

Introduction to CalSTRS Disability Benefits

2009-2010

CalSTRS Disability Benefits

We hope that all CalSTRS members will lead long, healthy working lives. But since illness and injury can interrupt educators' careers, CalSTRS provides disability benefits to all qualifying Defined Benefit Program members.

This brochure provides basic information about CalSTRS disability coverage, eligibility requirements and the application process. It is not a comprehensive guide to disability benefits or a substitute for personalized guidance about your specific situation. If you believe you may be eligible for disability benefits, we urge you to contact CalSTRS for a detailed discussion.

For more comprehensive information, see your most recent *Member Handbook, Your Disability Benefits Guide* (available late-2009) or contact us (see back).

CalSTRS is governed by the Teachers' Retirement Law. If there is a conflict between the law and this booklet, the law prevails.



Adjustments

Under Coverage A and Coverage B, the amount of your monthly disability benefit will be reduced by any workers' compensation benefits you receive for the same disability. Under Coverage A, your disability benefit will also be reduced by other payments you receive from public systems for the same disability, such as Social Security disability benefits or income protection payments. For either coverage, if you return to any work after you are approved to receive disability benefits, your benefits will be reduced if you exceed specific earnings limits.

Health Benefits

Because CalSTRS does not provide health benefits, your disability benefits will not include health benefit coverage. Please contact your employer if you have questions regarding the continuation of your covered health benefits.

Future Health Changes

Because an individual's medical condition may improve, we periodically review the eligibility of all disability benefit recipients.

If your health or work situation changes, you must let us know.

CalSTRS Resources



WEB SITES

www.CalSTRS.com
Click *Contact Us* to e-mail

www.403bCompare.com



CALL

800-228-5453
7 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Monday through Friday

866-384-4457
Home Loan Program

888-394-2060
CalSTRS Pension2*
Personal Wealth Plan



WRITE

CalSTRS
P.O. Box 15275
Sacramento, CA
95851-0275



VISIT

Member Services
100 Waterfront Place
West Sacramento, CA 95605



FAX

916-414-5040 (*new*)

CalSTRS West Sacramento Headquarters may experience closures through June 30, 2010, due to mandatory employee furloughs.

Please call to confirm business hours.

California State Teachers' Retirement System
P.O. Box 15275
Sacramento CA 95851-0275
800-228-5453
www.CalSTRS.com
SR0377 (Rev 07/09)

Printed on recycled paper



Eligibility Basics

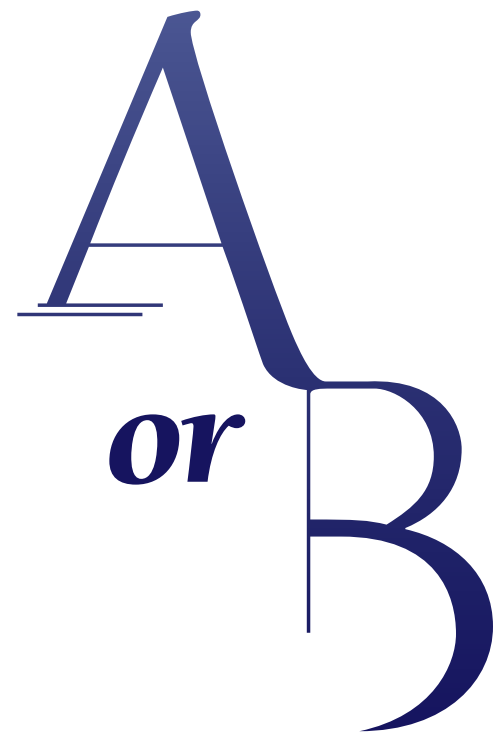
As a CalSTRS Defined Benefit Program member, you may qualify for long-term disability benefits if you have a medical condition that will prevent you from working for at least a year. You may also receive benefits for up to four of your dependent children. To receive CalSTRS disability benefits you must meet all these requirements:

1. You must have at least five years of service credit for work performed in California. Exception: If you were the victim of an unlawful act on the job, you may qualify with one year of service credit. Please contact us for more information.
2. You must have a physical or mental medical impairment that keeps you from working at your regular job or a comparable job (see 3 below). The condition must be permanent or expected to last at least a year after you stop working.
3. The impairment must prevent you from performing :
 - Your usual duties, with or without reasonable accommodation from your employer—for example, a classroom aide or special equipment.
 - Duties of a level comparable to your usual duties, which (a) you are qualified to perform or (b) you can become qualified for within a reasonable period of time through education, training or experience.
4. You must apply within certain timeframes (see Timing and Deadlines, under Application Process). Your disability must be substantiated by medical documentation.

Your disability determination will be based on CalSTRS criteria, not those used by other disability benefit providers such as Social Security. Disability benefits are not available for a medical condition that existed before you became a CalSTRS member unless the condition has substantially worsened since then.

Coverage A vs. Coverage B

There are two types of disability benefit coverage: Coverage A and Coverage B. If you became a member of CalSTRS on or after October 16, 1992, you have Coverage B. If you became a member before October 16, 1992, and did not elect Coverage B before April 1993, you have Coverage A.



In general, the basic disability benefit available under both types of coverage is 50 percent of your final compensation. In addition, you may receive 10 percent of your final compensation for each eligible, financially dependent child, up to a maximum of 40 percent of final compensation.

Coverage A

- You must be under age 60 to receive disability benefits. If you are 60 or older and have at least five years of service credit, you may apply for a service retirement.
- If you are over age 45 with fewer than 10 years of service credit, your disability benefit would be 5 percent of your final compensation times your years of service credit.
For example, with 7 years of service credit, your benefit would be 35 percent of your final compensation (7 years of service credit x 5 percent of final compensation = 35 percent of final compensation).
- When you turn 60, your disability benefit will end (unless you still have dependant children) and you may apply for service retirement. Your monthly benefit may decrease.

Coverage B

- You may apply for disability benefits at any age.
- Your disability benefits can continue for life, as long as you remain disabled.

If you're not sure which coverage you have, see your *Retirement Progress Report*, access your *myCalSTRS* account or call 800-228-5453 to speak to a customer service representative.

Application Process

Timing and Deadlines

You should apply for disability benefits before you exhaust other benefits available to you. If approved, your disability benefit will go into effect on whichever of the following dates occurs later:

- The first day of the month in which we receive your application.
- The day after the last day of service for which you were paid.

It can take up to five months to process your application. We encourage you to apply while you are working or receiving sick leave or differential pay from your employer so that you have income while your application is pending (see Filing and Review).

If you are no longer working, please contact us for information on filing timelines (see CalSTRS Resources on back).

Filing and Review

You must submit a completed *Application for Disability Benefits* to CalSTRS, not to your employer. The form is available at CalSTRS.com, from our benefits counselors, or by calling 800-228-5453.

After we receive your application, your case will be assigned to an analyst who will work with you throughout the application process and eligibility review. You must provide all information requested to document your disabling condition. We will work with you throughout the process.

Please note: If you do not submit requested information, we cannot determine your eligibility and your application will be denied.

Written Decision

The review process can take up to five months. We will send you written notice of the final decision.

If your application is not approved, you may have the right to reapply or appeal. We will describe your rights in the written notice.

Service Retirement During Evaluation of Disability Application

If you are eligible for a CalSTRS service retirement, you may receive that retirement benefit while we evaluate your disability application. This option can provide you with monthly retirement income while your disability application is pending. Please contact us for information.



CalSTRS Counseling Services

Before you apply for benefits, we recommend that you contact a CalSTRS benefits counselor to discuss your specific situation (see CalSTRS Resources on back). The counselor can explain the application process and eligibility requirements. In addition, the counselor can give you disability and service retirement benefit estimates and explain whether receiving disability benefits will affect your retirement benefits. Please note that the counselor

cannot advise you regarding whether you meet the medical qualifications for a disability benefit.

If you're at least 55 years old, you may also want to consider whether you would be better off retiring than filing for disability benefits. Our benefits counselors can provide information to help you decide.



If you are eligible for service retirement, you may receive that retirement benefit while your disability application is being evaluated.