

This fact sheet provides information to help you understand the provisions of the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP), but is not a contract document. The basic statutory provisions of the SBP law are in [Chapter 73, Title 10, United States Code](#).

## **General Information on SBP Beneficiary Categories**

Your military retired pay stops on the date of your death. SBP was designed to give you a way to provide a monthly income to your eligible survivor(s) following your death. Remember, when you enroll in the SBP, you are electing coverage for a category of beneficiary. For example, if you elect spouse coverage, you're covering not only your current spouse, but also any future spouse you may later marry if your current marriage ends by death or divorce. Upon remarriage, your new spouse would automatically become eligible to receive SBP benefits after one year of marriage, and premium deductions in your retired pay would resume on the first day of the month after your one-year anniversary. You have the option, however, to terminate your participation within one year of remarrying.

If you elect child coverage and then later acquire an additional child or children either through birth, adoption, or marriage, that child would become an eligible beneficiary upon the date of acquisition.

The SBP beneficiary election is essentially irrevocable, although changes are permitted to accommodate normal changes which can occur in a family. A few examples are:

- If you have no dependent children when you retire and you elect spouse-only coverage, you may change your election to spouse and child coverage if you later acquire a child, by notifying the Defense Finance and Accounting Service within one year of acquiring the child or children. Similarly, if you are unmarried and have dependent children when you retire and you elect child-only coverage, you may change your election later to spouse and child coverage if you marry if you notify DFAS before the first anniversary of your marriage.

- If you are single with no dependent children at retirement and decline coverage, you can elect to cover a new spouse and/or newly acquired children, but you must notify DFAS within one year of acquiring the family member(s).

- You can also change a spouse-only or spouse and child election to a former spouse or former spouse and child election within one year after a divorce.

- When two or more retirees name the same individual as an SBP spouse or former-spouse beneficiary, the annuitant can receive only one annuity and must choose which annuity to receive.

Most civilian pension survivorship plans offer only one or two options. The military SBP is unique in that it offers a variety of choices; however, if you decline coverage for eligible family members, you cannot later choose to enroll in the SBP for that category of beneficiary (unless through a Congressionally approved open enrollment which normally requires back premiums, interest, and a penalty

to be paid).

For example, if you are married, decline spouse coverage, later become divorced and remarry, you would not be able to elect coverage for your new spouse. Similarly, if you are married and decline spouse coverage, you would not be permitted to change your election to former-spouse coverage for either that spouse or a future spouse, even if ordered to do so by a state court as part of a divorce settlement.

The same principle applies to child coverage. If you have an eligible child and you choose not to elect child coverage, you would not be able to cover any future child or children you might acquire, including natural children, stepchildren, grandchildren, or adopted children.

There are several SBP beneficiary categories available. A member can elect coverage for one of the following categories:

- Spouse-Only Coverage
- Child-Only Coverage
- Spouse and Child Coverage
- Former Spouse Coverage
- Former Spouse and Child Coverage
- Insurable Interest Coverage