

353.656 DISABILITY BENEFITS.

Subdivision 1. **Duty disability; computation of benefits.** (a) A member of the police and fire plan, other than a firefighter covered by section 353.6511, or a police officer covered by section 353.6512, who is determined to qualify for duty disability as defined in section 353.01, subdivision 41, is entitled to receive disability benefits during the period of such disability in an amount equal to 60 percent of the average salary as defined in section 353.01, subdivision 17a, plus an additional 3.0 percent of that average salary for each year of service in excess of 20 years.

(b) To be eligible for a benefit under paragraph (a), the member must have:

(1) not met the age and vesting requirements for a retirement annuity under section 353.651, subdivision 1; or

(2) met the age and vesting requirements under that subdivision, but does not have at least 20 years of allowable service credit.

(c) If paragraph (b), clause (2), applies, the disability benefit must be paid for a period of 60 months from the disability benefit accrual date and at the end of that period is subject to provisions of subdivision 5a.

(d) If the disability under this subdivision occurs before the member has at least five years of allowable service credit in the police and fire plan, the disability benefit must be computed on the average salary from which deductions were made for contribution to the police and fire fund.

Subd. 1a. MS 2006 [Renumbered, subd 1b]

Subd. 1a. **Total and permanent duty disability; computation of benefits.** (a) A member of the police and fire plan, other than a firefighter covered by section 353.6511, or a police officer covered by section 353.6512, whose disabling condition is determined to be a duty disability that is also a permanent and total disability as defined in section 353.01, subdivision 19, is entitled to receive, for life, disability benefits in an amount equal to 60 percent of the average salary as defined in section 353.01, subdivision 17a, plus an additional 3.0 percent of that average salary for each year of service in excess of 20 years.

(b) A disability benefit payable under paragraph (a) is subject to eligibility review under section 353.33, subdivision 6, but the review may be waived if the executive director receives a written statement from the association's medical advisor that no improvement can be expected in the member's disabling condition that was the basis for payment of the benefit under paragraph (a). A member receiving a disability benefit under this subdivision who is found to no longer be permanently and totally disabled as defined under section 353.01, subdivision 19, but continues to meet the definition for receipt of a duty disability under section 353.01, subdivision 41, is subject to subdivision 1 upon written notice from the association's medical advisor that the person is no longer considered permanently and totally disabled, and may, upon application, elect an optional annuity under subdivision 1b.

(c) If a member approved for disability benefits under this subdivision dies before attaining normal retirement age as defined in section 353.01, subdivision 37, paragraph (b), or within 60 months of the effective date of the disability, whichever is later, the surviving spouse is entitled to receive a survivor benefit under section 353.657, subdivision 2, paragraph (a), clause (1), if the death is the direct result of the disabling condition for which disability benefits were approved, or section 353.657, subdivision 2, paragraph (a), clause (2), if the death is not directly related to the disabling condition for which benefits were approved under this subdivision.

(d) If the election of an actuarial equivalent optional annuity is not made at the time the permanent and total disability benefit accrues, an election must be made within 90 days before the member attains normal retirement age as defined under section 353.01, subdivision 37, paragraph (b), or having collected total and permanent disability benefits for 60 months, whichever is later. If a member receiving disability benefits who has dependent children dies, subdivision 6a, paragraph (c), applies.

Subd. 1b. **Optional annuity election.** (a) A disabled member of the police and fire fund may elect to receive the normal disability benefit or an actuarial equivalent optional annuity. If the election of an actuarial equivalent optional annuity is made before the commencement of payment of the disability benefit, the optional annuity must begin to accrue on the same date as the disability benefit covering only the disability benefit recipient would have accrued.

(b) If an election of an optional annuity is not made before the commencement of the disability benefit, the disability benefit recipient may elect an optional annuity:

(1) within 90 days before normal retirement age;

(2) upon the filing of an application to convert to an early retirement annuity, if electing to convert to an early retirement annuity before the normal retirement age;

(3) within 90 days before the expiration of the 60-month period for which a disability benefit is paid, if the disability benefit is payable because the disabled member did not have at least 20 years of allowable service at normal retirement age; or

(4) upon being determined that the disability benefit recipient continues to be disabled under subdivision 1, but is no longer totally and permanently disabled under subdivision 1a.

(c) If a disabled member who has named a joint and survivor optional annuity beneficiary dies before the disability benefit ceases and is recalculated under subdivision 5a, the beneficiary eligible to receive the joint and survivor annuity may elect to have the annuity converted at the times designated in paragraph (b), clause (1), (2), or (3), whichever allows for the earliest payment of a higher joint and survivor annuity option resulting from recalculation under subdivision 5a, paragraph (e).

(d) A disabled member may name a person other than the spouse as beneficiary of a joint and survivor annuity only if the spouse of the disabled member permanently waives surviving spouse coverage on the disability application form prescribed by the executive director.

(e) If the spouse of the member permanently waives survivor coverage, the dependent child or children, if any, continue to be eligible for dependent child benefits under section 353.657, subdivision 3, and the designated optional annuity beneficiary may draw the monthly benefit.

(f) Any optional annuity under this subdivision, plus dependent child benefits, if applicable, are subject to the maximum and minimum family benefit amounts specified in section 353.657, subdivision 3a.

Subd. 2. **Benefits paid under workers' compensation law.** (a) When the amount determined under paragraph (b) exceeds the equivalent salary determined under paragraph (c), the disability benefit amount must be reduced to that amount which, when added to the workers' compensation benefits, equals the equivalent salary.

(b) When a member receiving a disability benefit as specified in this section is also entitled to receive lump sum or periodic benefits under workers' compensation laws, the single life annuity actuarial equivalent disability benefit amount and the workers' compensation amount must be added. The computation must

exclude any attorney fees paid by the disability benefit recipient as authorized under applicable workers' compensation laws. The computation must also exclude permanent partial disability payments provided under section 176.101, subdivision 2a, and retraining payments under section 176.102, subdivision 11, if the permanent partial disability or retraining payments are reported to the executive director in a manner specified by the executive director.

(c) The equivalent salary is the amount determined under clause (1) or (2), whichever is greater:

(1) the salary the disabled member received as of the date of the disability; or

(2) the salary currently payable for the same employment position or substantially similar positions in the applicable government subdivision.

Subd. 2a. Reduction restored; overpayment. A disabled member who is eligible to receive a disability benefit under subdivision 2 as of June 30, 1987, and whose disability benefit amount had been reduced prior to July 1, 1987, as a result of the receipt of workers' compensation benefits, must have the disability benefit payment amount restored, as of July 1, 1987, calculated in accordance with subdivision 2. However, a disabled member is not entitled to receive retroactive repayment of any disability benefit amounts lost before July 1, 1987, as a result of the reduction required before that date because of the receipt of workers' compensation benefits.

Any disability benefit overpayments made before July 1, 1987, and occurring because of the failure to reduce the disability benefit payment to the extent required because of the receipt of workers' compensation benefits, may be collected by the association through the reduction of disability benefit or annuity payment made on or after July 1, 1987, until the overpayment is fully recovered.

Subd. 3. Regular disability benefit. (a) A member of the police and fire plan, other than a firefighter covered by section 353.6511, or a police officer covered by section 353.6512, who qualifies for a regular disability benefit as defined in section 353.01, subdivision 46, is entitled to receive a disability benefit, after filing a valid application, in an amount equal to 45 percent of the average salary as defined in section 353.01, subdivision 17a.

(b) To be eligible for a benefit under paragraph (a), the member must have at least one year of allowable service credit and have:

(1) not met the age and vesting requirements for a retirement annuity under section 353.651, subdivision 1; or

(2) met the age and vesting requirements under that subdivision, but does not have at least 15 years of allowable service credit.

(c) If paragraph (b), clause (2), applies, the disability benefit must be paid for a period of 60 months from the disability benefit accrual date and, at the end of that period, is subject to provisions of subdivision 5a.

(d) For a member who is employed as a full-time firefighter by the Department of Military Affairs of the state of Minnesota, allowable service as a full-time state Military Affairs Department firefighter credited by the Minnesota State Retirement System may be used in meeting the minimum allowable service requirement of this subdivision.

Subd. 3a. Total and permanent regular disability; computation of benefits. (a) A member of the police and fire plan, other than a firefighter covered by section 353.6511, or a police officer covered by

section 353.6512, whose disabling condition is determined to be a regular disability under section 353.01, subdivision 46, that is also a permanent and total disability as defined in section 353.01, subdivision 19, is entitled to receive, for life, a disability benefit in an amount equal to 45 percent of the average salary as defined in section 353.01, subdivision 17a, plus an additional 3.0 percent of that average salary for each year of service in excess of 15 years.

(b) A disability benefit payable under paragraph (a) is subject to eligibility review under section 353.33, subdivision 6, but the review may be waived if the executive director receives a written statement from the association's medical advisor that no improvement can be expected in the member's disabling condition that was the basis for payment of the benefit under paragraph (a). A member receiving a disability benefit under this subdivision who is found to no longer be permanently and totally disabled as defined under section 353.01, subdivision 19, but continues to meet the definition for receipt of a regular disability under section 353.01, subdivision 46, is subject to subdivision 3 upon written notice from the association's medical advisor that the person is no longer considered permanently and totally disabled.

(c) A member approved for disability benefits under this subdivision may elect to receive a normal disability benefit or an actuarial equivalent optional annuity. If the election of an actuarial equivalent optional annuity is not made at the time the total and permanent disability benefit accrues, an election must be made within 90 days before the member attains normal retirement age as defined in section 353.01, subdivision 37, paragraph (b), or having collected disability benefits for 60 months, whichever is later. No surviving spouse benefits are payable if the member dies during the period in which a normal total and permanent disability benefit is being paid. If a member receiving disability benefits who has dependent children dies, subdivision 6a, paragraph (c), applies.

Subd. 4. Limitation on disability benefit payments. (a) No member is entitled to receive a disability benefit payment when there remains to the member's credit unused annual leave, sick leave, or any other employer-provided salary continuation plan, or under any other circumstances when, during the period of disability, there has been no impairment of the person's salary as a police officer, a firefighter, or a paramedic as defined in section 353.64, subdivision 10, whichever applies.

(b) If a disabled member resumes a gainful occupation with earnings that, when added to the single life disability benefit, and workers' compensation benefit if applicable, exceed the disability benefit recipient's reemployment earnings limit, the amount of the disability benefit must be reduced during the months of employment and receipt of workers' compensation benefits, if applicable, as provided in this paragraph. The disability benefit recipient's reemployment earnings limit is the greater of:

(1) the monthly salary earned at the date of disability; or

(2) 125 percent of the base monthly salary currently paid by the employing governmental subdivision for similar positions.

(c) The disability benefit must be reduced by one dollar for each three dollars by which the total amount of the current monthly disability benefit, any monthly workers' compensation benefits if applicable, and actual monthly earnings exceed the greater disability benefit recipient's reemployment earnings limit. In no event may the monthly disability benefit as adjusted under this subdivision exceed the disability benefit originally allowed.

Subd. 5. [Repealed, 2007 c 134 art 4 s 36]

Subd. 5a. **Cessation of disability benefit.** (a) The association shall cease the payment of any disability benefit the first of the month following the reinstatement of a member to full time or less than full-time service in a position covered by the police and fire fund.

(b) A disability benefit paid to a disabled member of the police and fire plan, that was granted under laws in effect after June 30, 2007, terminates at the end of the month in which the member:

(1) reaches normal retirement age;

(2) if the disability benefit is payable for a 60-month period as determined under subdivisions 1 and 3, as applicable, the first of the month following the expiration of the 60-month period; or

(3) if the disabled member so chooses, the end of the month in which the member has elected to convert to an early retirement annuity under section 353.651, subdivision 4.

(c) If the police and fire plan member continues to be disabled when the disability benefit terminates under this subdivision, the member is deemed to be retired. The individual is entitled to receive a normal retirement annuity or an early retirement annuity under section 353.651, whichever is applicable, as further specified in paragraph (d) or (e). If the individual did not previously elect an optional annuity under subdivision 1b, paragraph (a), the individual may elect an optional annuity under subdivision 1b, paragraph (b).

(d) A member of the police and fire plan who is receiving a disability benefit under this section may, upon application, elect to receive an early retirement annuity under section 353.651, subdivision 4, at any time after attaining age 50, but must convert to a retirement annuity no later than the end of the month in which the disabled member attains normal retirement age. An early retirement annuity elected under this subdivision must be calculated on the disabled member's accrued years of service and average salary as defined in section 353.01, subdivision 17a, and when elected, the member is deemed to be retired.

(e) When an individual's disability benefit terminates under paragraph (b), clause (1) or (2), and is recalculated as a retirement annuity, the annuity must be based on clause (1) or (2), whichever provides the greater amount:

(1) the benefit amount at the time of reclassification, including all prior adjustments provided under Minnesota Statutes 2008, section 11A.18, through January 1, 2009, and thereafter as provided in section 356.415; or

(2) a benefit amount computed on the member's actual years of accrued allowable service credit and the law in effect at the time the disability benefit first accrued, plus any increases that would have applied since that date under Minnesota Statutes 2008, section 11A.18, through January 1, 2009, and thereafter as provided in section 356.415.

Subd. 6. [Repealed, 1993 c 307 art 4 s 54]

Subd. 6a. **Disability survivor benefits for pre-July 1, 2007, disabilitants.** (a) If a member who is receiving a disability benefit that was granted under the laws in effect before July 1, 2007, dies before attaining normal retirement age as defined under section 353.01, subdivision 37, paragraph (b), or within five years of the effective date of the disability, whichever is later, the surviving spouse shall receive a survivor benefit under section 353.657, subdivision 2, paragraph (a), clause (2); or 2a, unless the surviving spouse elected to receive a refund under section 353.32, subdivision 1. The joint and survivor optional annuity under subdivision 2a is based on the minimum disability benefit under subdivision 1 or 3, or the deceased member's allowable service, whichever is greater.

(b) If the disability benefit was granted under the laws in effect before July 1, 2007, and the disabilitant is living at the age required for receipt of a retirement annuity under section 353.651, subdivision 1, or five years after the effective date of the disability, whichever is later, the disabled member may continue to receive a normal disability benefit, or the member may elect a joint and survivor optional annuity under section 353.30. The optional annuity is based on the minimum disability benefit under subdivision 1 or 3, or the member's allowable service, whichever is greater. The election of this joint and survivor annuity must occur within 90 days before attaining normal retirement age as defined under section 353.01, subdivision 37, paragraph (b), or within 90 days before the five-year anniversary of the effective date of the disability benefit, whichever is later. The optional annuity takes effect the first of the month following the month in which the person attains the age required for receipt of a retirement annuity under section 353.651, subdivision 1, or reaches the five-year anniversary of the effective date of the disability benefit, whichever is later.

(c) If any disabled member dies while receiving a benefit and has a dependent child or children, the association shall grant a dependent child benefit under section 353.657, subdivision 3.

Subd. 7. [Repealed, 1992 c 432 art 2 s 51]

Subd. 8. **Application procedure to determine eligibility for police and fire plan disability benefits.** The application procedures to determine eligibility for police and fire plan disability benefits are defined under section 353.031.

Subd. 9. [Repealed, 2007 c 134 art 4 s 36]

Subd. 10. **Accrual of benefits.** (a) Except for a total and permanent disability under subdivision 1a, a disability benefit begins to accrue when the applicant is no longer receiving any form of compensation, whether salary or paid leave 90 days preceding the filing of an application; or, if annual or sick leave, or any other employer-paid salary continuation plan is paid for more than the 90-day period, from the date on which the payment of salary ceased, whichever is later. Except for a total and permanent disability under subdivision 1a, no member is entitled to receive a disability benefit payment when there remains to the member's credit any unused annual leave, sick leave, or any other employer-paid salary continuation benefit, or under any other circumstances when, during the period of disability, there has been no impairment of the person's salary.

(b) Payment of the disability benefit must not continue beyond the end of the month in which entitlement has terminated. If the disabilitant dies prior to negotiating the check for the month in which death occurs, payment must be made to the surviving spouse or, if none, to the designated beneficiary or, if none, to the estate.

Subd. 11. [Repealed, 2007 c 134 art 4 s 36]

Subd. 12. [Repealed, 2007 c 134 art 4 s 36]

Subd. 13. **Chemical dependency limitations to disability benefit eligibility.** (a) No benefits are payable for any disability resulting in whole or in part from the member's current use of illegal drugs. This exclusion does not apply to a member who:

(1) has successfully completed a supervised drug rehabilitation program or has otherwise been rehabilitated successfully and is no longer engaging in such use; or

(2) is participating in a supervised rehabilitation program and is no longer engaging in such use.

(b) "Illegal use of drugs" means the use of drugs, the possession or distribution of which is unlawful under United States Code, title 21, section 801. "Illegal use of drugs" does not include the use of a drug taken under the supervision of a licensed health care professional, or other uses authorized by United States Code, title 21, or other provisions of law.

Subd. 14. **Postretirement adjustment eligibility.** A disability benefit under this section is eligible for postretirement adjustments under section 356.415.

History: 1971 c 297 s 3; 1973 c 753 s 72-74; 1975 c 102 s 20,21; 1975 c 359 s 23; 1976 c 329 s 28; 1977 c 429 s 63; 1978 c 796 s 38; 1979 c 216 s 19; 1981 c 68 s 23,24; 1981 c 180 s 16; 1981 c 224 s 96; 1983 c 85 s 2; 1Sp1985 c 7 s 15; 1986 c 444; 1987 c 284 art 5 s 14,15; 1987 c 372 art 1 s 7; art 9 s 20,21; 1989 c 319 art 3 s 22; art 17 s 14,15; 1990 c 570 art 11 s 9,10; 1991 c 341 s 23; 1992 c 432 art 2 s 19; 1993 c 307 art 4 s 34-39; 1993 c 352 s 5; 1994 c 463 s 1; 1997 c 233 art 1 s 42; 2000 c 461 art 3 s 23,24; 2002 c 392 art 11 s 52; 2004 c 267 art 8 s 20-25; 1Sp2005 c 8 art 1 s 14; 2006 c 212 art 3 s 35; 2006 c 271 art 3 s 29; art 4 s 1-3; 2007 c 134 art 4 s 15-25; 2008 c 349 art 5 s 23; art 12 s 1; 2009 c 169 art 1 s 40,41; 1Sp2011 c 8 art 6 s 9-12,19; art 7 s 9-12,19; 2012 c 286 art 6 s 4; 2013 c 111 art 4 s 9-11; 2015 c 68 art 12 s 19-23; 2020 c 108 art 6 s 13,14