DISABILITY RETIREMENT BENEFITS

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYEE TRUST FUNDS

ET-5107 (12/12/2017) Scan to read online.

Table of Contents

General Information 2

Eligibility 3

Application Process 4

Approval Process 5

Denial of Benefits 5

Benefit Calculation 6

Benefit Payment Options 7

Annual Requirements 10

Suspension or Termination of Benefits 10

Taxes 11

Insurance Benefits 12

Death Benefits 13

Additional Information 13

Definitions 14

The Department of Employee Trust Funds does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the provision of programs, services or employment. If you are speech, hearing or visually impaired and need assistance, call toll free at 1-877-533-5020 or 608-266-3285 (local Madison). We will try to find another way to get the information to you in a usable form.

ETF has made every effort to ensure that this brochure is current and accurate. However, changes in the law or processes since the last revision to this brochure may mean that some details are not current. The most current version of this document can be found at etf.wi.gov. Please contact ETF if you have any questions about a topic in this brochure.

Cover photo courtesy of the Wisconsin Department of Tourism.

General Information

What is a Disability Retirement Benefit?
A disability retirement benefit is a lifetime annuity (monthly payment) paid to eligible Wisconsin Retirement System employees who become disabled and are unable to work until normal retirement age (NRA).(See the *Eligibility* section for additional information.) The benefit is based on your final average earnings and your years of actual creditable service, but adds assumed service as though you worked until NRA.

This benefit comes from your WRS retirement account. If your disability retirement benefit application is approved, your WRS account is closed and you become a WRS *retiree*, receiving a monthly disability annuity. The benefit is administered by the Department of Employee Trust Funds and governed by Wis. Stat. § 40.63.

Definition of Disability
To be approved for a disability benefit, you must meet the WRS definition of disability:

> Disability means the inability to engage in any substantial gainful activity by reason of a medically determinable physical or mental impairment which can be expected to result in death or to be of long-continued and indefinite duration. Substantial gainful activity is employment in any position for which the compensation will exceed the earnings limit in a calendar year. The earnings limit is subject to annual adjustments.

Two licensed physicians (M.D. or D.O.) must certify that you meet this definition. One of the doctors must specialize in the area of your disability.

If you stop working because of a Disability
Notify your employer. Your benefit cannot be approved until your employer certifies your employment ended due to the disability.

Social Security Disability Benefits
Social Security is a federal benefit and is separate from WRS benefits. Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits will not reduce your WRS disability retirement benefit. If you are approved for SSDI, the annual medical recertification requirement for the WRS disability retirement benefit may be waived. Therefore, you should send ETF a copy of your SSDI award letter when available. See the *Annual Requirements* section.

Note: SSDI benefits may make you eligible for Medicare sooner. See the *Insurance Benefits* section.

You can contact the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213 or visit www.ssa.gov for a projection of your Social Security benefits and to apply for benefits.

ETF Services
To help you better understand your benefits, it may be in your best interest to contact ETF and request an appoinment with a benefit specialist. See the back cover for contact information.

Eligibility

You must meet all of these conditions to be eligible to receive a disability retirement estimate and application:

- You must be a participating employee who has not already taken a benefit from your WRS account.
- You must be under normal retirement age (NRA) for your employment category (see chart).
  - *Exception:* Protective occupation employees that become disabled between the ages of 50-55, have at least 15 years of WRS service and can no longer perform duties of their protective occupation position may apply for a special disability benefit until age 55.

    The date you became disabled is considered the day after your last day worked in full protective status.
- Service Requirement: You must have earned service during a specific period. This period begins seven full calendar years before the year in which you apply for the benefit.
  - During this period, you must have either:
    - At least one-half year of creditable service in each of five of those years or
    - A total of at least five years of creditable service.
  - If you do not meet the service requirement, you may still be eligible if your disability is work related and your application is filed within two years of your last day worked.
  - You may lose eligibility if you do not apply in a timely matter.
- Vesting: Members that are not vested (see Definitions) must have a combined total of at least five years of actual and assumed service.

Protective occupation employees may also be eligible for duty disability benefits under Wis. Stat. § 40.65. Contact ETF or visit etf.wi.gov for more information.

Employment Category	Normal Retirement Age
Protective Occupation Employees with at least 25 years of creditable service	53
Protective Occupation Employees with less than 25 years of creditable service	54
Executive Retirement Plan Employees and Elected Officials	62 65 (if hired after December 31, 2016)
General Employees and Teachers	65

Application Process

In order to apply for this benefit, your disability must have caused you to stop working. You may remain on a *leave of absence* (without pay), or use paid leave during the application process. You do not have to terminate your employment until you have met all the requirements for approval.

If you terminate your WRS employment before you submit a benefit application, and you begin working in a non-WRS job, you may no longer be eligible for disability benefits under this program. Please contact ETF for more information.

Steps to Apply

- Contact ETF to request a disability retirement estimate. ETF will send you a packet that includes the *Disability Benefits Estimate and Application* (ET-5302), along with two medical reports.
- Complete and return the application to ETF.
- Complete your portion of the provided medical reports and give to two physicians (one must specialize in the area of your disability) along with the return envelopes for them to complete and return directly to ETF.

Processing Time

On average, ETF can process a disability retirement benefit application within three to four months. The time frame is primarily driven by how quickly ETF receives both medical report forms from your physicians and the required paperwork from your employer.

Life-Threatening Illness/Injury

If you have a life-threatening illness or injury, it is important that you understand the effect your decision will have on the benefit(s) payable upon your death. The disability retirement benefit may not be payable in a form that is most beneficial for your survivors. See the sections on *Disability Retirement Payment Options* and *Death Benefits*.

Withdrawal of Application

You may withdraw your application by submitting a written request to ETF no later than the last working day before the 21st of the month of your first payment.

Cancellation of Application

ETF must receive the two qualifying medical reports, and your employer's certification, within 12 months of the date your application is received by ETF. If these forms are not received by ETF within the one-year time frame, your application will be canceled.

Approval Process

ETF cannot approve your disability retirement benefit application without the following:

Medical Reports
Two licensed physicians (M.D. or D.O.) must complete a *Disability Medical Report* (ET-5303), or *Disability Special Medical Report* (ET-5304) for protective occupation employees only, stating that you are disabled. One of the doctors must specialize in the area of your disability.

Employer Certification
Your employer must certify the following:

- You have terminated or will terminate employment due to a disability and that you are not expected to return to work. See the *Definitions* section for an explanation of "termination of employment."
- You are not entitled to any further earnings. Any payment to which you may be entitled after your last day of work (such as vacation, compensatory time, sick leave, etc.) is used in determining your last day in pay status. This includes lump sum payments for any remaining leave time. Your employer will be required to certify your last day in pay status.

If all requirements are met and your application is approved:

- You will receive a letter detailing how much your benefit will be and when it will start.
- You will receive monthly payments by direct deposit. These payments are made on the first of the month for the previous month.

Note: If you die after applying for the benefit, but prior to being approved, the benefit will be deemed approved if:

- you were eligible for the disability benefit;
- ETF received at least one medical report indicating you met the definition of disability; and
- you die on or after the date which would have been the effective date of the disability retirement benefit; and no further earnings were payable to you at the time of your death.

Denial of Benefits

If ETF denies your application for disability retirement benefits, you may do one of the following:

1. Apply for a regular retirement benefit if you are at or above minimum retirement age (age 55, or age 50 if you are a protective occupation employee) and vested. If you apply within 60 days of denial, this benefit may begin on the same date that the disability retirement benefit would have begun had it been approved. If you begin a regular retirement benefit, you may not reapply for a disability retirement benefit.
2. Apply for a separation benefit if you are under minimum retirement age (age 55, or age 50 if you are a protective occupation employee) or if you are not vested. A separation benefit entitles you to only your employee-required contributions, additional contributions (if applicable), plus accumulated interest. If vested, this means you forfeit your employer-required contributions, plus interest, and service. You also forfeit the right to reapply for disability retirement benefits.
3. Reapply for this disability benefit if still eligible. See the *Eligibility* section for program requirements.
4. Leave your contributions in the retirement system until a later date. They will continue to accumulate interest. Note that if you die as an inactive member before you begin receiving a benefit, your death benefits will not include any matching employer contributions in your WRS account.

If you wish to contest ETF's denial, a written request for an appeal to the appropriate board under Chapter ETF 11, Wis. Admin. Code, must be received by ETF within 90 days following the date of the notice of denial (see the *Contact Information* section).

Benefit Calculation

The calculation begins with the effective date, which is normally the day after your last day in pay status. However, it can be no earlier than 90 days before the date we receive your application.

- If you apply more than 90 days after your last day in pay status, you will not have the earliest possible benefit effective date, and you will have lost a partial month or more of benefits.
- Annuities that are not effective on the day after the last day in pay status must always be effective on the first of a month. They are backdated up to 90 days and made effective the first of the following month.

The benefit is based on your final average earnings and your years of earned creditable service, plus assumed service as though you worked until your normal retirement age (NRA). (See the *Eligibility* section for NRA information.)

- You may be eligible for additional credit for pre-1974 military service, provided you meet the eligibility requirements:
  - The service, if granted, may increase the amount of your benefits. You must submit a copy of your discharge paper(s) showing dates of active duty and character of discharge. For more information, see the *Military Service and Your Benefits* section under the Members tab at etf.wi.gov.

Benefit Payment Options

A disability retirement benefit payment is a monthly annuity that consists of two amounts:

1. The Straight Life Portion
   - Based on "assumed" service as though you worked until normal retirement age (NRA).
   - Payable only to you for life. This portion is never paid as a death benefit.
2. The Death Benefit Guaranteed Portion
   - Based on your actual service and earnings
   - Payable to you for life, with available death benefits.

If you die while receiving a disability retirement benefit, a death benefit may be payable. Death benefits are determined by the annuity option you select. Understanding the difference between a *beneficiary* and a *named survivor* can make choosing an option easier.

A Beneficiary . . .	**A Named Survivor . . .**
Can be a person, trust, estate or organization and can include multiple beneficiaries	Can only be one person
Can be any age	Federal age restrictions apply if not the member's spouse
Can be changed at any time See the *Death Benefits* section for information on completing a beneficiary designation	Is named when applying for a disability retirement benefit and can only be changed if ETF receives a written request within 60 days after the date of your first payment
May receive remaining payments from an annuity with a guaranteed period if you die before that guarantee period has expired	Will receive payments for their lifetime upon your death
Can be different for separate benefit plans or accounts (retirement and life insurance)	Receives only a monthly benefit based on the death benefit guaranteed portion of the member's disability annuity

Life Annuity Options

For Annuitant's Life Only

- This annuity is paid to you for life.
- Payments end at your death.
- There is no death benefit payable to anyone.

Life with 60 or 180 Payments Guaranteed

- This annuity consists of two parts that are payable to you for life:
  - The *Straight Life* portion: Ends upon your death. It is never paid as a death benefit.
  - The *Death Benefit Guaranteed* portion: If you die before 60 or 180 payments have been made, the remainder of the 60 or 180 payments are paid to your beneficiary.

Joint and Survivor Annuity Options

75% Continued to Named Survivor

- This annuity consists of two parts that are payable to you for life:
  - The *Straight Life* portion: Ends upon your death. It is never paid as a death benefit.
  - The *Death Benefit Guaranteed* portion: Upon your death, 75% is payable to the named survivor for their lifetime.
- If your named survivor dies within the first five years that you are receiving your annuity, your annuity increases to the "For Annuitants Life Only" amount.
- If your named survivor dies before you, all payments stop upon your death.
- You may not choose this option if your named survivor is more than 19 years younger than you and is not your spouse.

100% Continued to Named Survivor

- This annuity consists of two parts that are payable to you for life:
  - The *Straight Life* portion: Ends upon your death. It is never paid as a death benefit.
  - The *Death Benefit Guaranteed* portion: Upon your death, 100% is payable to the named survivor for their lifetime.
- If your named survivor dies within the first five years that you are receiving your annuity, your annuity increases to the "For Annuitant's Life Only" amount.
- If your named survivor dies before you, all payments stop upon your death.
- You may not choose this option if your named survivor is more than 10 years younger than you and is not your spouse.

Reduced 25% on Death of Annuitant or Named Survivor

- This annuity consists of two parts that are payable to you for life:
  - The *Straight Life* portion: Ends upon your death. It is never paid as a death benefit.
  - The *Death Benefit Guaranteed* portion: Upon the death of either you or your named survivor, the benefit is reduced by 25% and payable for the lifetime of the survivor.
- If your named survivor dies before you, all payments stop upon your death.
- You may not choose this option if your named survivor is more than 19 years younger than you and is not your spouse.

100% Continued to Named Survivor with 180 Payments Guaranteed

- This annuity consists of two parts that are payable to you for life:
  - The *Straight Life* portion: Ends upon your death. It is never paid as a death benefit.
  - The *Death Benefit Guaranteed* portion: Upon your death, 100% is payable to the named survivor for their lifetime. If both you and your named survivor die before 180 payments have been made, the remainder of 180 payments are paid to your beneficiary.
- You may not choose this option if your named survivor is more than 10 years younger than you and is not your spouse.

If you choose a joint and survivor annuity option, the named survivor *cannot* receive a lump sum benefit. If you choose an option that includes 60 or 180 payments guaranteed, the beneficiary *may* have the option of a monthly or a lump sum payment.

Additional Contribution Payment Options
If you have made voluntary additional contributions, the payment options available to you will show on your disability retirement benefit application. You may choose to apply for your additional contributions at the same time as your disability annuity or delay until a later date. Please see the *Additional Contributions* (ET- 2123) brochure for more information, available at etf.wi.gov or from ETF.

Changing Options
It is important to carefully consider your option selection. The annuity option you select can only be changed if ETF receives your written request within 60 days following the date of your first payment. Please request a *Disability Annuity Option Change Application* (ET-5333) from ETF to make this change.

Annual Requirements

Earnings Statement
Each year, you will be required to complete a *Statement of Annual Earnings for Disability Annuitants* (ET-5905). You must complete and return the statement whether or not you received earnings. Failure to complete and return the form by the required due date or providing incorrect information may cause your benefits to be suspended or terminated.

If you have returned to work or are self-employed, you will be required to report the amount of earnings, employer(s) name and occupation for each calendar month you received earnings. Earnings are any wages and/or salary received for providing a personal service, including service performed on a contractual basis or self-employment.

If your statement shows you reached or exceeded the statutory earnings limit in the prior year, you may face an overpayment of benefits which would have to be paid back to ETF.

Medical Recertification
If you are approved for a disability retirement benefit, you may be required to provide annual medical evidence that you continue to be disabled. When providing the medical evidence, your last examination date must be within 12 months of the date the physician signed the *Recertification Medical Report* (ET-5909).

Annual medical recertification may continue as long as you are eligible to receive monthly disability retirement benefit payments or up to your normal retirement age (NRA). It is extremely important that you complete the recertification process in a timely manner to remain eligible to receive the monthly benefit. If you are approved for SSDI benefits, the annual medical recertification requirement may be waived.

Suspension or Termination of Benefits

Exceeding the Annual Earnings Limit
If you return to work, you must notify ETF immediately. Your disability retirement benefit payments will be suspended effective the first of the month in which you exceed the annual earnings limit. If your benefit is suspended, ETF will tell you when your benefit can resume.

For additional information about the earnings limit, see Disability Benefits on the member's tab of the ETF website.

Special Provisions for Protective Occupation Employees
If you are a protective occupation retiree receiving a disability retirement benefit because you could no longer perform the duties of your protective occupation position, there is no earnings limit. However, your benefits will be suspended immediately upon re-employment in a law enforcement or firefighting position.

No Longer Meet Disability Definition
If we receive your annual medical recertification and your physician indicates that you are able to perform the duties of any occupation for which the annual compensation would exceed the earnings limitation, your disability retirement benefit will be terminated. Your retirement account will then be re-established as if you had never received a disability retirement benefit.

Taxes

Disability retirement benefits are taxable income. For more information on federal income taxes and the tax status of your disability retirement benefit, contact the Internal Revenue Service at www.irs.gov and request Publication 524 *Credit for the Elderly or the Disabled*.

Income Tax Withholding
You may choose how you would like income tax withheld from your disability retirement benefit payment on your application.

Federal income tax withholding is voluntary, but if you do not specify how you want taxes withheld, federal regulations require ETF to withhold according to the tax tables as if you are married with three exemptions. (See the W4-P form in your packet or at www.irs.gov for help calculating your withholding amount.)

Wisconsin income tax withholding is also voluntary, but if you do not specify how you want taxes withheld, ETF is not required to withhold anything.

To change your income tax withholding (after you have submitted your application or once you are receiving payments):

- Use the Retiree Monthly Tax Withholding Calculator at etf.wi.gov to determine how much you would like to withhold from your payment for taxes. You can also use the calculator to print a tax withholding election form to submit to ETF.
- Complete an income tax withholding form, *Substitute W-4P Tax Withholding Certificate for Pension or Annuity Payments* (ET-4310), found online at etf.wi.gov or from ETF.

Tax Statement (1099-R)
If you receive a disability retirement benefit payment, ETF will send a 1099-R form by January 31 each year. The 1099-R shows the amount of income tax withheld, the total amount of your benefit and the taxable portion of your benefit for the prior year. You will need this when you file your income tax.

If you have more than one WRS annuity account (for example, you receive an annuity from both your own WRS account and as a beneficiary or named survivor of another account), you will receive a separate annual 1099-R tax statement for each of your annuity accounts. The 1099-R forms will be mailed in separate envelopes and may arrive on different days.

For more information about taxation, please see the *Tax Liability on WRS Benefits* (ET-4125) brochure, available at etf.wi.gov or from ETF.

Group Life Insurance Waiver of Premium
If you are currently insured under the Wisconsin Public Employers Group Life Insurance Program and are unable to work, you may be eligible to continue coverage without further premium payments. This applies to premiums for your covered spouse and dependents as well. A premium waiver is available whether or not you apply for or are approved for a WRS disability benefit.

- Contact your employer and request that they submit a *Request for Disability Premium Waiver* (ET-5306) form to ETF. Your employer has 36 months to submit the form to ETF.
- To guarantee continuous coverage, you must continue to pay premiums until the premium waiver is approved. However, if your coverage has lapsed before the premium waiver is approved, your coverage may be reinstated.
- If the waiver is approved, life insurance premiums are waived during the period of disability.

See the *Group Life Insurance After You Terminate Employment* (ET-4104) brochure for more information, available at etf.wi.gov or from ETF.

Group Health Insurance Coverage
If you apply for a disability retirement benefit and are covered under the group health insurance program administered by ETF, you may be eligible to continue coverage.

- If you are on a leave of absence while applying for a disability retirement benefit, you must prepay premiums through your employer until your application is approved, or your health insurance coverage will lapse.
- If your employment is terminated during the application process, you must apply for COBRA health insurance to keep continuous coverage.
- If your disability retirement benefit application is approved and your health insurance has lapsed (due to non-payment of premium or you did not apply for COBRA), you can apply for coverage to be reinstated. ETF will provide more information when this occurs.
- If health insurance is in place (and premiums were paid timely) when your disability retirement benefit application is approved, coverage will continue automatically unless you cancel in writing.
- You are responsible for the full cost of the health insurance premium, which can be paid by:
  - Sick leave credits (state employees only),
  - Deduction from the monthly disability retirement benefit payment (if large enough to cover the premium), or
  - Direct billing to you by the health plan.

See the *Group Health Insurance* (ET-4112) and *Sick Leave Credit Conversation Program* (ET-4132) brochures for more information.

If you are a local employee and are not covered under a group health insurance program through your WRS employer at the time you apply for disability benefits, you may be eligible for the Local Annuitant Health Plan (LAHP). Contact ETF for more information.

Medicare
To keep your group health insurance administered by ETF, you and your insured dependents must enroll for Medicare Parts A and B (hospital and medical) when first eligible. It is your responsibility to notify ETF when you and other family members enroll in Medicare. Complete the *Medicare Eligibility Statement* (ET-4307) form, available at etf.wi.gov or from ETF to inform ETF of your Medicare effective dates.

Note: If approved for a SSDI benefit, you may become eligible for Medicare approximately 24 months after your SSDI benefit is effective regardless of your age (unless you reach age 65 first).

Income Continuation Insurance (ICI)
If receiving income continuation insurance benefits, disability retirement benefits reduce the amount you receive from ICI. The payment amount of the *For Annuitant's Life Only* disability annuity option will be subtracted from your ICI payment (even if you select a different annuity option). For more information, see the *State Income Continuation Insurance* (ET-2106) or *Wisconsin Local Government Employees Income Continuation Insurance* (ET-2129) brochure.

Death Benefits

If you Have a Terminal Illness or Injury
As you decide whether to apply for a disability retirement benefit, you should understand the difference in the death benefits payable to your survivors upon your death. It may be in your best interest to compare the *disability retirement death benefit payment options* to the a*ctive and inactive death benefit amounts* before you apply.

Death Benefits ***before*** a disability retirement benefit is approved:

- *Active Employee Death Benefit*
  If you are employed in a WRS-covered position at the time of death, you have died as an active employee. The death benefit payable to your beneficiary(ies) will include, at a minimum, the amount of your employee-required contributions, a matching amount of employer contributions, additional contributions (if any) and accumulated interest. Your beneficiary(ies) may be eligible to choose a lump sum benefit or a lifetime monthly annuity depending on the amount of the benefit.
- *Inactive Employee Death Benefit*
  If you have terminated all WRS-covered employment prior to death, you have died as an inactive employee. The death benefit to your beneficiary(ies) will include the amount of your employee-required and additional contributions (if any) and accumulated interest. It will not include employer contributions. Your beneficiary(ies) may choose a lump sum benefit or a lifetime monthly annuity depending on the amount of the benefit.

  Reminder: Your most recent Annual Statement of Benefits shows both your active and inactive death benefit.

Death Benefits ***after*** a disability benefit is approved:

- The death benefit is based on the payment option you chose. See the *Benefit Payment Options* section.

  Reminder: Only the death benefit guaranteed portion of any disability retirement benefit is payable as a death benefit.

Beneficiary Designations
Death benefits are always paid according to the most recent, valid beneficiary designation on file with ETF prior to your death. If a beneficiary designation is not on file, death benefits will be paid according to statutory standard sequence. Your beneficiary information does not automatically change when a life event occurs, such as a marriage or a divorce. Be sure to inform your beneficiaries that they have been listed and should keep their contact information up to date with ETF. Beneficiary designation forms are available at etf.wi.gov or from ETF.

Additional Information

Annual Annuity Adjustments
Annuities may be adjusted based on the investment results of the prior calendar year. This is not a cost of living adjustment and is not guaranteed. Any adjustments are reflected on the May 1 payment. Adjustments can be positive or negative. If you participate solely in the Core Trust Fund, your annuity will never drop below your final annuity calculation. If you also participate in the Variable Trust Fund, there is no limit to how much the Variable portion of your annuity can be reduced.

Divorce and Your Annuity
Upon receipt of a Qualified Domestic Relations Order (QDRO), ETF can divide your WRS account or annuity payment for marriages legally terminated after 1981 by divorce, annulment or legal separation. For more information, see *How Divorce Can Affect Your WRS Benefits* (ET-4925) available at etf.wi.gov or from ETF.

Variable Participation
If you participate in the Variable Trust Fund, please refer to the *How Participation In the Variable Trust Fund Affects Your WRS Benefits* (ET-4930) brochure, available at etf.wi.gov or from ETF, for additional information.

Definitions

Assumed Service—additional service that includes the period between the last date for which you were paid WRS earnings, and the date when you would reach the normal retirement age for your employment category.

Creditable Service—includes all service from the date you began participating under the WRS to the last date for which you were paid WRS earnings. For disability retirement benefits, it also includes assumed service as defined above.

Disability—the inability to engage in any substantial gainful activity by reason of a medically determinable physical or mental impairment which can be expected to result in death or to be of long-continued and indefinite duration. (See definition of "medically determinable impairment".)

Earnings Limit—maximum amount of money you can make in a year without affecting your disability retirement benefit. This amount changes each year. Visit etf.wi.gov for the current year's earnings limit.

Final Average Earnings—calculated by adding the highest earnings for three calendar years (fiscal years for teachers, judges and educational support personnel) and dividing this total by the creditable service earned during these years, then dividing by 12. The three years used are those in which reported earnings were the highest; they do not need to be consecutive, nor the last years reported.

Leave of Absence—any period during which an employee has stopped working and receiving earnings but has no formal termination of the employer−employee relationship. Every leave of absence, except a military leave or union service leave, will terminate three years after it begins.

Medically Determinable Impairment—medically demonstrable anatomical, physiological or psychological abnormalities. The described abnormalities are medically determinable if they manifest themselves as signs or laboratory findings apart from symptoms that are not medically determinable.

Protective Occupation Employee—any WRS member whose job duties include active law enforcement, or active fire suppression or prevention, with frequent exposure to danger, peril and requiring a high degree of physical conditioning (examples: firefighter, police officer, correctional officer).

Substantial Gainful Activity—any work for which the compensation will exceed the earnings limit in a calendar year. (See definition of "earnings limit.")

Termination of Employment—for disability benefit purposes, a member ceases to be a participating employee on the termination date that the employer reports to ETF for the purpose of all benefits administered under Wis. Stat. § 40. Such benefits include the member's WRS account, health insurance, the state sick leave program, life insurance, income continuation insurance, etc. A termination due to disability does not preclude a participating employer from keeping the member on an administrative leave of absence for the purposes of benefits not administered under Wis. Stat. § 40.

Vesting—the minimum number of years of covered WRS employment needed to qualify a participant for a retirement benefit. Some participants must meet one of two vesting laws based on when they first began WRS employment.

- 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. Vested participants may receive a retirement benefit at age 55 (age 50 for protective category participants) once they terminate all WRS employment. Participants who are not vested may only receive a separation benefit.

Contact ETF

etf.wi.gov

Find ETF-administered benefits information, forms, brochures, benefit calculators, educational offerings and other online resources. Stay connected with:

ETF E-Mail Updates

@wi_etf

1-877-533-5020 or **608-266-3285 (local Madison)**

7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (CST), Monday-Friday

Benefit specialists are available to answer questions.

Wisconsin Relay: 711

P.O. Box 7931
Madison, WI 53707-7931

Write ETF or return forms.

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WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
OF EMPLOYEE TRUST FUNDS