
42 U.S. Code § 416

Additional definitions

For the purposes of this subchapter—

(a) Spouse; surviving spouse

(1) The term “spouse” means a wife as defined in subsection (b) or a husband as defined in subsection (f).

(2) The term “surviving spouse” means a widow as defined in subsection (c) or a widower as defined in subsection (g).

(b) Wife

The term “wife” means the wife of an individual, but only if she (1) is the mother of his son or daughter, (2) was married to him for a period of not less than one year immediately preceding the day on which her application is filed, or (3) in the month prior to the month of her marriage to him (A) was entitled to, or on application therefor and attainment of age 62 in such prior month would have been entitled to, benefits under subsection (b), (e), or (h) of section 402 of this title, (B) had attained age eighteen and was entitled to, or on application therefor would have been entitled to, benefits under subsection (d) of such section (subject, however, to section 402(s) of this title), or (C) was entitled to, or upon application therefor and attainment of the required age (if any) would have been entitled to, a widow’s, child’s (after attainment of age 18), or parent’s insurance annuity under section 231a of title 45. For purposes of clause (2), a wife shall be deemed to have been married to an individual for a period of one year throughout the month in which occurs the first anniversary of her marriage to such individual. For purposes of subparagraph (C) of section 402(b)(1) of this title, a divorced wife shall be deemed not to be married throughout the month in which she becomes divorced.

(c) Widow

(1) The term “widow” (except when used in the first sentence of section 402(i) of this title) means the surviving wife of an individual, but only if (A) she is the mother of his son or daughter, (B) she legally adopted his son or daughter while she was married to him and while such son or daughter was under the age of eighteen, (C) he legally adopted her son or daughter while she was married to him and while such son or daughter was under the age of eighteen, (D) she was married to him at the time both of them legally adopted a child under the age of eighteen, (E) except as provided in paragraph (2), she was married to him for a period of not less than nine months immediately prior to the day on which he died, or (F) in the month prior to the month of her marriage to him (i) she was entitled to, or on application therefor and attainment of age 62 in such prior month would have been entitled to, benefits under subsection (b), (e), or (h) of section 402 of this title, (ii) she had attained age eighteen and was entitled to, or on application therefor would have been entitled to, benefits under subsection (d) of such section (subject, however, to section 402(s) of this title), or (iii) she was entitled to, or upon application therefor and attainment of the required age (if any) would have been entitled to, a widow’s, child’s (after attainment of age 18), or parent’s insurance annuity under section 231a of title 45.

(2) The requirements of paragraph (1)(E) in connection with the surviving wife of an individual shall be treated as satisfied if—

- (A) the individual had been married prior to the individual's marriage to the surviving wife,
- (B) the prior wife was institutionalized during the individual's marriage to the prior wife due to mental incompetence or similar incapacity,
- (C) during the period of the prior wife's institutionalization, the individual would have divorced the prior wife and married the surviving wife, but the individual did not do so because such divorce would have been unlawful, by reason of the prior wife's institutionalization, under the laws of the State in which the individual was domiciled at the time (as determined based on evidence satisfactory to the Commissioner of Social Security),
- (D) the prior wife continued to remain institutionalized up to the time of her death, and
- (E) the individual married the surviving wife within 60 days after the prior wife's death.

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