

**85.31 Death cases — dependents.**

1. *a.* When death results from the injury, the employer shall pay the dependents who were wholly dependent on the earnings of the employee for support at the time of the injury, during their lifetime, compensation upon the basis of eighty percent per week of the employee's average weekly spendable earnings, commencing from the date of death as follows:

(1) To the surviving spouse for life or until remarriage, provided that upon remarriage two years' benefits shall be paid to the surviving spouse in a lump sum, if there are no children entitled to benefits.

(2) To any child of the deceased until the child shall reach the age of eighteen, provided that a child beyond eighteen years of age shall receive benefits to the age of twenty-five if actually dependent, and the fact that a child is under twenty-five years of age and is enrolled as a full-time student in any accredited educational institution shall be a prima facie showing of actual dependency.

(3) To any child who was physically or mentally incapacitated from earning at the time of the injury causing death for the duration of the incapacity from earning.

(4) To all other dependents as defined in [section 85.44](#) for the duration of the incapacity from earning.

*b.* The weekly benefit amount shall not exceed a weekly benefit amount, rounded to the nearest dollar, equal to two hundred percent of the statewide average weekly wage paid employees as determined by the department of workforce development under [section 96.1A, subsection 35](#), and in effect at the time of the injury. The minimum weekly benefit amount shall be equal to the weekly benefit amount of a person whose gross weekly earnings are thirty-five percent of the statewide average weekly wage. Such compensation shall be in addition to the benefits provided by [sections 85.27](#) and [85.28](#).

2. When the injury causes the death of a minor employee whose earnings were received by the parent and such parent was wholly dependent upon the earnings of the minor employee for support at the time of the injury, the compensation to be paid such parent shall be the weekly compensation for an adult with like earnings. For the purposes of [this section](#) a stepparent shall be regarded as a parent only when the stepparent has actually received the stepparent's principal support from the stepchild who died as a result of compensable injuries.

3. If the employee leaves dependents only partially dependent upon the employee's earnings for support at the time of the injury, the weekly compensation to be paid as provided in [subsections 1 and 2](#) shall be equal to the same proportion of the weekly payments for the benefit of persons wholly dependent as the amount contributed by the employee to such partial dependents bears to the annual earnings of the deceased at the time of the injury.

4. Where an employee is entitled to compensation under [this chapter](#) for an injury received, and death ensues from any cause not resulting from the injury for which the employee was entitled to the compensation, payments of the unpaid balance for such injury shall cease and all liability therefor shall terminate.

5. Except as otherwise provided by treaty, whenever, under the provisions of [chapter 10A, subchapter III, this chapter](#), and [chapter 87](#), compensation is payable to a dependent who is an alien not residing in the United States at the time of the injury, the employer shall pay fifty percent of the compensation herein otherwise provided to such dependent, and the other fifty percent shall be paid into the second injury fund in the custody of the treasurer of state. But if the nonresident alien dependent is a citizen of a government having a compensation law which excludes citizens of the United States, either resident or nonresident, from partaking of the benefits of such law in as favorable degree as herein extended to the nonresident alien,

then the compensation which would otherwise be payable to the dependent shall be paid into the second injury fund in the custody of the treasurer of state.

[S13, §2477-m9, -m10; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §1392; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §85.31; 82 Acts, ch 1161, §6]

87 Acts, ch 111, §1; 94 Acts, ch 1065, §3; 96 Acts, ch 1186, §23; 2008 Acts, ch 1032, §169; 2020 Acts, ch 1062, §77; 2021 Acts, ch 80, §33; 2022 Acts, ch 1021, §27; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §1743

Referred to in §85.43, 85.45  
Subsection 5 amended