

145.35 Providing disability coverage for on-duty illness or injury.

(A) As used in this section, "on-duty illness or injury" means an illness or injury that occurred during or resulted from performance of duties under the direct supervision of a member's appointing authority.

(B) The public employees retirement system shall provide disability coverage to each member who has at least five years of total service credit and disability coverage for on-duty illness or injury to each member who is a PERS law enforcement officer or Hamilton county municipal court bailiff, regardless of length of service.

Not later than October 16, 1992, the public employees retirement board shall give each person who is a member on July 29, 1992, the opportunity to elect disability coverage either under section 145.36 of the Revised Code or under section 145.361 of the Revised Code. The board shall mail notice of the election, accompanied by an explanation of the coverage under each of the Revised Code sections and a form on which the election is to be made, to each member at the member's last known address. The board shall also provide the explanation and form to any member on request.

Regardless of whether the member actually receives notice of the right to make an election, a member who fails to file a valid election under this section shall be considered to have elected disability coverage under section 145.36 of the Revised Code. To be valid, an election must be made on the form provided by the retirement board, signed by the member, and filed with the board not later than one hundred eighty days after the date the notice was mailed, or, in the case of a form provided at the request of a member, a date specified by rule of the retirement board. Once made, an election is irrevocable, but if the member ceases to be a member of the retirement system, the election is void. If a person who makes an election under this section also makes an election under section 3307.62 or 3309.39 of the Revised Code, the election made for the system that pays a disability benefit to that person shall govern the benefit.

Disability coverage shall be provided under section 145.361 of the Revised Code for persons who become members after July 29, 1992, and for members who elect under this division to be covered under section 145.361 of the Revised Code.

The retirement board may adopt rules governing elections made under this division.

(C) Application for a disability benefit may be made by a member, by a person acting in the member's behalf, or by the member's employer, provided the member has disability coverage under section 145.36 or 145.361 of the Revised Code and is not receiving a disability benefit under any other Ohio state or municipal retirement program. Application must be made within two years from the date the member's contributing service terminated or the date the member ceased to make contributions to the PERS defined benefit plan under section 145.814 of the Revised Code, unless the retirement board determines that the member's medical records demonstrate conclusively that at the time the two-year period expired, the member was physically or mentally incapacitated for duty and unable to make an application. Application may not be made by or for any person receiving age and service retirement benefits under section 145.33, 145.331, 145.34, or 145.37 of the Revised Code or any person who, pursuant to section 145.40 of the Revised Code, has been paid the accumulated contributions standing to the credit of the person's individual account in the employees' savings fund. The application shall be made on a form provided by the retirement board.

(D) The benefit payable to any member who is approved for a disability benefit shall become effective

on the first day of the month immediately following the later of the following:

- (1) The last day for which compensation was paid;
- (2) The attainment of eligibility for a disability benefit.

(E) Medical examination of a member who has applied for a disability benefit shall be conducted by a competent disinterested physician or physicians selected by the board to determine whether the member is mentally or physically incapacitated for the performance of duty by a disabling condition either permanent or presumed to be permanent. The disability must have occurred since last becoming a member or have increased since last becoming a member to such extent as to make the disability permanent or presumed to be permanent. A disability is presumed to be permanent if it is expected to last for a continuous period of not less than twelve months following the filing of the application.

If the physician or physicians determine that the member qualifies for a disability benefit, the board concurs with the determination, and the member agrees to medical treatment as specified in division (F) of this section, the member shall receive a disability benefit under section 145.36 or 145.361 of the Revised Code. The action of the board shall be final.

(F) The public employees retirement board shall adopt rules requiring a disability benefit recipient, as a condition of continuing to receive a disability benefit, to agree in writing to obtain any medical treatment recommended by the board's physician and submit medical reports regarding the treatment. If the board determines that a disability benefit recipient is not obtaining the medical treatment or the board does not receive a required medical report, the disability benefit shall be suspended until the treatment is obtained, the report is received by the board, or the board's physician certifies that the treatment is no longer helpful or advisable. Should the recipient's failure to obtain treatment or submit a medical report continue for one year, the recipient's right to the disability benefit shall be terminated as of the effective date of the original suspension.

(G) In the event an employer files an application for a disability benefit as a result of a member having been separated from service because the member is considered to be mentally or physically incapacitated for the performance of the member's present duty, and the physician or physicians selected by the board reports to the board that the member is physically and mentally capable of performing service similar to that from which the member was separated and the board concurs in the report, the board shall so certify to the employer and the employer shall restore the member to the member's previous position and salary or to a similar position and salary.

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145.362 Disability benefit recipient to retain membership status.

A disability benefit recipient shall retain membership status and shall be considered on leave of absence from employment during the first five years following the effective date of a disability benefit, notwithstanding any contrary provisions in this chapter.

The public employees retirement board shall require any disability benefit recipient to undergo an annual medical examination, except that the board may waive the medical examination if the board's physician or physicians certify that the recipient's disability is ongoing. If any disability benefit recipient refuses to submit to a medical examination, the recipient's disability benefit shall be suspended until withdrawal of the refusal. Should the refusal continue for one year, all the recipient's rights in and to the disability benefit shall be terminated as of the effective date of the original suspension.

On completion of the examination by an examining physician or physicians selected by the board, the physician or physicians shall report and certify to the board whether the disability benefit recipient is no longer physically and mentally incapable of resuming the service from which the recipient was found disabled. If the board concurs in the report that the disability benefit recipient is no longer incapable, the payment of the disability benefit shall be terminated not later than three months after the date of the board's concurrence or upon employment as a public employee. If the leave of absence has not expired, the retirement board shall certify to the disability benefit recipient's last employer before being found disabled that the recipient is no longer physically and mentally incapable of resuming service that is the same or similar to that from which the recipient was found disabled. The employer shall restore the recipient to the recipient's previous position and salary or to a position and salary similar thereto, unless the recipient was dismissed or resigned in lieu of dismissal for dishonesty, misfeasance, malfeasance, or conviction of a felony.

Each disability benefit recipient shall file with the board an annual statement of earnings, current medical information on the recipient's condition, and any other information required in rules adopted by the board. The board may waive the requirement that a disability benefit recipient file an annual statement of earnings or current medical information if the board's physician certifies that the recipient's disability is ongoing.

The board shall annually examine the information submitted by the recipient. If a disability benefit recipient refuses to file the statement or information, the disability benefit shall be suspended until the statement and information are filed. If the refusal continues for one year, the recipient's right to the disability benefit shall be terminated as of the effective date of the original suspension.

If a disability benefit recipient is restored to service by, or elected to an elective office with, an employer covered by this chapter, the recipient's disability benefit shall cease.

The board may terminate a disability benefit at the request of the recipient.

If disability retirement under section 145.36 of the Revised Code is terminated for any reason, the annuity and pension reserves at that time in the annuity and pension reserve fund shall be transferred to the employees' savings fund and the employers' accumulation fund, respectively. If the total disability benefit paid is less than the amount of the accumulated contributions of the member transferred to the annuity and pension reserve fund at the time of the member's disability retirement, the difference shall be transferred from the annuity and pension reserve fund to another fund as may be required. In determining the amount of a member's account following the termination of disability

retirement for any reason, the total amount paid shall be charged against the member's refundable account.

If a disability allowance paid under section 145.361 of the Revised Code is terminated for any reason, the reserve on the allowance at that time in the annuity and pension reserve fund shall be transferred from that fund to the employers' accumulation fund.

If a former disability benefit recipient again becomes a contributor, other than as an other system retiree under section 145.38 of the Revised Code, to this system, the state teachers retirement system, or the school employees retirement system, and completes an additional two years of service credit, the former disability benefit recipient shall be entitled to full service credit for the period as a disability benefit recipient.

If any employer employs any member who is receiving a disability benefit, the employer shall file notice of employment with the retirement board, designating the date of employment. In case the notice is not filed, the total amount of the benefit paid during the period of employment prior to notice shall be charged to and paid by the employer.

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