

CHAPTER 14  
DEATH BENEFITS AND BENEFICIARIES

[Prior to 11/24/04, see 581—Ch 21]

**495—14.1(97B) Internal Revenue Code limitations.** The maximum claims period shall not exceed the period required under Internal Revenue Code Section 401(a)(9), which may be less than five years for death benefits payable under benefit options described in Iowa Code section 97B.51 and for members who die after their required beginning date. The claims period for all cases in which the member's death occurs during the same calendar year in which a claim must be filed under this rule shall end April 1 of the year following the year of the member's death. A death benefit payable under Iowa Code sections 97B.52(1) and 97B.52(2) shall not exceed the maximum amount possible under the Internal Revenue Code.

To ensure that the limit is not exceeded, a member's combined lump sum death benefit under Iowa Code sections 97B.52(1) and 97B.52(2) shall not exceed 100 times the Option 2 amount that would have been payable to the member at the member's earliest normal retirement age. If a beneficiary of a special service member is eligible for an in-the-line-of-duty death benefit, any reduction required under this rule shall be taken first from a death benefit payable under Iowa Code section 97B.52(1). The "100 times" limit shall apply to active and inactive members. The death benefits payable under this chapter for a period of reemployment for a retired reemployed member who dies during the period of reemployment shall also be subject to the limits described in this rule.

A member's beneficiary or heir may file a claim for previously forfeited death benefits. Interest, if any, for periods prior to the date of the claim will only be credited through the quarter that the death benefit was required to be forfeited by law. Interest for periods following the quarter of forfeiture will accrue beginning with the quarter that the claim for reinstatement is received by IPERS. For death benefits required to be forfeited in order to satisfy Section 401(a)(9) of the federal Internal Revenue Code, in no event will the forfeiture date precede January 1, 1988. IPERS shall not be liable for any excise taxes imposed by the Internal Revenue Service on reinstated death benefits.

Effective January 14, 2004, all claims for a previously forfeited death benefit shall be processed under the procedure set forth at rule 495—14.13(97B).

**495—14.2(97B) Survival into first month of entitlement.** When a member who has filed an application for retirement benefits and has survived into the first month of entitlement dies prior to the issuance of the first benefit check, IPERS will pay the death benefit allowed under the retirement option elected by the member in the application for retirement benefits.

**495—14.3(97B) Designation of beneficiaries.**

**14.3(1) *Designation of beneficiaries.*** To designate a beneficiary, the member must complete an IPERS designation of beneficiary form, which must be filed with IPERS. The designation of a beneficiary by a retiring member on the application for monthly benefits revokes all prior designation of beneficiary forms. IPERS may consider as valid a designation of beneficiary form filed with the member's employer prior to the death of the member, even if that form was not forwarded to IPERS prior to the member's death. If a retired member is reemployed in covered employment, the most recently filed beneficiary form shall govern the payment of all death benefits for all periods of employment. Notwithstanding the foregoing sentence, a reemployed IPERS Option 4 retired member may name someone other than the member's contingent annuitant as beneficiary, but only for death benefits accrued during the period of reemployment and only if the contingent annuitant has died or has been divorced from the member. If a reemployed IPERS Option 4 retired member dies without filing a new beneficiary form, the death benefits accrued for the period of reemployment shall be paid to the member's contingent annuitant, unless the contingent annuitant has died or been divorced from the member. If the contingent annuitant has been divorced from the member, any portion of the death benefits awarded in a qualified domestic relations order (QDRO) shall be paid to the contingent annuitant as alternate payee, and the remainder of the death benefits shall be paid to the member's estate, or the member's heirs if no estate is probated.

**14.3(2) *Change of beneficiary.*** The beneficiary may be changed by the member by filing a new designation of beneficiary form with IPERS. The latest dated designation of beneficiary form on file shall determine the identity of the beneficiary. Payment of a refund to a terminated member cancels the designation of beneficiary on file with IPERS.

**495—14.4(97B) Applications for death benefits.** Before death benefit payments can be made, application in writing must be submitted to IPERS with a copy of the member's death certificate, together with information establishing the claimant's right to payment. A named beneficiary must complete an IPERS application for death benefits based on the deceased member's account.

**495—14.5(97B) Commuted lump sums.**

**14.5(1) *Designated beneficiary is an estate, trust, church, charity, or similar organization.*** Where the designated beneficiary is an estate, trust, church, charity or similar organization, or is a person, such as a trustee, executor, or administrator who has been appointed to receive funds on behalf of such entities, payment of benefits shall be made in a lump sum only.

**14.5(2) *Multiple beneficiaries.*** Where multiple beneficiaries have been designated by the member, payment, including the payment of the remainder of a series of guaranteed annuity payments, shall be made in a lump sum only. The lump sum payment shall be paid to the multiple beneficiaries in equal shares unless a different proportion is stipulated.

**14.5(3) *Guaranteed payments.*** Where a member has selected Option 5 and dies before receiving all guaranteed payments, and the member's designated beneficiary also dies before all guaranteed payments are made, any remaining guaranteed payments shall be paid in a commuted lump sum.

**495—14.6(97B) Payment of the death benefit when no designation of beneficiary or an invalid designation of beneficiary form is on file.** When no designation of beneficiary or an invalid designation of beneficiary form is on file with IPERS, payment shall be made in one of the following ways.

**14.6(1)** Where the estate is open, payment shall be made to the administrator or executor.

**14.6(2)** Where no estate is probated or the estate is closed prior to the filing with IPERS of an application for death benefits, payment will be made to the surviving spouse. The following documents shall be presented as supporting evidence:

- a. Copy of the will, if any;
- b. Copy of any letters of appointment; and
- c. Copy of the court order closing the estate and discharging the executor or administrator.

**14.6(3)** Where no estate is probated or the estate is closed prior to the filing with IPERS of an application for death benefits and there is no surviving spouse, payment will be made to the heirs-at-law as determined by the intestacy laws of the state of Iowa.

**14.6(4)** Where a trustee has been named as designated beneficiary and is not willing to accept the death benefit or otherwise serve as trustee, IPERS may apply but is not required to apply to the applicable district court for an order to distribute the funds to the clerk of court on behalf of the beneficiaries of the member's trust. Upon the issuance of an order and the giving of such notice as the court prescribes, IPERS may deposit the death benefit with the clerk of court for distribution. IPERS shall be discharged from all liability upon deposit with the clerk of court.

**495—14.7(97B) Waiver of beneficiary rights.** A named beneficiary of a deceased member may waive current and future rights to payments to which the beneficiary would have been entitled. The waiver of the rights shall occur prior to the receipt of a payment from IPERS to the beneficiary. The waiver of rights shall be binding and will be executed on a form provided by IPERS. The waiver of rights may be general, in which case payment shall be divided equally among all remaining designated beneficiaries or, if there are none, to the member's estate. The waiver of rights may also expressly be made in favor of one or more of the member's designated beneficiaries or the member's estate. If the waiver of rights operates in favor of the member's estate and no estate is probated or claim made, or if the executor or administrator expressly waives payment to the estate, payment shall be paid to the member's surviving spouse unless there is no surviving spouse or the surviving spouse has waived the surviving spouse's rights. In that case, payment shall be made to the member's heirs excluding any person who waived the right to payment. Any waiver filed by an executor, administrator, or other fiduciary must be accompanied by a release acceptable to IPERS indemnifying IPERS from all liability to beneficiaries, heirs, or other claimants for any waiver executed by an executor, administrator, or other fiduciary.

**495—14.8(97B) Beneficiaries under the age of 18.** Payment may be made to a conservator if the beneficiary is under the age of 18 and the total dollar amount to be paid by IPERS to a single beneficiary is \$10,000 or more. Payment may be made to a custodian if the total dollar amount to be paid by IPERS to a single beneficiary is less than \$10,000.

**495—14.9(97B) Simultaneous deaths.** IPERS will apply the provisions of the Uniform Simultaneous Death Act, Iowa Code sections 633.523 et seq., in determining the proper beneficiaries of death benefits in applicable cases.

**495—14.10(97B) Felonious deaths.** IPERS will apply the provisions of the Felonious Death Act, Iowa Code sections 633.535 et seq., in determining the proper beneficiaries of death benefits in applicable cases.

**495—14.11(97B) No interest on postretirement death benefits.** Interest is only accrued on a member's death benefit if the member dies before the member's first month of entitlement (FME) or, for a retired reemployed member, before the member's reemployment FME, and is only accrued with respect to the retired or retired reemployed member's accumulated contributions account.

**495—14.12(97B) Preretirement death benefits.**

**14.12(1) Pre-January 1, 1999, deaths.** Where the member dies prior to the first month of entitlement, the death benefit shall include the accumulated contributions of the member plus the product of an amount equal to the highest year of covered wages of the deceased member and the number of years of membership service divided by the "applicable denominator," as provided in Iowa Code section 97B.52(1). The amount payable shall not be less than the amount that would have been payable on the death of the member on June 30, 1984. The calculation of the highest year of covered wages shall use the highest calendar year of covered wages reported to IPERS.

**14.12(2) Post-January 1, 1999, deaths—death benefits under Iowa Code section 97B.52(1).**

*a. Definitions.*

"*Accrued benefit*" means the monthly amount that would have been payable to the deceased member under IPERS Option 2 at the member's earliest normal retirement age, based on the member's covered wages and service credits at the date of death. If a deceased member's wage record consists of a combination of regular and special service credits, the deceased member's earliest normal retirement age shall be determined under the regular or special service benefit formula for which the majority of the deceased member's service credits were reported.

"*Beneficiary(ies)*" shall, unless the context indicates otherwise, refer to both window period beneficiaries and post-window period beneficiaries.

"*Implementation date*" means January 1, 2001.

"*Nearest age*" means a member's or beneficiary's age expressed in whole years, after rounding for partial years of age. Ages shall be rounded down to the nearest whole year if less than six complete months have passed following the month of the member's or beneficiary's last birthday, and shall be rounded up if six complete months or more have passed following the month of the member's or beneficiary's last birthday.

"*Post-window period beneficiary*" means a beneficiary of a member who dies before the member's first month of entitlement and on or after January 1, 2001.

"*Window period beneficiary*" means a beneficiary of a member who dies before the member's first month of entitlement during the period January 1, 1999, through December 31, 2000.

*b.* Any window period beneficiary or post-window period beneficiary may elect to receive the lump sum amount available under Iowa Code section 97B.52(1). Sole beneficiaries may elect, in lieu of the foregoing lump sum amount, to receive a single life annuity that is the actuarial equivalent of such lump sum amount.

A window period beneficiary must repay any prior preretirement death benefit received as follows:

(1) If a window period beneficiary wishes to receive the larger lump sum amount, if any, the system shall pay the difference between the prior death benefit lump sum amount and the new death benefit lump sum amount.

(2) If a sole window period beneficiary wishes to receive a single life annuity under Iowa Code section 97B.52(1), the sole window period beneficiary may either:

1. Annuitize the difference between the previously paid lump sum amount and the new larger lump sum amount, if any; or

2. Annuitize the full amount of the largest of the lump sum amounts available under the revised statute, but must repay the full amount of the previously paid lump sum amount.

(3) To the extent possible, repayment costs shall be recovered from retroactive monthly payments, if any, and the balance shall be offset against current and future monthly payments until the system is repaid in full.

c. A claim for a single life annuity under this subrule must be filed as follows:

(1) A sole window period beneficiary must file a claim for a single life annuity within 12 months of the implementation date.

(2) A sole post-window period beneficiary must file a claim for a single life annuity within 12 months of the member's death.

(3) A beneficiary who is a surviving spouse must file a claim for a single life annuity within the period specified in subparagraph (1) or (2), as applicable, or by the date that the member would have attained the age of 70½, whichever period is longer.

d. Elections to receive the lump sum amount or single life annuity available under Iowa Code section 97B.52(1) and this subrule shall be irrevocable once the first payment is made. Election shall be irrevocable as of the date the first paycheck is issued, or would have been issued but for the fact that the payment is being offset against a prior preretirement death benefit payment.

e. No further benefits will be payable following the death of any beneficiary who qualifies and elects to receive the single life annuity provided under this subrule.

f. The provisions of this subrule shall not apply to members who die before January 1, 1999.

g. Procedures and assumptions to be used in calculating the lump sum present value of a member's accrued benefit are as follows:

(1) IPERS shall calculate a member's retirement benefit at earliest normal retirement age under IPERS Option 2, based on the member's covered wages and service credits at the date of death, and the retirement benefit formula in effect in the month following the date of death.

(2) For purposes of determining the "member date of death annuity factor" under the conversion tables supplied by IPERS' actuary, IPERS shall assume that "age" means the member's nearest age at the member's date of death.

(3) For purposes of determining the "member unreduced retirement annuity factor" under the conversion tables supplied by IPERS' actuary, IPERS shall assume that "age" means the member's nearest age at the member's earliest normal retirement date. If a member had already attained the member's earliest normal retirement date, IPERS shall assume that "age" means the member's nearest age at the date of death.

h. Procedures and assumptions for converting the lump sum present value of a deceased member's preretirement death benefit to a single life annuity are as follows:

(1) For purposes of determining the "age of beneficiary annuity factor" under the conversion tables supplied by IPERS' actuary, IPERS shall assume that "age" means the beneficiary's nearest age as of the beneficiary's first month of entitlement.

(2) A beneficiary's first month of entitlement is the month after the date of the member's death.

(3) Effective for claims filed after June 30, 2004, no retroactive payments of the single life annuity shall be made under this subrule.

(4) Effective for claims filed after June 30, 2004, the beneficiary whose single life annuity is less than \$600 per year shall be able to receive only the lump sum payment under this rule.

i. Eligibility for favorable experience dividend (FED) payments. Any sole beneficiary who is eligible for and elects to receive a single life annuity under this subrule shall also qualify for the dividend payments authorized under rule 495—15.2(97B), subject to the requirements of that rule.

*j.* Retired reemployed members and aged 70 members who retire without terminating employment. Preretirement death benefits for retired reemployed members and aged 70 members who retire without terminating employment shall be calculated as follows:

(1) For beneficiaries of such members who elect IPERS Option 4 or 6 at retirement, IPERS shall recompute (for retired reemployed members) or recalculate/recompute (for aged 70 members who retired without terminating employment) the member's monthly benefits as though the member had elected to terminate employment as of the date of death, to have the member's benefits adjusted for postretirement wages, and then lived into the recomputation or recalculation/recomputation (as applicable) first month of entitlement.

(2) The recomputation provided under subparagraph (1) shall apply only to beneficiaries of members who elected IPERS Option 4 or 6, where the member's monthly benefit would have been increased by the period of reemployment, and is subject to the limitations of Iowa Code sections 97B.48A, 97B.49A, 97B.49B, 97B.49C, 97B.49D, and 97B.49G. The recalculation/recomputations provided under subparagraph (1) shall apply only to beneficiaries of members who elected IPERS Option 4 or 6, where the member's monthly benefit would have been increased by the period of employment after the initial retirement, and is subject to the limitations of Iowa Code sections 97B.49A, 97B.49B, 97B.49C, 97B.49D, and 97B.49G. In all other cases, preretirement death benefits under this subparagraph shall be equal to the lump sum amount equal to the accumulated employee and accumulated employer contributions.

(3) Beneficiaries of members who had elected IPERS Option 4 or 6 may also elect to receive the accumulated employer and accumulated employee contributions described in subparagraph 14.12(2) "j"(2), in lieu of the increased monthly annuity amount. Notwithstanding subparagraph (2) above, if the member elected IPERS Option 5 at retirement, the lump sum amount payable under this paragraph shall be the greater of the applicable commuted lump sum or the accumulated employee and accumulated employer contributions.

*k.* Inactive members with less than 16 quarters of service credit. For deaths occurring after June 30, 2004, preretirement death benefits shall be provided solely under Iowa Code section 97B.52(1) "a," and shall only be payable in lump sum amounts for inactive members who have less than 16 quarters of service credit. For purposes of this paragraph, an inactive member is a member as defined under Iowa Code section 97B.1A(12).

#### **495—14.13(97B) Payment procedures for heirs that cannot be located.**

**14.13(1) Order of priority.** If a death benefit cannot be paid because heirs cannot be located, IPERS will pay a death benefit to the member's heirs according to the following procedure.

*a. Children.* If there is no surviving spouse, but at least one child survives, the death benefit shall be divided equally among the member's children. If there are living and deceased children, the shares that would have been payable to deceased children shall be payable in equal shares to the surviving children of each such deceased child.

*b. Grandchildren.* If neither the spouse nor children survive, but at least one grandchild survives, the death benefit shall be divided equally among the member's grandchildren. If there are living and deceased grandchildren, the shares that would have been payable to any deceased grandchild shall be payable in equal shares to the surviving children of such deceased grandchild.

*c. Parent(s).* If there is no surviving spouse, child, or grandchild, but at least one parent survives, the death benefit shall be divided equally between the member's parents.

*d. Siblings.* If there is no surviving spouse, child, grandchild, or parent, but at least one sibling survives, the death benefit shall be divided equally among the member's siblings. If there are living and deceased siblings, the shares that would have been payable to any deceased sibling shall be payable in equal shares to the surviving children of such deceased siblings.

*e. Nephew(s) and niece(s).* If no one from the above-mentioned groups survives, but there is at least one surviving niece or nephew, the death benefit shall be divided equally among the member's surviving nieces and nephews.

*f. Estate.* If someone other than a member of one of the groups listed above claims the member's death benefit, an estate must be opened and the death benefit shall only be payable to the administrator of that estate.

**14.13(2) Procedures for initial distribution for identified heirs.** IPERS shall distribute the death benefit to the heirs making a claim for such benefit in descending order listed in 14.13(1)“a” to “f.” A claimant shall be required to submit an affidavit suitable to IPERS that verifies the claimant's share or, to the best of the claimant's knowledge, that there are no other surviving persons from the claimant's group and that there are no living persons in any lower-numbered group that would have a higher priority claim to the death benefit. IPERS shall have no responsibility to determine or search out the member's heirs at law, nor shall IPERS incur any liability for relying on a claimant's affidavits in paying the death benefit hereunder.

**14.13(3) Procedures for final distribution to heirs who have filed claims.** If a claimant has identified other persons in the claimant's group who would be entitled to a share of the member's death benefit, but such persons have not filed a claim within five years after the member's death, or by the date required under IRC Section 401(a)(9) if earlier, the remainder of the member's death benefit shall be paid in pro-rata shares to the claimants who were previously paid a share of the death benefit. In order to comply with the applicable IRS limitations, the final payments under this subrule shall be made by December 31 of the fifth year that begins after the member's date of death, or by December 31 of the year that distribution is required under IRC Section 401(a)(9), if earlier. The sole recourse of any claimant who is a member of a group receiving payments hereunder or of any lower-numbered group that should have received all of such payments shall be against the claimants of the group that received death benefit payments.

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code sections 97B.1A(8), 97B.1A(18), 97B.1A(19), 97B.34, 97B.34A, 97B.44 and 97B.52 and 2000 Iowa Acts, chapter 1077, section 75.

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