

Your benefit is determined by your **service credit** years and compensation. When you retire, this formula will be used to calculate your benefit:

$$2\% \times \text{service credit years} \times \text{AFS} = \text{monthly benefit}$$

Average Final Salary (AFS) is the average of your 24 consecutive highest paid service credit months (see the "Payments reportable as salary" chart on page 4). Your benefit can be no higher than 75% of your AFS.

Example

Using the formula

If you retire at age 56 with 25 years of service credit and a monthly Average Final Salary of \$7,500, your monthly benefit is \$3,750, calculated as follows:

$$2\% \times 25 \times \$7,500 = \$3,750$$

Planning for retirement

Even though retirement might seem far away, planning for it now is one of the best things you can do for yourself and your family. Your monthly benefit will be an important part of your income in retirement, but it is just a portion of what you will need.

How do you begin developing your personal plan for retirement? First, estimate how much money you will need. That can vary based on factors that include:

- The lifestyle you'll want to lead when you retire
- Your health
- Whether you'll carry any debt into retirement
- Your life expectancy

Next, estimate how much money you will receive from all sources, such as your defined contribution, Social Security, personal savings and other employer pension plans. When you compare this number with what you think you will need, you can adjust your savings plan accordingly.

Many tools can help you with your planning. Here are some on the [DRS website](#):

- [Live webinars](#) are available to attend online. Topics include Plan 1, Plan 2, plan choice, the Deferred Compensation Program (DCP), distributions from Plan 1, investment basics and Social Security basics.
- Retirement seminars are available to watch on the DRS [Retirement Seminars](#) webpage. Topics include Plan 1, Plan 2, Plan 3, DCP, Social Security and health care options, and the Voluntary Employees' Beneficiary Association (VEBA).
- The benefit estimator within your [online account](#) can calculate your monthly benefit based on a variety of scenarios (for example, different **retirement dates**) using your actual account data. If you haven't already registered for this service, it takes just a few minutes to do so.

- The [Deferred Compensation Program](#) (DCP) is a special type of savings program that helps you invest for the retirement lifestyle you want to achieve. Unlike traditional savings accounts, DCP is tax-deferred. That means it lowers your taxable income while you are working and it delays payments of income on your investments until you withdraw your funds. Contributions are automatically deducted from your paycheck, so saving is easy. You can start with as little as \$30 per month. You can also let your contributions grow with percentage deductions.

Be sure to revisit your plan periodically and adjust for any changes in your professional and personal life.

Milestones/life changes

Becoming vested

When you have at least five years of **service credit** in WSPRS Plan 1, you have a **vested** right to a retirement benefit. This is a significant milestone in your public service career.

Leaving public service

If you leave WSPRS employment, you can choose to either leave your contributions in the plan until you're eligible to retire or withdraw them. The IRS requires that you begin taking payment of your monthly benefit no later than age 70½, unless you are still employed.

Leaving WSPRS-covered employment is the only circumstance in which you can withdraw your contributions. Doing so cancels any rights

and benefit you have accrued in WSPRS. You can restore your contributions and re-establish your benefit only in certain circumstances (see the next section).

There are tax implications to withdrawing your contributions, so you might want to contact the IRS or a tax advisor before making a decision. The [Withdrawal of Retirement Contributions](#) publication offers more detailed information.

Be sure to keep us up to date on any changes to your name, address or **beneficiary**. It's important that you keep your beneficiary designation current, because a divorce, marriage or other circumstance might invalidate it.

Returning to public service

If you leave your position, withdraw your contributions and later return to WSPRS work, you might be able to restore your previous **service credit**. To do so, you must repay the total amount of the contributions you withdrew plus interest within five years of returning to work or before you retire, whichever comes first. Contact us to find out that amount.

A **dual member**, or someone who belongs to more than one retirement **system**, might be able to restore service credit earned in a retirement system other than WSPRS. Each time you become a dual member, you'll have 24 months to restore service credit earned in a previous retirement system.

It might still be possible to buy service credit after the deadline has passed. However, the cost in that case can often be much higher. Find out more at [WSPRS Plan 1 and Plan 2: Recovery of Withdrawn or Optional Service Credit](#). You might find helpful information on the [Dual Membership](#) webpage as well.

Marriage or divorce

Marrying, divorcing or separating can affect your monthly benefit.

Court-ordered property division

A court-ordered property division could affect your benefit. As long as the order complies with applicable laws, we will pay a monthly benefit to your ex-spouse according to the division. The DRS publication [How Can a Property Division Affect My Retirement Account?](#) contains detailed information.

Updating your beneficiary

The **beneficiary** information you give DRS tells us the person(s) you want to receive your remaining benefit, if any, after your death. You can submit or update your beneficiary information at any time before retirement in your [online retirement account](#). Sign up for or log in to your account. Then select **My Account** > **View/Edit** (beside **Beneficiary**). You have the option of submitting a paper [Beneficiary Designation](#) form instead, if you prefer.

If you marry or divorce before you retire, you need to update your **beneficiary** information, even if your beneficiary remains the same. It's important that you keep your beneficiary designation up to date.

If the unexpected happens

Temporary leave from your job

You might need to take a temporary leave from your job because of:

- Military service
- A temporary disability

If so, you might be able to obtain **service credit** for work time missed while you were on leave.

Interruptive service credit for military service

If you left your commissioned position for uniformed military service, you might be eligible to receive service credit for that period of military service.

To qualify, you must:

- Leave WSPRS-covered employment to serve in one of the armed forces of the United States
- Receive an honorable discharge
- Return to employment with your DRS-covered employer within 90 days of leaving military service
- Send DRS a copy of your DD214, or Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty
- Send DRS a copy of the certificate you received with your campaign badge or medal (for no-cost military leave credit only)

If you become totally incapacitated as a result of serving in the United States military, you (or your surviving spouse or children, in the case of your death) can apply for military service credit without your return to employment. Read [WSPRS Plan 1: Interruptive Military Service Credit](#) for more information.

Disability before retirement

If you become disabled and receive disability benefits from the Washington State Patrol, you might be eligible to obtain service credit for that period of disability.

To qualify for service credit, you must return to active duty as a commissioned officer with the State Patrol and pay the member contributions plus interest on the salary you would have received if you hadn't been disabled. The payment must be made in full within five years of your return to active duty or before your retirement, whichever comes first.

Contact the State Patrol for disability benefits information and DRS to find out more about receiving disability-related service credit.

Death before retirement

If you are an **active** or **inactive member** when you die, your spouse or registered **domestic partner** will be paid a benefit equal to 50% of your **Average Final Salary** (AFS) at the time of your death.

Death after retirement

If you die after you begin receiving a service retirement, your spouse or registered domestic partner will receive benefits according to the retirement benefit option you chose (see "Your benefit options" on page 12).

Benefits for your spouse or domestic partner

If you chose Option A at retirement, your spouse or registered domestic partner will receive either a monthly benefit equal to your retirement benefit or a benefit equal to 50% of your AFS at the time of your retirement, whichever is less.

If you chose Option B at retirement, your spouse or registered domestic partner will receive a benefit that is reduced using a factor based on the difference between your ages.

Benefits for your children

If your spouse or registered domestic partner is eligible for survivor benefits, regardless of whether you die in service or after retirement, each of your unmarried children younger than 18 is entitled to a monthly benefit equal to 5% of your AFS. The children's benefits will be paid to their custodial parent(s) or guardian(s).

In Option A, the combined benefits to your spouse or partner and your children are limited to 60% of your AFS at the time of your retirement. Option B has no limitation (see "Your benefit options" on page 12).

If you don't have an eligible spouse or partner, your minor children under a guardianship order will receive benefits as follows:

- If you have only one child, he or she will receive a monthly benefit equal to 30% of your AFS.
- If you have multiple minor children, the benefit will increase by 10% of your AFS per child up to a maximum of 60% and will then be divided equally among the children.

Death as a result of an injury or occupational disease sustained during employment

If the [Department of Labor & Industries](#) (L&I) determines that your death was the result

of injuries sustained during the course of employment or an occupational disease or infection that arose from your employment, your beneficiary will be entitled to a one-time, duty-related death benefit.

Your surviving spouse or registered domestic partner and dependent children could also be eligible for health care and education benefits. For more information, contact DRS.

If you die in the line of duty, monthly benefit payments to your unmarried children could continue after each turns 18. To be eligible, a child must be younger than 20 years and 11 months old and be attending an accredited or state-approved school. If the child turns 21 during a school term, his or her benefit will continue until the end of the term.

If your surviving spouse or domestic partner remarries after your death

L&I will stop your spouse's or partner's benefit due to the remarriage. However, as of July 24, 2015, your surviving spouse or partner can request an equivalent benefit payment from DRS. If he or she chose the lump sum survivor option before remarriage, the equivalent benefit payments from DRS will be reduced.

Approaching retirement

Retirement planning checkup

Consider taking time to check in on your retirement planning. Have you analyzed how much you will need and how much you will have in retirement? Has anything in your plan changed? Have you joined the state's [Deferred Compensation Program](#) (DCP) or another supplemental savings program?

Things to consider:

- Identify your retirement lifestyle goals.

Will you want to travel the world or stay close to home? Different lifestyle choices can mean different financial goals.

- Take care of your health. The cost of medical care can be one of the largest expenses you incur in retirement. Getting regular checkups now and maintaining a healthy lifestyle can have an impact on what those costs will be when you retire.
- Pay down debt. Debt lessens the money you have available to save. Paying off debt while you're still generating a paycheck will affect how much you have to save and give you greater flexibility in retirement.
- Sign up for DCP or another similar savings vehicle. (It's never too late to get started.) If you're already saving with DCP or another plan, consider increasing your contribution amount. Making even a small increase can make a big difference over the long run. Use the [calculator](#) on the DCP website to see the impact different contribution amounts could have. Here's an important tip: If you're age 50 or older, the IRS allows a higher contribution limit, which enables you to save even more in your DCP account if you choose.

These questions are key as you approach retirement.

- How much income will you need in retirement?
- What will your monthly benefit be?
- How will your benefit change if you work past age 65 or you decide to retire early?
- Will you want to increase your benefit by purchasing additional **service credit**?
- What other income will you have available to you in retirement?

This section can help you find the answers. If you haven't already signed up for an [online account](#), consider doing so. With this account, you can calculate your benefit using different scenarios and your individual account information.

Estimating your benefit

If you are within five years of retirement, we encourage you to review your [online account](#) and use the online benefit estimator to determine how much your benefit might be. You can use this estimator at any point in your career.

If you expect to retire within the next year, contact us through your [online account](#) or call to request a written estimate of your benefit.

Service retirement

If you are an active member, you are eligible to retire with a full benefit at:

- Any age with at least 25 service credit years
- Age 55 or older with at least five years of service credit

Unless you are the chief of the State Patrol, you must retire no later than the first of the month following the month you turn 65.

If you are an inactive member, you can retire with a full benefit beginning at age 60. You can still retire at age 55, but your benefit will be reduced to reflect that you will be receiving it over a longer period of time.

Benefit reduction <i>For inactive members</i>	
Age at retirement	% of full benefit
55	61.0%
56	67.2%
57	74.0%
58	81.7%
59	90.3%
60+	100%

How your monthly benefit will be calculated

Your benefit is determined by your **service credit** years and compensation. When you retire, this formula will be used to calculate your benefit:

$$2\% \times \text{service credit years} \times \text{AFS} = \text{monthly benefit}$$

Average Final Salary (AFS) is the average of your 24 consecutive highest paid service credit months (see the "Payments reportable as salary" chart on page 4). Your benefit can be no higher than 75% of your AFS.

Example

Service retirement

If you retire at age 55 with 28 years of service credit and a monthly Average Final Salary of \$7,200, your monthly benefit is \$4,032, calculated as follows:

$$2\% \times 28 \times \$7,200 = \$4,032$$

Retiring as a dual member

If you are a member of more than one Washington state retirement **system**, you are a **dual member**. You can combine **service credit** earned in all dual member systems to become eligible for retirement.

In most cases, your monthly benefit will be based on the highest base salary you earned, regardless of which system you earned it in. Base salary includes your wages and overtime (see the "payments reportable as salary" table on page 4) and can include other cash payments if those payments are included as base salary in all the retirement systems you are retiring from.

Example

Dual member

If you retire at age 65 with three years of service credit from WSPRS Plan 1 and four from the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) Plan 1, you are a dual member. Without dual membership, your service would not be eligible for a monthly benefit from either system. With dual membership, your service credit is combined, giving you enough to retire. Your benefit from each is calculated with service from that system. This is how your benefit is calculated:

$2\% \times 3$ (WSPRS service credit years) \times
Average Final Salary (AFS) = WSPRS
benefit

$2\% \times 4$ (PERS service credit years)
 \times Average Final Compensation = PERS
benefit

$PERS \text{ benefit} + WSPRS \text{ benefit} = \text{total}$
monthly benefit

For more information, read the [Dual Membership](#) webpage.

Annuity options

An annuity is a guaranteed income plan you purchase. When retiring, WSPRS Plan 1 members have two [available annuities](#).

WSPRS Plan annuity: With this annuity, the retirement benefit increase you receive is based on the dollar amount you choose to purchase. While there is no maximum amount, a minimum purchase of \$25,000 is required. The funds to purchase this annuity must come from an eligible governmental plan, such as your DCP savings. Estimate the monthly retirement income increase through the "Purchase an Annuity" calculator in your [online account](#).

Service credit annuity: This annuity allows you to add up to 60 months to your service in the final pension calculation. Purchased service credit does not actually increase the number of years you've worked and won't help you qualify for retirement, but it can make a big impact when it comes to your pension benefit! Estimate the monthly retirement income increase as well as the annuity cost through the "Purchasing Service" calculator in your [online account](#).

So how do you fund these annuities? Many members use their DCP savings account. For more information about these annuities, see [DRS annuities](#).

Ready to retire

Applying for retirement online

To apply online, go to your [online account](#) and either sign up for or log in to your account.

The online retirement application will display only what you need based on your retirement **system, plan** and retirement eligibility rules.

Follow the step-by-step instructions and electronically submit the application to us when you're ready.

Applying for retirement on paper

Request a retirement application from us. Submit the completed application with all required signatures and documentation, including proof of age for your **survivor**.

If you're purchasing **service credit**, complete and turn in your *Request to Purchase Retirement Service Credit* form with your application.

Your benefit options

When you apply for retirement, you will choose between two benefit options. Once you retire, you can change your option in only limited, specific circumstances, so choose carefully. If you are married or in a registered domestic partnership, the law requires that your spouse or partner consent to your benefit option choice by cosigning your retirement application.

Option A

This option pays you a monthly benefit for your lifetime. When you die, your spouse or domestic partner will receive either a monthly benefit equal to your retirement benefit or a benefit equal to 50% of your AFS at the time of your retirement, whichever is less.

Option B

You receive a benefit that is lower than the Option A benefit amount. But when you die, your spouse or domestic partner will receive a monthly benefit equal to the monthly benefit you were receiving at the time of your death.

Health insurance coverage

Ask your employer if you will be eligible for health insurance coverage through the [Public Employees Benefits Board \(PEBB\)](#) once you retire. You can also contact the Health Care Authority at 800-200-1004 or www.hca.wa.gov.

If you qualify for continuing coverage, you must meet strict timelines to apply or request a deferral. If you are not entitled to PEBB coverage, you might be eligible for health insurance your employer provides. For more information, contact your employer or HCA.

Federal benefit limit

When you retire, your benefit could be limited if it exceeds the federally allowed amount. It can be adjusted annually for inflation (see the current [IRS limits](#)). Members hired before Jan. 1, 1990, have different limits. When we process your benefit estimate, we will notify you if your benefit exceeds the limit.

Few retirement **system** members should be impacted by this limit. If you think it could impact you, please call us for additional information.

Federal tax on your monthly benefit

Most, if not all, of your benefit will be subject to federal income tax. The only exception will be any portion that was taxed before it was contributed. When you retire, we will let you know if any portion of your contributions has already been taxed.

Since most public employers deduct contributions before taxes, it's likely your entire retirement benefit will be taxable.

At retirement, you must complete and submit a federal [W-4P form](#) to let us know how much of your benefit should be withheld for taxes. If you don't, IRS rules require withholding as if you are married and claiming three exemptions. You can adjust your withholding amount at any time during retirement by completing a new [W-4P form](#).

For each tax year you receive a retirement benefit, we will provide you with a *1099-R form* to use in preparing your tax return (see the [1099-R guide](#)). These forms are usually mailed at the end of January for the previous year. The information is also available through your [online account](#). It is your responsibility to declare the proper amount of taxable income on your tax return.

Legal actions

In general, your monthly benefit isn't subject to assignment or attachment. However, it could be subject to court and administrative orders issued under federal law or for spousal maintenance and child support.

You can find more information in the publication [Can Legal Action Affect My Retirement Account?](#)

When and how your benefit will be paid

After you retire, your retirement benefit will be paid at the end of each month and directly deposited in your financial institution account. You must enter your banking information in your [online retirement account](#) or complete the [Direct Deposit Authorization](#) form as part of your paper retirement application.

If you need to change your financial institution once you've started your retirement, just update your information in your online account or send us a new authorization form.

In rare cases, if you are unable to receive payment by direct deposit, payment will be mailed at the end of each month.

Once you retire

Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA)

On July 1 of every year following your first full year of retirement, your monthly benefit will be adjusted to a maximum of 3% per year, as determined by the [Consumer Price Index](#).

Working after retirement

If you return to public service in Washington state after you retire, your benefit could be affected, depending on the position and number of hours you work.

In certain circumstances, you might be required to become a member of, and pay contributions to, another retirement **system**. You might be able to work limited hours with no impact to your benefit.

If you think you might be returning to work after retirement, call us to see if your benefit will be affected. Consider reviewing [Thinking About Working After Retirement?](#)

Benefit overpayments or underpayments

If you ever receive an overpayment of your monthly benefit, you are required to repay it. If we discover your benefit has been underpaid, we will correct the error and award you a retroactive payment, if applicable.

Changing a benefit option or survivor after you retire

Once you retire, you may change your benefit option or **survivor** in the following circumstances only:

- If you chose Option B and your spouse or partner dies before you do, your monthly benefit will be adjusted to the higher Option A payment level. Be sure to notify us to initiate this adjustment.
- If you chose Option B and you divorce or dissolve your domestic partnership, your monthly benefit will be adjusted to the higher Option A payment level. Be sure to notify us to initiate this adjustment.
- If you retire and then marry or enter into a registered domestic partnership and remain married or in that partnership for at least two years before your death, your spouse or partner will automatically become your survivor. You will continue receiving an Option A benefit. In certain circumstances, you might be able to choose an Option B benefit for your spouse or partner if you make the change between your second and third wedding anniversaries.

Glossary of terms

Average Final Salary (AFS): The monthly average of your 24 consecutive highest paid service credit months. Your Average Final Salary is used in determining your monthly benefit.

Beneficiary: The person(s), estate, organization or trust you have designated to receive any benefit payable upon your death. Your beneficiary must have a federal tax identification number or a Social Security number.

Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA): On July 1 of every year following your first full year of retirement, your monthly benefit will be adjusted to reflect the percentage change in the Consumer Price Index — to a maximum of 3% per year.

Defined benefit: A retirement plan in which your benefit is based on a formula rather than an account balance. The formula provides a monthly benefit based on your years of service and your Average Final Salary.

Domestic partner: In a registered domestic partnership, both individuals have met the state's legal requirements and registered their partnership with the Secretary of State's Office or another jurisdiction. Contact the Secretary of State's Office if you have questions about the requirements. Registered domestic partners have the same survivor and death benefits as married spouses. However, differences could occur in how taxes are handled at the federal level.

Dual member: You are a dual member if you have established membership in more than one Washington state retirement system, including First Class City retirement systems for Seattle, Spokane and Tacoma, but excluding Plan 1 of the Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' Retirement System.

Membership status: The status of your retirement membership. This can be:

- Active, which means you are currently employed in a position covered by one of the state retirement systems
- Inactive, which means you no longer are actively contributing to the state retirement system and have not withdrawn your contributions after leaving employment (which might leave you eligible to receive a benefit once you reach retirement age)
- Withdrawn, which means you were employed in a position covered by one of the state retirement systems and you withdrew your contributions after leaving employment

Reduced benefit: A benefit that has been decreased by a factor provided by the Office of the State Actuary. A benefit is reduced in two situations: when you retire early or you retire and select a Survivor Option (which pays a benefit to your survivor after your death).

Retirement date: The first day after you fully separate from service.

Service credit: The credit you receive each month for working in a position covered by one of the state retirement systems. Service credit is used to determine your eligibility for retirement and your benefit amount.

Survivor: The individual you choose — when picking Option A or B at retirement — to receive benefit payments after your death.

System/plan: The retirement system and plan in which you are a member.

Vested: You have earned the right to receive a retirement benefit once you reach an eligible age.

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