

§ 1.401(a)-1

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is for recordkeeping purposes only. Consequently, the funds in the medical benefits account need not be separately invested. They may be invested with funds set aside for retirement purposes without identification of which investment properties are allocable to each account. However, where the investment properties are not allocated to each account, the earnings on such properties must be allocated to each account in a reasonable manner.

(3) *Reasonable and ascertainable.* Section 401(h) further requires that amounts contributed to fund medical benefits therein described must be reasonable and ascertainable. For the rules relating to the deduction of such contributions, see paragraph (f) of § 1.404(a)-3. The employer must, at the time he makes a contribution, designate that portion of such contribution allocable to the funding of medical benefits.

(4) *Impossibility of diversion prior to satisfaction of all liabilities.* Section 401(h) further requires that it must be impossible, at any time prior to the satisfaction of all liabilities under the plan to provide for the payment of medical benefits described in section 401(h), for any part of the corpus or income of the medical benefits account to be (within the taxable year or thereafter) used for, or diverted to, any purpose other than the providing of such benefits. Consequently, a plan which, for example, under its terms, permits funds in the medical benefits account to be used for any retirement benefit provided under the plan does not satisfy the requirements of section 401(h) and will not qualify under section 401(a). However, the payment of any necessary or appropriate expenses attributable to the administration of the medical benefits account does not affect the qualification of the plan.

(5) *Reversion upon satisfaction of all liabilities.* The plan must provide that any amounts which are contributed to fund medical benefits described in section 401(h) and which remain in the medical benefits account upon the satisfaction of all liabilities arising out of the operation of the medical benefits portion of the plan are to be returned to the employer.

(6) *Forfeitures.* The plan must expressly provide that in the event an individual's interest in the medical benefits account is forfeited prior to termination of the plan an amount equal to the amount of the forfeiture must be applied as soon as possible to reduce employer contributions to fund the medical benefits described in section 401(h).

(d) *Effective date.* This section applies to taxable years of a qualified pension or annuity plan beginning after October 23, 1962.

[T.D. 6722, 29 FR 5072, Apr. 14, 1964]

§ 1.401(a)-1 Post-ERISA qualified plans and qualified trusts; in general.

(a) *Introduction—(1) In general.* This section and the following regulation sections under section 401 reflect the provisions of section 401 after amendment by the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (Pub. L. 93-406) ("ERISA").

(2) [Reserved]

(b) *Requirements for pension plans—(1) Definitely determinable benefits.* (i) In order for a pension plan to be a qualified plan under section 401(a), the plan must be established and maintained by an employer primarily to provide systematically for the payment of definitely determinable benefits to its employees over a period of years, usually for life, after retirement.

(ii) Section 1.401-1(b)(1)(i), a pre-ERISA regulation, provides rules applicable to this requirement, and that regulation is applicable except as otherwise provided.

(iii) The use of the type of plan provision described in § 1.415-1(d)(1) which automatically freezes or reduces the rate of benefit accrual or the annual addition to insure that the limitations of section 415 will not be exceeded, will not be considered to violate the requirements of this subparagraph provided that the operation of such provision precludes discretion by the employer.

[T.D. 7748, 46 FR 1695, Jan. 7, 1981]

§ 1.401(a)-2 Impossibility of diversion under qualified plan or trust.

(a) *General rule.* Section 401(a)(2) requires that in order for a trust to be

qualified, it must be impossible under the trust instrument (in the taxable year and at any time thereafter before the satisfaction of all liabilities to employees or their beneficiaries covered by the trust) for any part of the trust corpus or income to be used for, or diverted to, purposes other than for the exclusive benefit of those employees or their beneficiaries. Section 1.401-2, a pre-ERISA regulation, provides rules under section 401(a)(2) and that regulation is applicable except as otherwise provided.

(b) *Section 415 suspense account.* Paragraph (a) of this section does not apply to amounts properly allocated to a suspense account pursuant to §1.415-6(b)(6). The plan, or the trust forming part of the plan, may provide for the reversion to the employer, upon termination of the plan, of amounts held in the suspense account.

[T.D. 7748, 46 FR 1696, Jan. 7, 1981]

§ 1.401(a)-4 Optional forms of benefit (before 1994).

Q-1: How does section 401(a)(4) apply to optional forms of benefits?

A-1: (a) *In general*—(1) *Scope.* The nondiscrimination requirements of section 401(a)(4) apply to the amount of contributions or benefits, optional forms of benefit, and other benefits, rights and features (e.g., actuarial assumptions, methods of benefit calculation, loans, social security supplements, and disability benefits) under a plan. This section addresses the application of section 401(a)(4) only to optional forms of benefit under a plan. Generally, the determination of whether an optional form is nondiscriminatory under section 401(a)(4) is made by reference to the availability of such optional form, and not by reference to the utilization or actual receipt of such optional form. See Q&A-2 of this section. Even though an optional form of benefit under a plan may be nondiscriminatory under section 401(a)(4) and this §1.401(a)-4 because the availability of such optional form does not impermissibly favor employees in the highly compensated group, such plan may fail to satisfy section 401(a)(4) with respect to the amount of contributions or benefits or with respect to other benefits, rights and features if,

for example, the method of calculation or the amount or value of benefits payable under such optional form impermissibly favors the highly compensated group. See §1.411(d)-4, Q&A-1 for the definition of “optional form of benefit.”

(2) *Nondiscrimination requirements.* Each optional form of benefit provided under a plan is subject to the nondiscrimination requirement of section 401(a)(4) and thus the availability of each optional form of benefit must not discriminate in favor of the employees described in section 401(a)(4) in whose favor discrimination is prohibited (the “highly compensated group”). See paragraph (b) of this Q&A-1 for a description of the employees included in such group. This is true without regard to whether a particular optional form of benefit is the actuarial equivalent of any other optional form of benefit under the plan. Thus, for example, a plan may not condition, or otherwise limit, the availability of a single sum distribution of an employee’s benefit in a manner that impermissibly favors the highly compensated group.

(b) *Highly compensated group.* For plan years commencing prior to the applicable effective date for the amendment made to section 401(a)(4) by section 1114 of the Tax Reform Act of 1986 (TRA ’86), the highly compensated group consists of those employees who are officers, shareholders, or highly compensated. For plan years beginning on or after the applicable effective date of the amendments to section 401(a)(4) made by TRA ’86, the highly compensated group consists of those employees who are highly compensated within the meaning of section 414(q). The amendment to section 401(a)(4) made by section 1114 of TRA ’86 is generally effective for plan years commencing after December 31, 1988. See section 1114(a) of TRA ’86.

Q-2: How is it determined whether an optional form of benefit satisfies the nondiscrimination requirements of section 401(a)(4)?

A-2: (a) *Nondiscrimination requirement.*—(1) *In general.* An optional form of benefit under a plan is nondiscriminatory under section 401(a)(4) only if the requirements of paragraphs (a)(2) and (a)(3) of this Q&A-2 are satisfied