

plan. H will be treated as the surviving spouse under the QPSA and QJSA unless W obtains H's consent to waive the QPSA or QJSA or both. The fact that W married S after W's divorce from H is disregarded. If, however, the QDRO had provided that H shall be treated as W's current spouse only with respect to benefits that accrued prior to the divorce, then H's consent would be needed by W to waive the QPSA or QJSA with respect to benefits accrued before the divorce. S's consent would be required with respect to the remainder of the benefits.

(2) In the preceding examples, if the QDRO ordered that a portion of W's benefit (either through separate accounts or a percentage of the benefit) must be distributed to H rather than ordering that H be treated as W's spouse, the survivor annuity requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 would not apply to the part of W's benefit awarded H. Instead, the terms of the QDRO would determine how H's portion of W's accrued benefit is paid. W is required to obtain S's consent if W elects to waive either the QJSA or QPSA with respect to the remaining portion of W's benefit.

(C) *Amount of the QPSA or QJSA.* (1) Where, because of a QDRO, more than one individual is to be treated as the surviving spouse, a plan may provide that the total amount to be paid in the form of a QPSA or survivor portion of a QJSA may not exceed the amount that would be paid if there were only one surviving spouse. The QPSA or survivor portion of the QJSA, as the case may be, payable to each surviving spouse must be paid as an annuity based on the life of each such spouse.

(2) Where the QDRO splits the participant's accrued benefit between the participant and a former spouse (either through separate accounts or percentage of the benefit), the surviving spouse of the participant is entitled to a QPSA or QJSA based on the participant's accrued benefit as of the date of death or the annuity starting date, less the separate account or percentage that is payable to the former spouse. The calculation is made as if the separate account or percentage had been distributed to the participant prior to the relevant date.

(ii) *Current spouse.* Under section 414(p)(5), even if the applicable election periods (*i.e.*, the first day of the year in which the participant attains age 35 and 90 days before the annuity starting date) have not begun, a QDRO may provide that a current spouse shall not be treated as the current spouse of the participant for all or some purposes under sections 401(a)(11) and 417. A QDRO may provide that the current spouse waives all future rights to a QPSA or QJSA.

(iii) *Effects on benefits.* (A) A plan is not required to provide additional vesting or benefits because of a QDRO.

(B) If an alternate payee is treated pursuant to a QDRO as having an interest in the plan benefit, including a separate account or percentage of the participant's account, then the QDRO cannot provide the alternate payee with a greater right to designate a beneficiary for the alternate payee's benefit amount than the participant's right. The QJSA or QPSA provisions of section 417 do not apply to the spouse of an alternate payee.

(C) If the former spouse who is treated as a current spouse dies prior to the participant's annuity starting date, then any actual current spouse of the participant is treated as the current spouse, except as otherwise provided in a QDRO.

(iv) *Section 415 requirements.* Even though a participant's benefits are awarded to an alternate payee pursuant to a QDRO, the benefits are benefits of the participant for purposes of applying the limitations of section 415 to the participant's benefits.

[T.D. 7534, 43 FR 6943, Feb. 17, 1978, as amended by T.D. 8219, 53 FR 31850, Aug. 22, 1988; 53 FR 48534, Dec. 1, 1988]

#### § 1.401(a)-14 Commencement of benefits under qualified trusts.

(a) *In general.* Under section 401(a)(14), a trust to which section 411 applies (without regard to section 411(e)(2)) is not qualified under section 401 unless the plan of which such trust is a part provides that the payment of benefits under the plan to the participant will begin not later than the 60th day after the close of the plan year in which the latest of the following events occurs—

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(1) The attainment by the participant of age 65, or, if earlier, the normal retirement age specified under the plan,

(2) The 10th anniversary of the date on which the participant commenced participation in the plan,

(3) The termination of the participant's service with the employer, or

(4) The date specified in an election made pursuant to paragraph (b) of this section.

Notwithstanding the preceding sentence, a plan may require that a participant file a claim for benefits before payment of benefits will commence.

(b) *Election of later date*—(1) *General rule*. A plan may permit a participant to elect that the payment to him of any benefit under a plan will commence at a date later than the dates specified under paragraphs (a)(1), (2), and (3) of this section.

(2) *Manner of election*. A plan permitting an election under this paragraph shall require that such election must be made by submitting to the plan administrator a written statement, signed by the participant, which describes the benefit and the date on which the payment of such benefit shall commence.

(3) *Restriction*. An election may not be made pursuant to a plan provision permitted by this paragraph if the exercise of such election will cause benefits payable under the plan with respect to the participant in the event of his death to be more than "incidental" within the meaning of paragraph (b)(1)(i) of § 1.401-1.

(c) *Special early retirement rule*—(1) *Separation prior to early retirement age*. A trust forming part of a plan which provides for the payment of an early retirement benefit is not qualified under section 401 unless, upon satisfaction of the age requirement for such early retirement benefit, a participant who—

(i) Satisfied the service requirements for such early retirement benefit, but

(ii) Separated from service (with any nonforfeitable right to an accrued benefit) before satisfying such age requirement,

is entitled to receive not less than the reduced normal retirement benefit described in paragraph (c)(2) of this section. A plan may establish reasonable

conditions for payments of early retirement benefits (including for example, a requirement that a claim for benefits be made) if the conditions are equally applicable to participants who separate from service when eligible for an early retirement benefit and participants who separate from service earlier.

(2) *Reduced normal retirement benefit*. For purposes of this section, the reduced normal retirement benefit is the benefit to which the participant would have been entitled under the plan at normal retirement age, reduced in accordance with reasonable actuarial assumptions.

(3) *Separation prior to effective date of this section*. The provisions of this paragraph shall not apply in the case of a plan participant who separates from service before attainment of early retirement age and prior to the effective date of this section set forth in paragraph (e) of this section.

(4) *Illustration*. The provisions of this paragraph may be illustrated by the following example:

*Example*. The X Corporation Defined Benefit Plan provides that a normal retirement benefit will be payable to a participant upon attainment of age 65. The plan also provides that an actuarially reduced retirement benefit will be payable, upon application, to any participant who has completed 10 years of service with the X Corporation and attained age 60. When he is 55 years of age and has completed 10 years of service with X Corporation, A, a participant in the plan, leaves the service of X Corporation and does not return. The plan will not be qualified under section 401 unless, upon attainment of age 60 and application for benefits, A is entitled to receive a reduced normal retirement benefit described in subparagraph (2) of this paragraph.

(d) *Retroactive payment rule*. If the amount of the payment required to commence on the date determined under this section cannot be ascertained by such date, or if it is not possible to make such payment on such date because the plan administrator has been unable to locate the participant after making reasonable efforts to do so, a payment retroactive to such date may be made no later than 60 days after the earliest date on which the amount of such payment can be ascertained under the plan or the date

on which the participant is located (whichever is applicable).

(e) *Effective date.* This section shall apply to a plan for those plan years to which section 411 of the Code applies without regard to section 411(e)(2).

(Secs. 401(a)(14), 7805, Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (88 Stat. 937, 68A Stat. 917; 26 U.S.C. 401(a)(14), 7805))

[T.D. 7436, 41 FR 42651, Sept. 28, 1976; 41 FR 44690, Oct. 12, 1976]

**§ 1.401(a)-15 Requirement that plan benefits are not decreased on account of certain Social Security increases.**

(a) *In general.* Under section 401(a)(15), a trust which is part of a plan to which section 411 applies (without regard to section 411(e)(2)) is not qualified under section 401 unless, under the plan of which such trust is a part:

(1) *Benefit being received by participant or beneficiary.* A benefit (including a death or disability benefit) being received under the plan by a participant or beneficiary (other than a participant to whom subparagraph (2)(ii) of this paragraph applies, or a beneficiary of such a participant) is not decreased by reason of any post-separation social security benefit increase effective after the later of—

(i) September 2, 1974, or

(ii) The date of first receipt of any retirement benefit, death benefit, or disability benefit under the plan by the participant or by a beneficiary of the participant (whichever receipt occurs first).

(2) *Benefit to which participant separated from service has nonforfeitable right.* In the case of a benefit to which a participant has a nonforfeitable right under such plan—

(i) If such participant is separated from service and does not subsequently return to service and resume participation in the plan, such benefit is not decreased by reason of any post-separation social security benefit increase effective after the later of September 2, 1974, or separation from service, or

(ii) If such participant is separated from service and subsequently returns to service and resumes participation in the plan, such benefit is not decreased by reason of any post-separation social

security benefit increase effective after September 2, 1974, which occurs during separation from service and which would decrease such benefit to a level below the level of benefits to which he would have been entitled had he not returned to service after his separation.

(b) *Post-separation social security benefit increase.* For purposes of this section, the term “post-separation social security benefit increase” means, with respect to a participant or a beneficiary of the participant, an increase in a benefit level or wage base under title II of the Social Security Act (whether such increase is a result of an amendment of such title II or is a result of the application of the provisions of such title II) occurring after the earlier of such participant's separation from service or commencement of benefits under the plan.

(c) *Illustrations.* The provisions of paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section may be illustrated by the following examples:

*Example (1).* A plan to which section 401(a)(15) applies provides an annual benefit at the normal retirement age, 65, in the form of a stated benefit formula amount less a specified percentage of the primary insurance amount payable under title II of the Social Security Act. The plan provides no early retirement benefits. In the case of a participant who separates from service before age 65 with a nonforfeitable right to a benefit under the plan, the plan defines the primary insurance amount as the amount which the participant is entitled to receive under title II of the Social Security Act at age 65, multiplied by the ratio of the number of years of service with the employer to the number of years of service the participant would have had if he had worked for the employer until age 65. The plan does not satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(15), because social security increases that occur after a participant's separation from service will reduce the benefit the participant will receive under the plan.

*Example (2).* A plan to which section 401(a)(15) applies provides an annual benefit at the normal retirement age, 65, in the form of a stated benefit formula amount less a specified percentage of the primary insurance amount payable under title II of the Social Security Act. The plan provides no early retirement benefits. In the case of a participant who separates from service before age 65 with a nonforfeitable right to a benefit under the plan, the plan defines the primary insurance amount as the amount which the participant is entitled to receive under title