What is a Long Term Disability Insurance (LTDI) benefit?

- This benefit provides income while you are disabled.
- This benefit ends when you turn 65 years old. If you are 61 or older when the benefit begins, you may receive the benefit longer.
- The amount of the benefit is 40% of your average salary (based on your three highest years of earnings). If you are not covered by Social Security (based on your work record), LTDI provides 50% of your average salary.
- There is no death benefit with LTDI. If your illness is serious, please contact ETF to discuss all of your options.
- Each year, we will ask you to complete a form telling us how much money you made. We may also ask your doctor if you are still disabled.

This packet provides general information. Please contact the Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF) for more detailed information and instructions on how to apply for this Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) benefit.
Eligibility

Am I Eligible to Apply?
I must meet all four conditions below.

- I have stopped working because of my disability*.
- I had been working in WRS-covered employment until I became disabled. (If you began working before October 16, 1992 without a break in service, contact ETF for information about the 40.63 disability retirement program.)
- If I terminated my job because of my disability, I have not made more than the earnings limit* per year since then.
- I worked at least one-third of a year in five of the last seven years; OR my disability is work related. (If the disability is work related, apply within two years of the last day worked.)

“SPECIAL” ELIGIBILITY FOR PROTECTIVE OCCUPATIONS* ONLY

- I meet the conditions above, I became disabled between ages 50 and 55, I have worked for at least 15 years, and I can no longer do my job.

*See “Definitions”
Application Process

How do I apply?

- Contact ETF for a disability benefit estimate and detailed information. See the “Contact” tab.
- Contact Aetna to file a claim. See the “Contact” tab.
- File your claim with Aetna as soon as possible after your last day worked. The effective date of your benefit can be no earlier than 90 days before your claim is filed. If you wait, you could miss some benefits.
- It takes two to three months to process the claim because we need to get information from your employer and doctors.
- Your claim will be cancelled after one year if we do not receive everything we need.
What are the requirements for my claim to be approved?

If you are eligible, then:

- Two licensed medical doctors must complete a form stating that you are disabled (one of the doctors must specialize in your disability).
- Your employer must verify that you have stopped working due to a disability and that you are not expected to return to work.

You will receive a letter when your claim is approved telling you how much your benefit will be and when it will start.
**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q: Must I terminate my employment to receive LTDI benefits?**

A: No, your employer may keep you on a leave of absence for up to 36 months. After that, you will be considered terminated for WRS purposes. However, if you wish to bank your unused sick leave to pay for State of Wisconsin Group Health Insurance premiums, you must terminate your employment.

**Q: Can I work while receiving LTDI benefits? Is there a limit to how much I can earn?**

A: Yes, you can work and there is an earnings limit*. The earnings limit changes each year. Go to etf.wi.gov/members/benefits_disability_ins.htm for this year’s earnings limit. If you earn more than this amount in a calendar year, your LTDI benefit will be stopped and may be started again the next year. If you earn more than the earnings limit a second time, your benefit will be terminated.

**Q: What happens to my WRS life insurance when I receive LTDI benefits?**

A: Your life insurance continues, but you do not have to pay premiums. However, be sure to pay your premiums until you are notified that they are being waived.

**Q: What happens to my WRS health insurance when I receive LTDI benefits?**

A: Your health insurance can continue. If your health insurance has lapsed or you are currently on COBRA, you will have one chance to apply for health insurance coverage once your LTDI benefit is approved. You pay the full health insurance premium.

*See “Definitions”
Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

Q: How does Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) affect my LTDI benefit?
A: SSDI does not affect your LTDI benefit. However, if you are approved for SSDI, we might not have to contact your doctor each year to confirm that you are still disabled. You should send ETF a copy of your SSDI award letter.

Q: If I receive Income Continuation Insurance (ICI) benefits, how does LTDI affect my ICI?
A: LTDI reduces the amount you receive from ICI. The original amount of your LTDI benefit will be subtracted from your ICI payment if the LTDI payments cover the same period as ICI payments.

Q: What happens to my WRS account while I receive LTDI?
A: Supplemental contributions* may be paid into your retirement account as long as you meet all requirements. These supplemental contributions increase the value of your WRS account.

Q: What happens if I apply for a benefit from my WRS account while I am receiving LTDI?
A: Depending on your individual situation, you may or may not want to apply for a benefit from your WRS account while on LTDI. This could reduce or stop the amount of your LTDI benefit, and you would not get supplemental contributions. Contact ETF to discuss what is best for you.

*See “Definitions”
Disability – the inability to engage in any substantial gainful activity by reason of a medically determinable physical or mental impairment that can be expected to result in death or to be of a long-continued and indefinite duration.

Earnings Limit – the maximum amount of money you can make in a year. This amount changes each year. Go to etf.wi.gov/members/benefits_disability_ins.htm for the current year’s earnings limit.

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

Substantial Gainful Activity – employment in a position for which the pay will exceed the earnings limit.

Supplemental Contributions – monthly contributions paid by the WRS to your retirement account at 7% of your final average salary if your LTDI benefits are not terminated or suspended, you are not earning WRS creditable service, you have not taken a separation or retirement benefit, and you have not qualified to receive Duty Disability benefits. Your final average salary is adjusted each year.
There are several forms of interest to LTDI applicants.

**Required:** *LTDI Medical Report* form (ET-5338). You will need to complete two *LTDI Medical Report* forms (ET-5338)* to apply for an LTDI benefit.

Complete the top portion, sign and take the form to two of your doctors. One of the two doctors must be a specialist in the area of your disability. Your doctors need to complete, sign, and mail or fax the reports to ETF.

*Certain protective occupation employees will use the *LTDI Special Disability Medical Report* (ET-5353) instead of the *LTDI Medical Report* form (ET-5338).

**Optional:** You may also choose to complete the *Beneficiary Designation* form (ET-2320).

You may contact us for these forms (see the “Contact Us” tab). If you requested forms, they may already be enclosed in this folder.

Form numbers are in the lower left-hand corner of each form.
Contact Us

Call ETF

Toll Free: 1-877-533-5020
Local Madison: 608-266-3285
Fax: 608-267-4549

Wisconsin Relay Service
(for hearing & speech impaired)
7-1-1 or
1-800-947-3529 (English)
1-800-833-7813 (Spanish)

Call Aetna

Toll Free: 1-800-960-0052
Fax: 1-866-667-1987

Write Aetna

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Lexington, KY 40512-4560

Send Aetna an E-mail

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Visit Our Internet Site/View Our Online Videos

etf.wi.gov (Look for the red envelope to signup for ETF E-mail Updates.)
or etf.wi.gov/webcasts.htm

Write Us

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Madison, WI 53707-7931

Send Us an E-mail

Go to etf.wi.gov
Click on “contact etf” and click on a category