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What are the requirements for a survivor to receive Social Security benefits?

Question

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Answer

In order to receive survivors benefits, the deceased worker must have earned the required number of Social Security credits and survivors must meet the following requirements:

- A widow or widower may be able to receive full benefits at age 65 if born before 1940. (The age to receive full benefits is gradually increasing to age 67 for widows and widowers born in 1940 or later.) Reduced widow or widower benefits can be received as early as age 60. If the surviving spouse is disabled, benefits can begin as early as age 50. For more information on widows, widowers and other survivors, visit [Widows, Widowers & Other Survivors](#).
- A widow or widower can receive benefits at any age if she or he takes care of the deceased worker's child who is entitled to a child's benefit and is younger than age 16 or disabled.
- A deceased worker's unmarried children who are younger than age 18 (or up to age 19 if they are attending elementary or secondary school full time) also can receive benefits. Children can get benefits at any age if they were disabled before age 22 and remain disabled. Under certain circumstances, benefits also can be paid to stepchildren, grandchildren or adopted children.
- A deceased worker's dependent parents can receive benefits if they are age 62 or older. (For parents to qualify as dependents, the deceased worker would have had to provide at least one-half of their support.)
- A deceased worker's former wife or husband who is age 60 or older (as early as age 50 if disabled) can get benefits if the marriage lasted at least 10 years. A former spouse, however, does not have to meet the age or length-of-marriage rule if he or she is caring for his/her child who is younger than age 16 or who is disabled and also entitled based on the deceased worker's work. The child must be the deceased worker's former spouse's natural or legally adopted child.

For more information on survivors benefits, see our publication "[Survivors Benefits](#)".