

The Benefit Option - Can It Be Changed?

Limited circumstances permit retirees to change their retirement benefit options or their beneficiaries. When a significant life event occurs (e.g., a marriage, divorce, the death of a spouse or beneficiary, etc.) retirees or their beneficiaries and survivors should immediately contact Retiree Services to find out if the event allows or requires them to change their options and how it will affect benefits.

Survivor Benefits

When a retiree dies, the survivors should contact Retiree Services as soon as possible. The department can help survivors determine if they are eligible for benefits. Dependent children are typically eligible up to age 18, and those continuously enrolled in college may remain eligible up to age 23. Retiree Services can advise survivors what documentation they need to receive and maintain benefits.

Return to APERS Covered Position

One of Retiree Services most important jobs is answering our members' questions. For example, members frequently ask whether they can return to work at an APERS-covered position after retiring. In many cases they can, but there are various restrictions and limitations, especially for those who have participated in the DROP.

For members who are drawing disability benefits, the answer is much clearer: no. Disability retirees may not return to work for an APERS-covered employer, and any who try risk forfeiting their benefits. So if you are unsure about a policy or procedure, don't hesitate to contact us. We are here to serve you.

For more information contact:

Arkansas Public Employees Retirement System

124 W. Capitol Ave. Suite 400
Little Rock, AR 72201

(501) 682-7800 or 1-800-682-7377

www.apers.org

As much as possible, this brochure has been written in non-technical terms, avoiding the formal language of the retirement laws, rules and regulations. Any conflict between the information contained in this brochure and those retirement laws, rules and regulations must be resolved pursuant to the governing statutes, rules and regulations.

If questions about interpretation arise as a result of the attempt to make the retirement provisions easy to understand, Chapters 2, 4, and parts of 7 of Title 24 of the Arkansas Code Annotated (1987), as amended, must remain the final authority.

The information provided in this brochure is based on the Arkansas Retirement System laws and rules in existence at the time this brochure was published and is subject to future modification based on changes in the law.

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APERS



What is Retiree Services?

Retiree Services is the section of APERS that serves the needs of retired members, their beneficiaries, and survivors. APERS maintains close contact with retirees, distributing their annuity payments, alerting them to changes in their benefits, and helping when significant life events like disability, marriage, divorce, or death affect their status or benefits. Below is a sampling of the many tasks Retiree Services performs for retirees.

Monthly Benefits and Direct Deposit

Perhaps the most important APERS service is processing and distributing annuity payments. Each month, the system pays benefits to retirees, disability retirees, beneficiaries, and survivors. Most receive payments by direct deposit (mandatory for new retirees). Members who wish to change their deposit accounts must notify APERS as soon as possible to avoid delays in receiving their direct deposit.

To set up or change a member's direct-deposit account, Retiree Services needs the account information and a completed "Direct Deposit Authorization" that can be mailed or faxed to APERS. This and many other useful forms are available for download in the "Retired" section of the APERS website at www.apers.org.

Semiannual Statements and 1099-R Statements

In addition to the payments themselves, Retiree Services also supplies members important information about their benefits. Perhaps most important are the semi annual "Benefit Stubs" that detail the amount of the member's monthly payment and any adjustments that have been made.

Every member receives a benefit stub at the first of the calendar year in January and another at the first of the state's fiscal year in July. The July stub notifies members of planned changes in their benefits caused by things like a cost of living adjustment (COLA). The January stub lists the monthly benefit the member will receive during the first half of the coming year.

Along with the January stub, APERS will also provide members a 1099-R form (Distributions from Pensions, Annuity, Retirement...) to be filed with their tax returns. The 1099-R indicates the benefits paid and the taxes withheld the previous year (beneficiaries and survivors also receive a 1099-R).

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Retirees who need additional copies of their 1099-R can download a blank "1099-R Duplicate Request" form from the APERS website or ask that one be mailed to them. Completed requests must be returned to APERS by mail no sooner than February 15 of each year (no email or fax).

APERS is required by law to send benefit stubs, tax forms, and other important correspondence to the address it has on record for each member. Retirees must keep the system informed of their contact information or risk significant delays in receiving important documents.

Retirees can find most forms they need at APERS' website

www.apers.org

Forms for Retiree's Life Status Changes

Members should promptly notify APERS of any significant life events like moving or changing marital status. Retiree Services provides forms for reporting changes in names, addresses, beneficiaries, the status of dependents, and so on. Most forms can be downloaded from the APERS website, and the department will also mail them to members on request.

Under certain circumstances like death of a spouse, divorce, or re-marriage Retiree Services offers recalculations of benefits. All requests have to be in writing.

State and Federal Tax Withholding Forms

APERS does not automatically deduct taxes from a retiree's annuity without written authorization. Many retirees select a withholding option when they first apply for benefits, but some may wish to set or change their withholding later. Members will find the necessary printable forms on the APERS website, and Retiree Services will also mail forms to members on request. After receiving a completed and signed form, APERS can begin withholding benefits as requested by the member.

Verifying Your Benefits

Retirees often need to document their annuity income when applying for loans, seeking access to nursing homes or assisted living facilities, and so on. APERS Retiree Services can usually satisfy this requirement with a "Verification of Benefits" letter, which members can request by submitting a completed "Verification of Benefits Request" form. The printable form is available for download on the APERS website (www.apers.org), or members can ask Retiree Services to mail them a copy.