



## “Pick Your Person” Beneficiary Designation Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What is a beneficiary?

A beneficiary is a person (or people) you name to receive a benefit in the event of your death.

### 2. Why is it important to choose a beneficiary?

Naming a beneficiary ensures your money will go where you want. Your loved ones will get timely access—without legal hassles—to money they’re entitled to in the event of your passing.

### 3. What happens if I don’t choose a beneficiary?

If you don’t name a beneficiary, your benefit may not be paid to the person you intended, or the payment may be delayed. Consult with your personal financial advisor to see what’s best in your personal situation.

### 4. Which benefits need a beneficiary?

- Life insurance – The Hartford
- Health savings account (Anchor Choice Plan) – BCBSRI/UMB Bank
- Retirement savings plans\*
  - *Voluntary* 457(b) deferred compensation plans – Fidelity, TIAA, Voya
  - *Compulsory* hybrid retirement plan
    - Employees’ Retirement System of Rhode Island (ERSRI) Defined Benefit Plan – ERSRI
    - 401(a) defined contribution plan – TIAA

\* Special retirement plan notes for nonclassified employees at the Community College of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, and the University of Rhode Island:

- If you were not previously employed elsewhere in the classified or unclassified service of the State, you likely have a different retirement savings plan administered under the Council on Postsecondary Education (the Council).
- Regardless of other previous State employment, you also have access to a separate 457(b) deferred compensation plan under the Council and could contribute to either the State’s or the Council’s 457(b) deferred compensation plan.

For additional information regarding designating beneficiaries under either or both the Council’s retirement plan and/or 457(b) deferred compensation plan, please refer to your institution’s human resources office.

### 5. How do I elect my beneficiary? What is the process?

The process varies for each benefit vendor. Visit the [Naming Your Beneficiaries](#) page of the virtual benefits fair (<http://www.exploremployeebenefits.ri.gov/naming-your-beneficiaries>) for detailed information specific to each vendor.



**6. Is there a place to choose a beneficiary for all my benefit plans at once?**

Unfortunately, no. Since all your benefit plans are managed by different entities, that information is kept separately with the individual benefit vendors. Visit the [Naming Your Beneficiaries](#) page of the virtual benefits fair for more information.

**7. What information do I need to complete my election?**

For most benefits, you will need your beneficiary's legal name and residence address. Some vendors may require your beneficiary's Social Security number.

**8. Didn't I already name beneficiaries when I was first eligible for benefits? Why do I need to do it again?**

Although you may have elected your beneficiaries when you first became eligible for benefits or completed your enrollment, it's a good idea to review your beneficiary designations periodically. Your circumstances may have changed, and you may wish to change your elections. Although you can change your beneficiary at any time, during Open Enrollment—when you are thinking about your benefits—is the perfect time to review your elections.

**9. Doesn't the State Office of Employee Benefits keep track of my beneficiaries for me?**

No. Your beneficiary information is managed by the individual benefit vendors, and they maintain that information separately.

**10. I am satisfied with my current beneficiary designations and don't wish to make any changes at this time. Do I need to do anything?**

No. If you take no action, your current beneficiary elections will remain as they are. No changes will be made to your elections. If your situation changes, you may review your elections and make new beneficiary designations at any time.

**11. What should I consider when choosing a beneficiary?**

When choosing a beneficiary, you need to think about the people who depend on you financially, for example, your spouse or dependent children. Consult with your financial advisor to discuss the best person or people to choose in your specific situation.

**12. What is the difference between a primary beneficiary and a contingent (secondary) beneficiary?**

Contingent beneficiaries are second in line for your benefit. They would receive a benefit only if your primary beneficiary cannot. It's a good idea to elect a contingent beneficiary in case your primary can't be located, declines the benefit, isn't legally permitted to accept it, or dies before you.

**13. Can I change my beneficiaries any time or only during Open Enrollment?**

You can change your beneficiary elections at any time.



**14. Is there a limit to the number of times I can change my beneficiary?**

No. There is no limit to the number of times you can change your beneficiary.

**15. Is there a limit to the number of people I can name for any specific benefit plan?**

In many cases, you may choose multiple beneficiaries for a single benefit and indicate the percentage of the benefit each beneficiary should receive. Check with the individual benefit vendor for rules specific to your situation.

**16. Can I name someone different for each benefit plan?**

Yes, you can choose a different beneficiary for each benefit plan.

**17. Am I required to name my spouse as my beneficiary?**

No. You may choose anyone you wish to be your primary and/or contingent beneficiary. However, in some cases, your spouse may be required to sign a waiver if you elect someone other than your spouse.

**18. Can I name a child as a beneficiary?**

You may name your dependent child as a beneficiary. However, be aware that if your child is underage, a court may appoint a legal guardian to administer the benefit.

**19. Can I name a trust, estate, charity, or other non-person as my beneficiary?**

Yes. Consult with your personal financial advisor, and check with the individual benefit vendor for their rules specific to this type of election.

**20. Do I need to inform my beneficiaries or get their consent before I name them?**

Rules vary by benefit plan and state of residence. Consult with your personal financial advisor, and check with the individual benefit vendor for rules specific to your situation.

**21. Doesn't my will take care of this?**

Not necessarily. In some cases, your beneficiary designation takes precedence over your will. Speak with your personal financial advisor about your estate planning.

**22. Where can I get more information?**

For more information, visit the [Naming Your Beneficiaries](http://www.exploreemployeebenefits.ri.gov/naming-your-beneficiaries) page of the virtual benefits fair (<http://www.exploreemployeebenefits.ri.gov/naming-your-beneficiaries>).