Benefits Services Bureau, Benefit Initiation Section
Trust Funds Specialist

POSITION SUMMARY

Under close to limited supervision of the Benefit Initiation Supervisor, this position processes detailed benefit applications and determines eligibility, and calculates, audits, and finalizes benefit payments. This position analyzes member records and effectively communicates both by phone and in writing with Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) members and their representatives to provide routine and non-routine and detailed benefit information in response to inquiries and requests, as well as issues detected internally, to resolve benefit questions and issues. These issues relate to such topics as: benefit eligibility, benefit calculations, forced distribution payments, adjustments to existing benefit payments, taxability of benefits, life insurance, and collection of overpayments. WRS and life insurance benefit information is provided for critical life events such as employment termination, retirement, and death. This information will influence important decisions that are made by the participants and/or their survivors. This professional position has the responsibility to independently organize, prioritize, and manage their individual workload. This position requires exceptional skills in oral and written communications, customer service, and interpersonal relations.

The job responsibilities require knowledge and ability to analyze and interpret Wisconsin Statutes and Administrative Code; federal and state tax rules and regulations; and department policies, precedents and procedures related to benefit eligibility, calculations, and payments.

In addition, this position serves as a liaison between the Benefit Services Bureau sections as well as between the bureau and other areas of the department in gathering and analyzing information, determining alternatives, preparing proposed courses of action, ensuring consistent policy interpretation and application, documenting resolutions, and communicating with members and internal partners. This position participates and serves on projects to automate, enhance, and/or streamline new or existing processes, division/department/bureau policy review, and other initiatives. As an employee of ETF, the incumbent will support and create a diverse and inclusive work force.

GOALS AND WORKER ACTIVITIES

35%
Goal A: Provision of accurate, timely, and detailed benefit eligibility, computation, and payment status information after thorough research and analysis, in writing or by phone.

A1. Respond to internal and external calls, e-mails, faxes, and letters from ETF staff, non-annuitants, annuitants, survivors, and their representatives regarding complex benefit eligibility, benefit calculations and re-calculations, required distributions, benefit overpayments, and complex problem situations. Provide resolution and go over any available recourse and next steps with the affected parties so that they can make informed decisions.

A2. Analyze information provided by members, survivors, or their representatives and relevant department records, policies, and procedures.

A3. Initiate contacts to members and their representatives to obtain additional information needed to determinate eligibility and appropriate calculations.

A4. Assist members in preparing forms and documentation to address their specific needs in accordance with governing laws, rules, and policies.

A5. Initiate challenging conversations with members to explain the reason for a benefit overpayment and implications of present value offsets, and (as needed) coordinate with the Division of Trust Finance to make repayment arrangements.

A6. Research and resolution of complex inquiries by analyzing and interpreting Wisconsin Statutes and Administrative Code; federal and state tax rules and regulations; and department policies, precedents and procedures related to WRS member cases.

A7. Identify account cases requiring legal counsel interpretation and/or advice; prepare and conduct briefings to obtain management approval for submitting legal services requests.

A8. Research and analyze member records, bank reports, ACH rejects, and other sources of information to respond to inquiries regarding complex and sensitive benefit payment questions and issues such as bank reclamations, overpayments, fraud, and missing or misdirected payments.

A9. Complete weekly and monthly payroll processing to include following up on warnings and errors, resolving negative nets, communicating with US Bank on ACH transmissions, handling payment actions to stop or pull checks, reverse direct deposits, create account receivables, reissue payments, etc.

A10. Review power of attorney and guardianship documents to ensure proper authorization to disclose benefit information and make benefit payments. Contact the member or their representative if specific authority needs to be obtained.

A11. Review transfer by affidavits, waivers, and trust documents to ensure appropriate information and authorization is provided.

A12. Research and analyze member records, beneficiary designations, monthly death reports from the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Berwyn death match software, and other sources of information to determine and initiate contacts with members, their representatives and survivors to resolve sensitive issues such as discrepancies involving death reports, suspended annuities, etc. Initiate appropriate death processing transactions to terminate annuities, and calculate and recover overpayments.

35%
Goal B: Determine detailed eligibility, calculate, and audit benefits such as separations, retirements, and death benefits also including taxability, life insurance certifications, annuitant Qualified Domestic Relations Order (QDRO) splits, rehired annuitants accounts, and benefit corrections.

B1. Review detailed benefit applications for proper completion.

B2. Determine eligibility for the benefit and payment option selected according to statute, code, and written procedures. Update estimates when needed.

B3. Determine proper-computation methods and calculate the benefit under applicable laws to assure legal compliance, actuarial soundness, and that it is most advantageous to the member. Refer to Member Services if the member fails to exercise rights to maximize benefits.

B4. Determine taxability of benefits and calculate income tax withholding according to federal regulations and written procedures including complex Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs).

B5. Determine eligibility and certify continuation of life insurances, the amount and type of coverage, and method of premium payment.

B6. Review QDRO court documents applicable to annuities, compute, audit and complete processing to enter benefits into payment system for members and alternate payees.

B7. Coordinate with ESS, DIS and DTF on rehired annuitant accounts. Review account status, determine if there is an overpayment or retro payments owed. Contact the member via phone or letter. At time of final termination, recalculate annuity payment.

B8. Determine the need for special check, request approval, calculate the amount of the check and the retro exclusion, and notify the distribution group when complete.

B9. Manage changes in the system with special access on the day after cut-off.

20%
Goal C: Participate in projects aimed toward automating and/or enhancing existing activities, implementing new requirements, and completing recurring projects within the section.

C1. Identify opportunities for improvements in section/bureau processes; changes needed to implement business re-engineering and/or strategic plan objectives; and proposed statutory and administrative code language changes to enhance service and efficiency. Collect input from affected stakeholders. Evaluate alternatives and develop conclusions and recommendations.

C2. Participate in cross-functional discussions and workgroups to analyze process improvements.

C3. Participate in projects within the section such as the life insurance amended certification process, variable at core, remaining IIC balance letters, clean up queries and projects, etc.

C4. Review accounts, annually, of inactive participants age 70 ½ or older and deceased participants. Conduct research to locate and initiate contact with members and beneficiaries. Calculate distributions and process benefits to make payment and close accounts.

C5. Serve as a liaison to business analysts, IT staff, and/or other areas of the Department and represent the section in projects aimed toward improving and/or automating existing antiquated and/or manual activities and tasks.

C6. Provide knowledge to business analysts and IT staff on the preparation of business user requirements and user acceptance test plans. Assist with development, testing and implementation.

C7. Document results of policy and process reviews and provide input for section implementation of changes.

C8. Effectively communicate decisions and outcomes to affected parties.

10%
Goal D: Assist with procedure documentation, staff training and auditing, and completion of other tasks as assigned.

D1. Review, recommend and provide input to section policies and procedures; draft procedures.

D2. Review, recommend and provide input on the creation and improvement of forms used by the section.

D3. Assist in planning and development of section training plans and materials to support WRS knowledge transfer.

D4. Train and audit the work of new staff as directed. Monitor progress of assigned trainee(s), respond to questions and inform Supervisors and Trainer of concerns or problems.

D5. Provide training on new/changing procedures to affected staff within and outside the Section as directed.

D6. Complete other tasks as assigned by supervisor.

KNOWLEDGES, SKILLS & ABILITIES

1. Knowledge of state and federal laws, rules and regulations governing the Wisconsin Retirement System.

2. Knowledge of Section business processes and the IT systems that support them.

3. Ability to effectively communicate technical information to non-technical internal and external customers orally and in writing.

4. Ability to perform mathematical calculations.

5. Ability to acquire and apply new knowledge and skills for work.

6. Ability to adapt to departmental transformation along with changing priorities within the section.

7. Ability to work in a team environment by actively working with others to achieve desired goals.

8. Skill to identify, recommend, and implement change to maximize efficiency.

9. Ability to handle multiple priorities at once and work effectively under pressure.

10. Skill to apply departmental compliance policies, practices and procedures.
11. Ability to use complex and sophisticated computer-based software systems including Microsoft Office.

12. Knowledge of planning and organizing work to meet deadlines or unanticipated needs or priorities.

13. Ability to establish productive and efficient working relationships.

14. Ability to train and audit work of other staff.

15. Knowledge of confidentiality rules and procedures.

16. Knowledge and understanding of the mission, organization, and activities of the Wisconsin Retirement System.

17. Knowledge of basic project management skills, and system development and testing practices.

18. Understand and comply with all ETF and enterprise security standards, policies, processes, and procedures