



# PSERS Active Member Newsletter

## Volume 2 - 2026

A publication of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Public School Employees' Retirement System

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Publication #9302

## Message from the Executive Director

I am honored to introduce myself as PSERS' Executive Director. For nearly 30 years, I served the federal, state, and local government. Most recently, I was secretary of the Pennsylvania Office of the Budget. Equally important to my public sector financial experience is my background as a PSERS member. After all, it's not enough to properly manage the resources entrusted to our care; we must also deliver exceptional service.

As a PSERS member, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve the dedicated members of PSERS. My top focus in this role is how we can continue to elevate our services for you.

In March, I visited all seven of our regional offices that are spread across the Commonwealth for your convenience. Our regional offices are filled with professionals who are dedicated to providing helpful educational information and support as you make serious decisions that will have long-term implications for your financial security.

You can reach our PSERS' retirement representatives in person, on the phone, or through secure message in your Member Self-Service (MSS) online account. Throughout your career and into retirement, PSERS ensures members can access support in a way that fits their needs and maintains the confidentiality and security of their retirement information.

We offer a portfolio of complimentary services so you can feel confident moving into the next chapter of your life. PSERS retirement representatives are available to provide answers to questions about your account status, retirement eligibility, and benefit estimates. Our online resources have expanded throughout the years to increase functionality in our secure MSS portal. PSERS continues to provide targeted education for new members and on financial wellness.

In your final 12 months of employment before retirement, know what to expect by requesting a retirement estimate and reviewing our retirement readiness checklist. Discover which retirement option is right for you and learn how to avoid common mistakes on your retirement application that can delay the start of your monthly benefit by attending a group counseling session. During a counseling session, our retirement representatives will guide you step by step in completing and ensuring timely submission of your retirement application.

As we provide these beneficial services, we also want to be sure costs are controlled so your money is used efficiently and effectively.

## PSERS Board of Trustees Meetings

### Board Meeting Schedule:

June 17-18, 2026  
August 13-14, 2026  
October 22-23, 2026  
December 17-18, 2026

Visit PSERS' website for the detailed schedule of Board and Committee meetings.

Board meetings are held in Harrisburg at PSERS, located at 5 N 5th Street.

In addition to Board meetings, Committee meetings are held throughout the year. All PSERS Board meetings are live streamed and open to the public.

For exact meeting times or if you would like to attend and require an accommodation to participate, please contact Tivia Danner, PSERS Executive Office at [tidanner@pa.gov](mailto:tidanner@pa.gov).

### Message from the Executive Director...continued

I am pleased to share that our total pension administration cost per active member is approximately 22% lower than our peer average (\$112 compared to \$143), per the 2024 CEM Benchmarking report.

I am committed to improving upon the great work that has been done for the benefit of our members and providing support to our dedicated staff who work for you every day.



Sincerely,



Uri Monson  
PSERS' Executive Director

## PSERS Board of Trustees Re-Elect Chair and Vice Chair for 2026

The Board of Trustees of the Pennsylvania Public School Employees' Retirement System (PSERS) voted at the January board meeting to re-elect Richard Vague as chair and Susan C. Lemmo as vice chair.

The chair and vice chair, who serve one-year terms in their leadership positions, lead the 15-member PSERS Board.

Vague, a Philadelphia resident, is Gov. Josh Shapiro's board appointee. He brings extensive experience to the board through leadership roles in government, energy, finance, and the nonprofit sector. From 2020 to 2022, he served on the PSERS Board in his previous capacity as Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Banking and Securities.

Lemmo, a Clearfield resident, is serving her second three-year term representing retirees and class DC participants receiving distributions. Prior to retiring from a 32-year career as an art teacher in the Curwensville Area School District, Lemmo served three terms (2014 to 2022) on the PSERS Board representing active certified members and participants. During that time, she earned the Certified Public Pension Trustee accreditation from the Pennsylvania Association of Public Employee Retirement Systems.

The Board also announced the appointment of state Rep. Marc Anderson, who represents the 92nd Legislative District serving parts of York County. The speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives appointed Anderson to replace former state Rep. Torren Ecker, who resigned in December after he was elected to serve as judge of the Court of Common Pleas in the 51st Judicial District.

# When is Normal Retirement?

## What is Normal Retirement?

Normal retirement for the PSERS defined benefit (DB) component means that you can receive an unreduced annuity at retirement.

## Eligibility

You must reach a certain age and/or service requirements as of when you terminate employment to be eligible for normal retirement with PSERS. Those requirements are determined by your membership class. You can find your membership class in your Member Self-Service account or on your annual Statement of Account:

Class	Eligibility for Normal Retirement
T-C*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Age 62, or</li> <li>Age 60 with 30 years of service, or</li> <li>35 years of service regardless of age.</li> </ul>
T-D	
T-E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Age 65 with a minimum of three years of service credit, or</li> <li>Any combination of age and service that totals 92 with at least 35 years of credited service.</li> </ul>
T-F	
T-G**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Age 67 with a minimum of three years of service credit, or</li> <li>Any combination of age and service that totals 97 with at least 35 years of credited service.</li> </ul>
T-H**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Age 67 with a minimum of three years of service credit.</li> </ul>

Vesting in the PSERS DC Plan makes you eligible to receive your employer's contributions to your DC account and the earnings on those contributions, if any, after termination of employment. You must earn three eligibility points to be vested in the PSERS DC Plan. You earn one eligibility point for each fiscal year in which you contribute to the PSERS DC Plan.

Class DC members who intend to retire, please contact Voya at 1-833-432-6627 to request your distribution.

## Special Early Retirement

For Class T-C, Class T-D, Class T-E, Class T-F, and Class T-H members, a special early retirement is available if you are at least age 55 and have 25 or more years of credited service ("55/25"). The "special early" means that the early retirement reduction factor is less than what it would be for an early retirement. A "55/25" retirement is reduced by one quarter of one percent per month for each month you are under normal retirement requirements. Class T-G members have a special early retirement available if you are at least age 57 with 25 years of service.

\*Special rules apply if you terminated service before July 1, 2001. Contact PSERS for more information.

\*\*Normal and early retirement eligibility applies to only the DB component of a Class T-G or Class T-H member's benefit.

## What if I retire before being eligible for a normal retirement?

Vested members are eligible for early retirement, which is a reduced annuity available to members who want to retire before normal retirement requirements.

The chart below identifies the eligibility requirements for vesting and the early retirement reduction factor(s) used to calculate your monthly benefit.

Class	Eligibility to Vest	Early Retirement Reduction Factor
T-C	5 years of service	The normal retirement benefit is reduced based on how far away the member is from normal retirement. The reduction correlates to how far away the member is from normal retirement. In effect, the member receives less each month because the benefit will be received over a longer period of time.
T-D		
T-E		
T-F	10 years of service	The same factors as above apply if: (1) retiring between age 62-67; or (2) any age below age 62-with at least 25 years of service. If retiring prior to age 62 with less than 25 years of service, then the current reduction factor from age 62 to 67 is used as well as a different reduction factor from actual retirement age to age 62.
T-G**	10 years of service	
T-H**		

If you are considering retirement within the next 12 months, you should request a staff-prepared estimate that will show the potential monthly benefit you would receive at retirement for a normal, early, vested, or disability benefit. To request a staff-prepared estimate, call us at 1-888-773-7748 during normal business hours or complete and submit a *Request for Retirement Estimate* (PSRS-151) form. PSERS also offers an online retirement estimate calculator that can be used at any time prior to retirement.

# Disability Retirement

PSERS provides a disability retirement benefit to members who are unable to perform their current public school employment duties for medical reasons. A disability retirement benefit is not designed to replace 100% of your salary and will vary based on your membership class. However, in most scenarios, a disability retirement benefit will be more than an early retirement benefit because there is no early retirement reduction. If approved, you will receive a monthly retirement payment for as long as you are disabled and comply with the necessary requirements set forth in the Retirement Code.

## Eligibility

To be eligible for a disability retirement benefit, you must:

- Be a Class T-C, Class T-D, Class T-E, Class T-F, Class T-G, or Class T-H member. Class DC members are not eligible for a PSERS disability retirement benefit.
- Have at least five years of credited service with PSERS.
- Be determined by a PSERS medical examiner to be physically or mentally unable to perform the duties stated in your job description. You have the responsibility to provide PSERS with sufficient medical evidence to support your disability and to respond timely to any requests for additional medical evidence.
- Have become disabled while an active, contributing member of PSERS. Should you become disabled while inactive or after you terminate service, you are not eligible for a PSERS disability retirement benefit.
- Be disabled at the time you submit your *Application for Disability Retirement (PSRS-49)* to PSERS.
- Apply for disability retirement benefits within two full school years of your last day of active PSERS service or paid, contributing leave for which you receive PSERS service credit (you do not receive service credit for workers' compensation payments unless you are on a Special Sick Leave approved by your employer), whichever is later.\*

\*Example: Member's last day of active PSERS service is February 15, 2025. Because this date occurs within the 2024-2025 school year, the disability filing deadline would be June 30, 2027, as shown below:

- Last active service occurred within school year 2024-2025
- Full school year #1 – July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026
- Full school year #2 – July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027

**If you do not apply within the two school years, you will not be eligible to apply for a disability retirement benefit regardless of your physical or mental incapacity to perform your job. The application, approval, or receipt of disability employment benefits, such as workers' compensation or Social Security benefits, will not determine your eligibility or extend the time frame to apply with PSERS.**

You must either be terminated or on an unpaid leave to receive a PSERS disability retirement benefit. If you submit an *Application for a Disability Retirement* while still in active status (paid and reported to PSERS by your school employer), your employer must either terminate your employment or place you on an unpaid leave of absence within 30 days after PSERS receives your *Application for Disability Retirement*.

## Working While Receiving a Disability Benefit

A disability retirement benefit may be granted on a long-term or short-term basis, but there is no partial disability that would allow you to continue to work for a public school employer. As a disability retiree, you are still a PSERS retiree, who is generally not permitted to work for any public school in Pennsylvania while receiving a PSERS pension.

You may work outside of Pennsylvania public school service while receiving a disability benefit, but a disability retirement benefit is subject to review by PSERS at any time for any reason to ensure continued disability and compliance with the Retirement Code. Employment may raise the question of continued medical eligibility.

Income you receive may impact your disability retirement benefit if you are under normal retirement age.

To apply for a PSERS disability retirement benefit, you must contact PSERS to request an application. A PSERS retirement representative will assist you with the disability application process.

PSERS is conducting disability counseling sessions remotely and in person. Please refer to the [Let's Talk About Disability Retirement Benefits](#) publication, which is available on the PSERS website at [pa.gov/PSERS](http://pa.gov/PSERS) > Member Resources > Forms and Publications > Active Member Publications, or contact PSERS for more information.

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## How Can Divorce Affect Your Retirement Benefit?

Divorce may affect your PSERS retirement account. If you are planning to or have recently divorced, you should notify PSERS. As a retirement benefit may be one of the largest financial assets a member may have, the division of retirement assets may become an important issue in a divorce agreement.

The retirement benefits payable to a PSERS member are sometimes classified as marital property that can be divided during a divorce. The division of marital property in a divorce is known as equitable distribution.

Any attachment of a member's retirement benefit for the purpose of equitable distribution must be accomplished through the terms of an Approved Domestic Relations Order (ADRO), as set in the Retirement Code.

PSERS requires the submission of a Domestic Relations Order (DRO) for review and approval. If, as written, the DRO is acceptable to and approved by PSERS and signed by both parties and the court, the DRO is then considered an ADRO.

If there is no equitable distribution of the PSERS account, the former spouse must submit a *Waiver of Pension Benefits* (PSRS-1286) form to PSERS. This form is available on the PSERS website or by calling PSERS.

You should also take time to review your beneficiary information to ensure that it complies with the approved domestic relations order. Updating beneficiary information is quick and easy through the PSERS Member Self-Service (MSS) Portal. If you cannot access the MSS Portal, you can complete a *Nomination of Beneficiary* (PSRS-187) form.

For more information, including a sample ADRO, refer to the PSERS publication [Divorce Guidelines](#).

## Misconceptions About Retirement

The choices you make while deciding to retire will be some of the most important decisions you ever make. Here are two common misconceptions PSERS members have when preparing for retirement.

### **Misconception: After I retire, my beneficiaries are guaranteed a death benefit.**

Death benefits are not guaranteed after retirement unless you have a survivor annuitant.

The single life annuity retirement options (Maximum Single Life Annuity and Option 1) provide the highest monthly benefit amount available for your lifetime. Each month when you receive your monthly payment, however, the available death benefit is reduced by the amount of payment you received. Additionally, if you chose to withdraw your contributions and interest at retirement, there may not be a death benefit.

If having a guaranteed death benefit is important to you, the Joint Survivor Annuities (Option 2 and 3) provide a monthly payment for your lifetime, and a guaranteed lifetime monthly payment for a survivor annuitant after your death.

Additional information regarding the retirement benefit options available to you can be found on the PSERS website at [pa.gov/PSERS](http://pa.gov/PSERS).

### **Misconception: 90 days is three months.**

Your *Application for Retirement* must be received by PSERS no more than 90 calendar days after your termination date in order to receive retroactive retirement benefits. PSERS Retirement Code refers to 90 calendar days, and because not all months have 30 days, 90 days is not three months. If PSERS receives your *Application for Retirement* after 90 calendar days from your termination date, your retirement date will be the date PSERS receives your application.

For example, if you terminate employment on June 30, you can file your *Application for Retirement* at any time within 90 days of June 30 and your retirement date will still be July 1. Unfortunately, some may assume that September 30 is within the 90-day window from the termination date of June 30. With that assumption, you would lose out on three months of retirement payments as 90 days after June 30 is September 28.

To aid in your retirement planning and to ensure you are within the 90 days, PSERS offers Retirement Exit Counseling sessions to members within one year of retirement.

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## Final Average Salary

Did you know that your defined benefit retirement benefit is based upon a formula? The formula used to calculate your gross retirement benefit takes into consideration your final average salary (FAS), your membership class, and your years of credited service.

In most cases, your FAS is an average of your highest compensation earned during any three school years (Class T-C, T-D, T-E, T-F) or any five school years (Class T-G and T-H). Included in the calculation of your FAS is any extra compensation for additional duties. Examples include, but are not limited to, overtime and work as a coach or department head.

However, there are certain types of payments not included in the FAS calculation. These include, but are not limited to, payment for unused leave as well as bonuses and severance payments received because of your retiring.

For school years in which you worked part-time, your compensation may be annualized. In other words, your earnings may be calculated as if you worked full time and then applied against the fractional portion of the service you rendered for the school year. For terminations before the end of the school year, the partial salary for that year may be used in combination with a proportionate percentage of a prior school year.

Understanding how your FAS is calculated can help you better prepare for retirement and make informed decisions throughout your career. Learn more about FAS and additional retirement related information at a Foundations for Your Future (FFYF) program. View the upcoming FFYF schedule at [pa.gov/PSERS](http://pa.gov/PSERS).

## Attend an Information Session About Retiree Health Care

The Health Options Program makes health coverage in retirement easy and worry-free. Sponsored by PSERS, the Health Options Program provides medical, prescription drug, dental, and vision coverage to pre-Medicare and Medicare-eligible retirees.

You can find out more about these benefits by joining either an in-person meeting or a virtual information session. Sessions start on March 18 and continue through May 1. You can view the full schedule and learn how to register by visiting [HOPbenefits.com](http://HOPbenefits.com) > Eligibility & Enrolling > [Information Sessions](#).

**A special incentive just for PSERS retirees.** PSERS provides [Premium Assistance](#)—a financial incentive—to help retirees pay for health coverage. If you qualify, based on your years of service, you can receive up to \$100 a month toward your monthly premium.

**When you can enroll.** PSERS members can enroll in the Health Options Program when they turn age 65, retire, or lose health care coverage under a school employer's health plan, or involuntarily lose health care coverage under a non-school employer's health plan.

A full list of Qualifying Events is posted at [HOPbenefits.com](http://HOPbenefits.com) > Eligibility and Enrolling > [Eligibility](#).

**Website:**  
[HOPbenefits.com](http://HOPbenefits.com)

**Contact:**  
Health Options Program  
enrollment or eligibility  
HOP Medical Plan, Value  
Medical Plan, or HOP Pre-65  
Medical Plan benefits or claims:  
**1-800-773-7725**

Premium Assistance  
**1-866-483-5509**

*8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET,  
weekdays*

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**5 N 5th Street**  
**Harrisburg PA 17101-1905**

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**Important Information from the  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Public School Employees' Retirement System**



**Website**  
*pa.gov/PSERS*

Register for PSERS' Member Self-Service (MSS) Portal to access your retirement account online, anytime!



**Call or Fax**

Toll-Free: 1-888-773-7748

Local Calls: 717-787-8540

Fax: 717-772-3860



**Send us a Secure Message  
through your MSS Account!**

Don't have an MSS Account?  
Complete the Contact Form on our  
website.

