

Beneficiary Information

Most people don't stop to consider who they named as a beneficiary at the time of hire until they start the retirement process. But a beneficiary designation is important long before retirement. Member contributions are your money and will be paid to someone in the event of your death, either as a monthly pension benefit or as a refund. It is important you make sure PERA knows who that recipient should be. **All members should complete a Beneficiary Designation Form when they are first hired.**

You may designate only one person or one organization as a refund beneficiary and only one person as a survivor beneficiary. **The refund beneficiary and the survivor beneficiary can be the same person. If you are married, your spouse must give his or her consent if you choose someone other than your spouse to receive the benefit.** In that instance, your spouse must sign a Beneficiary Spousal Consent Form before a Notary Public.

The **refund beneficiary designation is very important if you have not vested.** If you die before you are vested and your death is not duty-related, your employee contributions plus interest are paid in a lump sum to your designated refund beneficiary. If you do not designate a refund beneficiary, your member contributions will be paid to your estate. The **survivor beneficiary designation becomes effective after you have become vested or if you die from duty-related causes before being vested.** Survivor pension amounts vary for non-duty-related and duty-related deaths.

You should check your designated beneficiary or beneficiaries every year. Is it your ex-spouse, your children who are grown, or a parent who has recently passed away? Have you married, divorced or remarried? Has the child you named as beneficiary moved away or changed his or her name? Though unintentional, someone you designated as a beneficiary years ago may still be designated as the recipient of your PERA benefits. Many of the beneficiary forms on file with PERA are more than 20 years old. A lot can change in that time.

A survivor pension benefit may be payable to a designated survivor beneficiary, surviving spouse, or eligible surviving children under the age of 18 in certain circumstances. Every death situation is different. Please contact PERA for additional information.