

Wisconsin Retirement System Retirement Plan Structure

- The WRS retirement plan is a qualified pension plan that satisfies requirements of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC).
- The WRS retirement plan is subject to Section 401(a). It is not a 401(k) plan.
- The WRS retirement plan is a defined benefit plan with a variable investment option.
- Interest is only credited to your account each December 31. No interest is credited on a daily, monthly, or quarterly basis, except prorated interest may be credited for a partial year when WRS benefits are paid.
- **You cannot take a loan against your account.**



Contact the Department of Employee Trust Funds

Visit us Online at etf.wi.gov

Find WRS benefits information, forms and publications, benefits calculators, educational offerings, and other online resources.

Appointments

For current information about appointment options with a benefits specialist, and to schedule an appointment, see ETF's website at etf.wi.gov or call us at 1-877-533-5020.

Some available options include:

1. In-person small group retirement appointments within the state, with up to 12 participants.
2. Online small group retirement appointments, with up to 12 participants.
3. In-person individual retirement appointments.
4. Online individual retirement appointments. These appointments are secure and allow you to meet face-to-face with a benefits specialist. All you need is a computer, your telephone, and an internet connection.

You can also take advantage of interactive webinars or videos on a variety of WRS benefit topics. Find these and other educational resources on ETF's website at etf.wi.gov.

Address/Name/Gender Change

Notify ETF of all address, name, or gender changes. This will ensure that you receive annual statements and other important information from ETF. Failure to notify ETF may result in forfeiture of your WRS account.

To update your information, complete and return the [Address/Name/Gender Change \(ET-2815\)](#) form to ETF, call us at 1-877-533-5020, or send a secure email from the Contact Us section on ETF's website.

Return Forms

You may return completed forms to ETF by mail:

Department of Employee Trust Funds
P.O. Box 7931
Madison, WI 53707-7931

You may also use ETF's secure drop box located outside the entrance of the Hill Farms State Office Building in Madison.

Call ETF

7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Monday through Friday (except holidays)
1-877-533-5020
Wisconsin Relay: 711



Explanation of Alternate Payee Annual Statement of Benefits

Wisconsin Retirement System Account Information

As of January 1, 2024

This Statement of Benefits contains information about your alternate payee account under the Wisconsin Retirement System. As the former spouse or domestic partner of a WRS participant, you were awarded a percentage of your former spouse or domestic partner's WRS account through a Qualified Domestic Relations Order (QDRO). Your alternate payee account includes your share of their WRS account (contributions, years of service and interest) as of the decree date of the QDRO. The decree date is the effective date used to divide the WRS account. Your alternate payee account is credited with annual interest each December 31.

Carefully review the information on page 3 regarding Required Minimum Distributions (the deadline to apply for your benefit).

Section 1 — 2023 Earnings and Service

This section does not apply to alternate payee accounts.

Section 2 — Years of Creditable Service as of 1/1/2024

This shows your former spouse or domestic partner's years of creditable service that were transferred to your alternate payee account. This includes military service, if applicable. Service is broken down into three types: "Before 2000," "After 1999," and "After Act 10."

- Your former spouse/domestic partner may have service in one, two, or all three types, depending on when and how long they worked under the WRS.
- If the QDRO decree date was after 1999 and your former spouse/domestic partner was employed in a WRS-covered position before 2000 and after 1999, a higher formula multiplier is applied to the "Before-2000" years of service when calculating your formula retirement benefit.
- Only employees in the elected/executive category have "After Act 10" service. A lower formula multiplier is applied to this service.

Section 3 — Employee-Required Contributions

This section shows your share of your former spouse or domestic partner's cumulative employee-required contributions in your account. It *does not* include their employer contributions (see Section 9 for your total account balance as of January 1, 2024).

- Annual interest is applied each December 31 to that year's beginning balance(s).
- Your interest rate is shown in this section.

Most contributions are made on a *before-tax* basis and are not taxed until you receive a WRS benefit. However, some types of employee contributions can be made on an "after-tax" basis and are not taxed again. The non-taxable portion of your account is called your "Investment in Contract." It is shown at the bottom of this section.

Section 4 — Additional Contributions

This section shows the current balance of your share of any voluntary additional contributions your former spouse/domestic partner or their employer made to their WRS account before the decree date.

- Annual interest is applied each December 31 to that year's beginning balance(s).
- Additional contributions always receive the effective rate of interest.

If your former spouse/domestic partner was approved for a Long-Term Disability Insurance (LTDI) benefit before the decree date, the LTDI supplemental contributions are included as Core Employer Additional Contributions. Your Core balance includes your share of the LTDI supplemental contributions as of the decree date.

For information about taxes on additional contributions, see the [Tax Liability on WRS Benefits \(ET-4125\)](#) brochure.

Section 5 — Primary Beneficiary Designation(s) for WRS-Required Account

A beneficiary designation controls who receives a death benefit if you die before you begin your retirement benefit or choose an annuity with a guaranteed period.

- If you filed a beneficiary designation with ETF in 1988 or later, your primary beneficiary(ies) will normally appear in this section.
- Changes in your personal situation like marriage, divorce, or termination of a domestic partnership do not change your beneficiary designation. You must file a new designation to change your beneficiary.
- If you never filed a beneficiary designation or if your beneficiary(ies) are all deceased, your death benefit will be paid according to the standard sequence specified by Wis. Stat. § 40.02 (8)(a).
- You may change your beneficiaries by completing the Beneficiary Designation (ET-2320) or Beneficiary Designation-Alternate (ET-2321) form. These forms are available at etf.wi.gov or by contacting ETF.

Section 6 — Separation Benefit

A separation benefit is a one-time (lump-sum) payout of the employee-required contributions in your account, plus additional contributions (if applicable) and interest. It does not include the employer-required contributions. A separation benefit closes your WRS account. If you are vested and take a separation benefit, you lose all rights to a retirement benefit that includes the employer contributions and WRS service in your account.

If you are the alternate payee of a former spouse (the participant), you may take a separation benefit under either of these circumstances:

- Your former spouse has not yet reached *minimum* retirement age (55, or 50 if they had some protective category service that was not purchased forfeited service).
- Your former spouse is not vested.

If you are the alternate payee of a former domestic partner (the participant), you may take a separation benefit under either of these circumstances:

- Your former domestic partner has not yet reached *normal* retirement age (age 65 for general employees and teachers). See etf.wi.gov for information about other employee categories.
- Your former domestic partner is not vested.

An alternate payee can apply for a benefit even if the participant is still employed under the WRS. Once the participant reaches *minimum* retirement age (if you are a former spouse), you are eligible for a retirement benefit based on both the employee and employer contributions if the participant is vested.

Section 7 — Death Benefit

If you die before your WRS benefit begin date, the death benefit amount shown, plus any interest, is the amount payable to your beneficiary(ies).

Section 8 — Formula Benefit Data

This section shows the data ETF uses to calculate your formula retirement benefit:

- Your former spouse or domestic partner's three highest annual WRS earnings. The years do not need to be three in a row, nor the three most recent years of earnings.
- Their final average monthly earnings (FAE). The FAE is calculated by adding the total earnings in the three highest years, dividing the total by the total service credited for those three years, then dividing the result by 12.
- Any Variable Fund excess/deficiency as of January 1, 2024.

A Variable excess/deficiency amount is shown if your former spouse/domestic partner participated in the Variable Fund before the effective date of your alternate payee account. This amount shows the value of your account compared to the value it would have been if your former spouse/domestic partner had never participated in the Variable Fund. A Variable excess will increase your formula benefit, while a Variable deficiency will decrease it.

As an alternate payee, you cannot enroll in the Variable Fund, but you can cancel participation in the Variable Fund. For more information, review the Variable Trust Fund (ET-4930) brochure. You may project updates to your Variable excess or deficiency balances using the WRS Variable Excess or Deficiency Update Calculator at etf.wi.gov/calculator.htm.

Section 9 — Money Purchase Balance

- Your account must be vested to be eligible.
- Your monthly money purchase retirement benefit is calculated by multiplying your total money purchase balance (including interest) by the money purchase factor for your age on the benefit begin date.
- A retirement benefit based on this balance is available only if your former spouse is age 55 (50 if they had some protective service on the decree date) or if your former domestic partner is normal retirement age.
- In 2024, this balance is only available as a lump-sum retirement benefit if the monthly annuity amount is less than \$528.

Section 10 — Retirement Benefit Projections

No projections are shown for alternate payee accounts.

You **must** be vested to be eligible for a retirement benefit. A retirement benefit is available only if your former spouse is age 55 (age 50 if they had some protective service on the decree date), or if your former domestic partner is normal retirement age.

Some participants must meet one of two vesting laws based on when they first began WRS employment. As an alternate payee, your vesting status generally depends on whether or not your former spouse/domestic partner is vested.

- Participants who first began WRS employment after 1989 and terminated employment before April 24, 1998, must have some WRS-creditable service in five calendar years.
- Participants who first began WRS employment on or after July 1, 2011, must have five years of WRS-creditable service.

If neither vesting law applies, participants were vested when they first began WRS employment. If the participant was not vested on the decree date, but later becomes vested by earning the required service (before taking a benefit), you also become vested.

Contact ETF to request a retirement benefit estimate six to twelve months before you plan to apply for a retirement benefit.

Please note, your statement does not include any account receivable amount due if you have an outstanding balance pending. Any monies owed on your account will be deducted from your WRS annuity, if not paid in full before you apply for benefits.

Additional Information for Vested Alternate Payees

If you are vested, you may want to consider applying for your retirement benefit as soon as you are eligible, regardless of your employment status or income. Delaying your retirement benefit may increase your monthly payment. Calculate how long it will take to recover the monthly payments and any annual increases that you will give up by waiting to begin your benefit.

Additionally, if you die before you begin receiving a retirement benefit, the death benefit will be less than your total account balance because you will forfeit the employer contributions.

Required Minimum Distribution

Once you stop working for a Wisconsin Retirement System employer, federal law requires you to begin receiving your benefit payment(s) by a certain date, depending on your age. This is called a required minimum distribution (RMD). Visit etf.wi.gov for detailed information about current RMD requirements, and the potential impact a RMD may have on your WRS benefits and tax liability. You may also want to consult with your tax advisor.

It is important for you to contact ETF before a forced distribution is required. Once a forced distribution begins, your ability to choose a different payment option, if available, will be very limited. Your WRS account will be closed and you will not be able to return your payment(s).