

Guide to Death Benefits for Beneficiaries of Retired Members



TRS has prepared this guide to explain the major steps involved in filing for death benefits and to provide some general information about TRS death benefits. Please visit our website for more specific information.

TYPES OF DEATH BENEFITS

All retired members receive a retirement allowance under the **Qualified Pension Plan (QPP)**. Retirees may also have an account in the **Tax-Deferred Annuity (TDA) Program**, TRS' optional investment plan. When a retiree dies, their designated beneficiaries may be eligible to receive both a QPP benefit and a TDA benefit (if the retiree had a TDA account).

Retirees may designate different beneficiaries under the QPP and the TDA Program. QPP and TDA death benefits are determined and paid separately. If TRS does not have a valid beneficiary designation on file, any death benefit due would generally be paid to the retiree's estate.

QPP DEATH BENEFITS

There are three types of QPP benefits that may be payable after the death of a TRS retiree.

- **Benefit under the retirement payment option:** Retiring members choose a payment option for their retirement allowance; the option they choose may provide for a specific benefit to be paid to one or more beneficiaries. One choice, the Maximum Payment Option, does not provide for beneficiary payments.

- **Fractional payment:** Fractional payments to beneficiaries represent a portion of the retirement allowance payment for the month in which the retiree died. If the retiree died on the last day of the month, no benefit is payable to any fractional beneficiaries, since the full monthly payment was made to the member.
- **Death Benefit #2:** A lump-sum amount may be payable to the retiree's designated beneficiaries if the deceased was in Tier II, III, IV, or VI.

Each of the above is a separate benefit. The retiree may have designated different beneficiaries for each.

TDA DEATH BENEFITS

There are three types of TDA death benefits. Up to two of these may be payable after the death of a retiree who participated in TRS' TDA Program.

- **Benefit under a TDA payment option:** If the retiree had annuitized his/her TDA funds, benefits vary based on the payment option they chose at annuitization.
- **Fractional payment:** Fractional payments to beneficiaries represent a portion of the annuity payment for the month in which the retiree died. If the retiree died on the last day of the month, no benefit is payable to any fractional beneficiaries, since the full annuity payment was made to the retiree.

- **Lump-sum payment:** If the retiree was maintaining a TDA account through TDA Deferral status, the TDA balance would generally be distributed to beneficiaries in a lump-sum. (Interest and/or investment return stop accruing on the retiree's TDA balance as of the date of death.)

AFTER THE DEATH OF A MEMBER

Any individual can contact TRS to report the death of a member. (See "Steps in the Death Benefit Claim Process" at the end of this brochure for instructions.)

TRS requires an original death certificate or a certified copy in order to process any benefit payments that are payable. We will contact all beneficiaries about the benefits payable and provide instructions for claiming the benefits.

FILING A DEATH BENEFIT CLAIM

If you are a beneficiary, you will be able to use a dedicated website to conveniently and securely file a death benefit claim with TRS. You will be guided through the online claim process step by step, and receive prompts along the way, so you won't have to worry about submitting a claim containing errors—which can significantly delay the processing of benefits. And, filing online means that TRS receives the claim instantly. (See "Steps in the Death Benefit Claim Process" at the end of this brochure for more information.)

DISTRIBUTION OPTIONS

In some cases, you may be able to choose how you receive your death benefit. General information about distribution options is available on our website.

When you file a death benefit claim online, the distribution options available to you will be indicated as you go through the claim process.

SPOUSAL RIGHT OF ELECTION

If you are the spouse of a TRS member, you may be eligible under New York State law to elect a share of your deceased spouse's estate even if you were not named as a beneficiary. Benefits from TRS' QPP and TDA accounts are included in calculating the net estate. If TRS has not yet distributed the benefits payable upon the death of a retiree or beneficiary, we will refrain from making a payment or transfer to the named beneficiaries of the death benefits upon being served with a certified copy of a court order instructing us to do so.

INQUIRIES ABOUT YOUR BENEFIT

If you need assistance, you can call our Member Services Center at 1 (888) 8-NYC-TRS. When you do, please have the following information available: The last four digits of the member's Social Security number and the member's TRS retirement number.

Please be aware that processing death benefits can take several weeks after we are notified of the retiree's death. Prompt receipt of the retiree's death certificate and any funds owed will help TRS distribute benefits as efficiently as possible. TRS appreciates your assistance and patience during this time.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

You can learn additional details about TRS death benefits by accessing the **Beneficiaries** FAQs on our website at www.trsnyc.org. Here you will find information on the benefits payable under various payment options, types of death benefits, taxes withheld from benefits, and more.

Please note that death benefits and processing are different if the member dies while in service (or while on a leave of absence). Our brochure *Guide to Death Benefits for Beneficiaries of Non-Retired Members* provides that information.

STEPS IN THE DEATH BENEFIT PROCESS
(if the deceased was a retired member of TRS)

The major steps involved in benefit processing are indicated below. Please be aware that promptly providing TRS with the deceased's death certificate, any other required documentation, and any funds owed to TRS will help us to process benefits in a timely manner.

- 1:** An individual notifies TRS of the member's death. TRS requires the member's name, date of death, and TRS retirement number. The person providing the notice of death must also provide his/her name, address, and telephone number.
- 2:** If a death certificate was not provided upon notification, TRS sends a letter requesting an original death certificate or certified copy to all beneficiaries or legal representatives on file with TRS. (Unfortunately, we cannot accept photocopies and cannot return the certificate.)
- 3:** Usually within a few weeks, the beneficiaries or legal representatives receive a letter from TRS describing their portion of the benefit(s) payable and any amounts that must first be repaid to TRS. These amounts may include payments issued by TRS after the member's death and subsequently deposited.
- 4:** Each beneficiary or legal representative receives a separate letter providing a unique 12-digit claim code for logging in to the TRS website.
- 5:** Upon logging in, claimants are then guided through the steps of claiming their benefits online.
- 6:** Once all the required online steps are completed, claimants print a summary receipt for their records. They must also print the "Attestation and Notarization for Online Death Benefit Claim," which must be notarized and returned to TRS along with any required documents.
- 7:** TRS issues payment, usually about two months after the claims process began.

For your convenience, TRS forms and publications are available on our website.
If you require additional assistance, please contact our Member Services Center at 1 (888) 8-NYC-TRS.

*This publication should not be solely relied upon, as it is based on currently available information that is subject to change.
In all cases, the specific provisions of the governing laws, rules, and regulations prevail.*



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