



# **Tier 1**

# **Member Guide**

**May 2025**



**Teachers' Retirement System  
of the State of Illinois**

# Foreword

May 2025

## Mission

Delivering expert pension service to Illinois public educators as they earn their promised retirement security.

## Vision

Working together as the trusted retirement resource for generations of our members.

## Our Values

**Integrity:** We are tenaciously honest and ethical.

**Accountability:** We openly set high standards and confidently own our actions and results.

**Service:** We genuinely care for our members and each other by being kind and helpful.

**Teamwork:** We proudly collaborate as one TRS.

**Diversity:** We are inclusive and persistently embrace our differences to empower our success.

**Continuous Improvement:** We challenge ourselves to embrace learning, new ideas, and growth.



The *Member Guide* provides an overview of your TRS benefits. You are a member of Tier 1 in the Teachers' Retirement System of the State of Illinois (TRS) because you first contributed to TRS before Jan. 1, 2011 or you have pre-existing creditable service with a reciprocal pension system prior to Jan. 1, 2011.

A member first contributes to TRS on his or her first day of paid service.

Public Act 96-0889, which was signed into law in spring 2010, added a new section to the Pension Code that applied different benefits to anyone who first contributed to TRS on or after Jan. 1, 2011 and does not have any previous service credit with a pension system that has reciprocal rights with TRS. These members are referred to as "Tier 2" members.

This guide has been prepared to answer general questions that you have about us, the services we offer, and your responsibilities as a member or an annuitant. We make every effort to provide you with the most current information, including rule changes enacted by our Board of Trustees and benefit changes resulting from legislation. This guide includes legislative changes signed into law as of May 1, 2025.

Effective June 1, 2011, Illinois law entitles a party to a civil union to the same legal obligations, responsibilities, protections, and benefits as are afforded or recognized by the law of Illinois to spouses. For information about changes that have occurred since the publication of this guide, see our *Topics & Report* newsletter by visiting the [TRS website, trsil.org](https://www.trsil.org).

It is our policy to comply with all applicable federal and state laws, rules, and regulations. If there is a conflict between information contained in this guide and the applicable law, rule or regulation, the law, rule or regulation takes precedence.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

*Created by the Illinois General Assembly in 1939, TRS has grown to be one of the largest teachers' retirement systems in the United States with more than 456,000 active members, annuitants, and benefit recipients.*



We provide retirement benefits for teachers who are employed by all Illinois public common and charter school districts located outside the city of Chicago. The Illinois Pension Code contains the laws relating to our creation, benefits, and administration.

## Administration

TRS is governed by a 15-member Board of Trustees. Trustees include the state superintendent of education, seven trustees appointed by the governor, five trustees elected by contributing TRS members, and two trustees elected by TRS annuitants.

The Board of Trustees appoints an executive director who also serves as the secretary of the Board of Trustees. The executive director is responsible for daily operations at TRS.

## Funding

We have several sources of funding:

- member contributions,
- investment income,
- employer contributions, and
- appropriations from Illinois state government.

As an active member, you contribute 9% of your salary toward retirement each year. We invest these assets to create diversified investment income. Our investment portfolio, which is managed by external investment management firms and monitored by our investment staff and consultant, includes stocks, bonds, real estate, cash and equivalents, and private markets. Employer contributions and appropriations from Illinois state government make up the remaining funding sources.

As a remittance agent for the Department of Central Management Services, we collect additional

contributions from active members and employers to help fund the Teachers' Health Insurance Security (THIS) Fund. Revenues from the THIS Fund are used to finance the Teachers' Retirement Insurance Program (TRIP). Federal law prohibits TRS monies from being placed in the THIS Fund.

## Qualified pension plan status

TRS operates a qualified pension plan under provisions of the Internal Revenue Code, Section 401(a). The advantages of being a qualified plan include:

- tax-sheltering of mandatory retirement contributions in the year that they are made to TRS;
- deferral of income taxes on contributions until your retirement, at which time your effective tax rate may be lower; and
- tax-free accumulation of interest credited to you by TRS.

To maintain our qualified pension status, we must meet certain Internal Revenue Service requirements, including:

- annual benefit, salary, and contribution limitations,
- compensation that may be reported for benefit calculation purposes,
- benefit eligibility provisions,
- benefit distribution limitations, and
- rollover restrictions.

We are dedicated to complying with all requirements for qualified plans.

## Confidentiality

All information contained in a member's record is confidential. We provide such information to the member, to others at the member's written request, to other retirement systems subject to the Illinois Retirement Systems Reciprocal Act, to the state of Illinois for annuitant health insurance purposes, and to the Social Security Administration for government pension offset determination and windfall elimination purposes. Member information also may be given pursuant to a subpoena issued during court proceedings.

## Social Security numbers

TRS requires Social Security numbers (SSNs) for tax reporting obligations associated with payment of

benefits and refunds and for internal verification and administrative purposes. You may rest assured that TRS understands identity protection concerns, complies with all applicable identity protection laws, and has policies and procedures in place to protect your SSN. We will never require you to transmit your SSN over the internet unless the connection is secure or the SSN is encrypted. We will redact your SSN from information or documents before release as part of a public records request. We will only print your SSN on documents and forms that we mail to you as part of an application or enrollment process, to establish, amend, or terminate your TRS account, or to confirm the accuracy of your SSN. For information about SSNs and Qualified Illinois Domestic Relations Orders (QILDROs), please consult our QILDRO publication.

## **Administrative review**

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Any member, annuitant, beneficiary, or employer may appeal a staff determination or interpretation of the Illinois Pension Code or the TRS rules which specifically affects them to the Board of Trustees Claims Hearing Committee. A written request for an administrative review must be filed with the executive director no later than six months after a TRS staff disposition or interpretation is given. The TRS Board does not provide advisory opinions.



# Chapter 2: Membership

*TRS is the retirement system for educators in positions requiring licensure under the Illinois School Code and employed in public schools outside the city of Chicago.*

## Covered positions

You qualify for TRS membership if you are employed as:

- an assistant regional superintendent of education,
- a chief school business official,
- a classroom teacher,
- a driver education teacher,
- an employee of a regional superintendent in an educational program that serves two or more districts and in a position that requires licensure,
- a regional superintendent of education,
- a retired teacher if post-retirement employment limitations are exceeded,
- a school administrator requiring licensure,
- a school librarian,
- a school nurse,
- a school psychologist,
- a school social worker,
- a substitute or part-time teacher, or
- a teacher of homebound students.

You also may be a member of TRS if you are employed in a position requiring teacher licensure in certain state government agencies or in certain positions with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) or TRS.

## Noncovered positions

You do not qualify for TRS membership if you are employed as:

- an adult education teacher,
- an assistant athletic director or athletic director not requiring licensure,\*
- an athletic official with IHSA or similar contract,
- a behavior analyst,
- a buildings and grounds manager,
- a bus driver,
- a cafeteria worker,
- a clerical worker,
- a construction manager,
- a contract speech pathologist under section 5/14-6.04 of the School Code,
- a custodian,
- a graduate general administrator intern,
- a home educator/parent educator,
- an individual aide,
- a mobility instructor,
- a non-licensed school administrator,
- an occupational therapist,
- a paraprofessional/teacher's aide,

- a physical therapist,
- a physical therapist assistant,
- a psychologist intern,
- a retired teacher who complies with post-retirement employment limitations,
- a secretary,
- a security guard,
- a social worker intern,
- a speech and language pathologist assistant,
- a student teacher or worker,
- an ROTC instructor,
- a tutor,
- a technology director not requiring licensure,\* or
- a transportation director.

Positions that do not qualify for TRS membership may be covered by the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF).

The preceding lists are not all-inclusive. Contact ISBE with any questions regarding licensure requirements.

## Effective date of membership

The effective date of your TRS membership is the day you begin employment in a TRS-covered position. If your employer has not recorded your date of employment, your membership date is the first payroll day for which contributions from your salary are required.

## Proof of birth

If you have not already submitted a “proof of birth” in the secure member area online, it must be provided to TRS in order to receive future benefits. Acceptable proof of birth includes: a copy of your birth certificate, valid passport, valid driver’s license or any other state-issued identification card displaying your date of birth.

## Felony conviction

If you are convicted of a work-related felony while you are a member of TRS, you become ineligible for TRS membership and benefits. However, you may take a refund of your TRS retirement contributions ([see Chapter 16: “Refund of Retirement Contributions”](#)).

If you are convicted while an annuitant, you are entitled to a refund of your retirement contributions that have not been paid as an annuity benefit.

\* Depending on the job duties, these positions may or may not require licensure.

# Chapter 3: Earnings

*Your earnings help to determine the amount of your future pension benefit and are the basis upon which TRS retirement contributions are determined.*



## Creditable earnings

We recognize the following forms of compensation as creditable earnings:

- salary you earn for:
  - regular contractual teaching duties;
  - extra-duty earnings:
    - contractual teachers: extra duties related to teaching or the academic program, or involving supervision of students;
    - noncontractual teachers: only extra duties requiring teacher licensure;
  - substitute teaching;
  - teaching that is completed after school hours, such as night school or driver education; and
  - homebound teaching.
- stipends paid to administrators for serving as a school board officer or clerk.
- longevity stipends.
- bonuses.
- wages while using vacation, sick leave, and personal leave.
- employer-paid TRS contributions for members.
- contributions to tax-sheltered annuities under the Internal Revenue Code, Section 403(b) or to a qualified tax-deferred compensation plan under the Internal Revenue Code, Sections 457(b) or 401(a).
- contributions to a flexible benefit plan. A “flexible benefit plan” is an option offered by an employer to employees who are covered under TRS to

receive cash or contributions to a 403(b) tax-sheltered annuity or 457(b) deferred compensation plan in lieu of employer-provided insurance.

- payments made by your employer for the purchase of optional service credit. To be reportable as creditable earnings, the payments must be paid or due and payable along with or prior to your final paycheck for regular earnings.
- payments made by your employer for your 2.2 upgrade. To be reportable as creditable earnings, the payments must be paid or due and payable along with or prior to your final paycheck for regular earnings.
- salary or backwage payments resulting from contract buyouts, labor litigation, and settlement agreements.
- retirement incentives and severance payments, including payments for accumulated vacation and sick leave, that are paid or due and payable along with or prior to your final paycheck for regular earnings.
- regional superintendent stipends paid from county funds.
- stipend paid for becoming National Board Certified.
- honorariums paid to union officers.
- gift cards given in lieu of payments that qualify as salary.

## Summer earnings

Summer earnings are reportable to TRS on the same basis as employment during the regular school term.

Summer-school teaching and summer extra duties that require teacher licensure are reportable as creditable earnings. For full-time and part-time contractual teachers, summer extra duties involving supervising students and summer duties related to the academic program are also reportable as creditable earnings.

## Active military duty

Since the 2000-2001 school year, members called to active military duty receive full earnings and TRS service credit while on active duty without paying any contributions.

## Limitations

Individuals who become TRS members on or after July 1, 1996, receive credit for earnings up to the annual amount allowed by federal law.

## Noncreditable earnings

Noncreditable earnings include compensation earned for duties that are unrelated to the academic program.

The following compensation items do not qualify as creditable earnings and cannot be reported to TRS:

- severance payments that are due and payable and paid after your final paycheck for regular earnings or last day of work,
- payment at termination for services that you will perform while you are retired,
- lump-sum payments made after your death,
- previously nonreportable or nonreported earnings or benefits that are converted to reportable earnings in the last years of service for the purpose of increasing final average salary. TRS presumes any decrease in noncreditable compensation in the last seven creditable school years is to increase final average salary,
- workers' compensation payments,
- jury duty payments,
- options to take salary in lieu of employment-related expense allowances or reimbursements,
- payments to substitute and part-time noncontractual (hourly) teachers for extra duties that do not require licensure,
- member THIS Fund contributions paid as a benefit,
- employer TRS and THIS Fund contributions,
- employer payment of Medicare tax, and
- contributions to or distributions from nonqualified deferred compensation plans.

## Fringe benefits

Employer-paid fringe benefits are not creditable earnings unless they are included in a reportable flexible

benefit plan. A "flexible benefit plan" is an option offered by an employer to employees who are covered under TRS to receive cash or contributions to a 403(b) tax-sheltered annuity or 457(b) deferred compensation plan in lieu of employer-provided insurance. Examples of noncreditable, employer-paid fringe benefits include:

- dental insurance,
- disability insurance,
- health insurance, and
- life insurance (including insurance in excess of \$50,000 and split-dollar life insurance).

## Expense reimbursements and allowances

Expense reimbursements or allowances are not creditable earnings, whether they are paid to you or to the provider of the service or product. Examples of noncreditable expense reimbursements and allowances include:

- cellular phone reimbursements,
- contributions to medical savings accounts,
- dependent care reimbursements,
- employer-provided automobiles,
- legal fee reimbursements,
- living or mortgage allowances,
- medical care reimbursements,
- membership dues,
- moving expenses,
- publication subscriptions,
- travel reimbursements and allowances, and
- tuition reimbursements.

# Chapter 4: Contributions

*You, your employer, and the State of Illinois make contributions to TRS to provide for your retirement, disability, and death benefits.*



## Member contributions

As an active TRS member, you are required to contribute 9% of your gross creditable earnings (**defined in Chapter 3: “Earnings”**) toward retirement each year. Your contribution consists of:

- 7.5% for retirement annuities,
- 0.5% for automatic annual increases in annuities, and
- 1% for death benefits.

You must also contribute a percentage of your gross creditable earnings to help fund the Teachers’ Health Insurance Security (THIS) Fund, which finances the Teachers’ Retirement Insurance Program.

Contributions are withheld from your creditable earnings by payroll deduction or are paid by your employer and are credited to your TRS account. Your contributions accrue interest at the rate of 6% per year and are sheltered from federal income taxes.

Annually, you will receive an online TRS Benefits Report that provides information about your contributions (**see “TRS Benefits Report” in Chapter 17**).

## Employer contributions

Employers contribute a percentage of creditable earnings (**defined in Chapter 3: “Earnings”**). In addition, if any portion of a member’s creditable earnings is paid from a special trust or federal fund, the employer pays

TRS an additional contribution on creditable earnings paid from that special trust or federal fund.

Employers also make contributions to the THIS Fund.

## End-of-career salary increases exceeding 6%

Your employer will be required to pay TRS for the actuarial value of any salary increase over 6% that is used in the final average salary calculation and increases your pension benefit. The amount will be determined when you retire and your employer will be required to pay a lump sum to TRS.

Contracts and collective bargaining agreements in effect prior to June 1, 2005 that provide for pay increases over 6% at retirement are exempt from the provisions contained in the act.

## Sick leave granted near the end of a career

Employers will be responsible for the cost of sick leave granted days that increase service credit in excess of the teacher’s normal allotment in the last four school years prior to his/her retirement. The law exempts collective bargaining agreements and contracts as discussed in the paragraph above.

## State of Illinois contributions

The state of Illinois provides a large source of contributions annually to TRS. The state also makes contributions for the 2.2 benefit formula.

## Assignment of contributions and loans

By law, you are protected from creditors placing a lien on, garnishing, or confiscating contributions you have made to TRS. This provision does not extend to federal tax levies. You may not assign your TRS contributions to a creditor or borrow against your account funds.



# Chapter 5: Service Credit

*Service credit determines your eligibility for a retirement annuity.*



“Days paid” include any weekday (Monday through Friday) for which payment is made to you for:

- administrative absence defined as an absence from duty administratively authorized for investigative purposes without the loss of pay or benefits and without charge to leave;
- attendance during the work week at teachers’ institutes, workshops, and parent/teacher conferences scheduled in the school calendar;
- legal school holidays;
- sabbatical leaves in accordance with the School Code;
- Saturday, if it qualifies as a day of service and the service is required due to a lawful day of attendance;
- service requiring licensure under the School Code;
- vacation, sick, or personal leave days used prior to termination; or
- suspension.

You may also purchase optional service, which is discussed in **Chapter 6: “Optional Service Credit.”**

We annually prepare an online TRS Benefits Report for each active member that provides information about service credit (see “TRS Benefits Report” in **Chapter 17**).

## Regular service

You earn one year of service credit for any school year in which you are employed and receive salary for 170 days.

Prior to Jan. 14, 1991, if you earned salary for fewer than 170 days, you were granted a fraction of a year of service based on the length of the school term or employment contract, whichever was longer.

Effective Jan. 14, 1991, if you earn salary for fewer than 170 days between July 1 and June 30, you will be granted service credit at the ratio of actual number of days paid to 170 days.

For example, if you teach three days per week for a total of 108 days, your service credit would be 0.635 of a year. ( $108 \div 170 = 0.635$ )

## Sabbatical leave

You earn regular service credit for a sabbatical leave if your employer granted the leave in accordance with the School Code [105 ILCS 5/24-6.1]. Your employer must remit the full retirement contribution for you during your sabbatical leave. The contribution is based on the last reported salary rate prior to your leave.

## Sick leave

When you retire, you may receive a maximum of two years (340 days) of service credit for unused, uncompensated sick leave that is certified by a TRS employer. If you receive payment for unused sick leave days and the payment is reportable as creditable earnings, you will not receive service credit for those days. If the payment for sick leave days is not reportable to TRS as creditable earnings, the sick leave days must be reported.

Your last employer certifies the number of unused, uncompensated sick leave days you have accrued on the Supplementary Report for Retirement Annuity Benefits form that is filed with us when you retire. If you have sick leave from employers prior to the 1987-88 school year for which you want service credit, you must have each former employer complete a Former Employee Sick Leave Certification form and return it to us. Beginning with the 1987-88 school year, employers annually certify the number of unused, uncompensated sick leave days for members who terminated employment during the past school year. Please check your TRS Benefits Report to determine if any previous employers reported unused sick leave for you.

To be creditable for retirement purposes, sick leave must be available for your use if you become ill. Service credit is not available for sick leave days that are added to your record at or near the time you terminate service for the purpose of increasing your retirement service credit.

In certain instances, your employer may agree to add sick days to your record to restore days lost due to an earlier, lower cap or because of a negotiated increase in sick days.

In all cases, any additional days awarded must actually be available for use in the event of illness, accident, or disability. The following box shows the calculation to determine whether additional days granted are available for use and retirement credit.

Number of paid days remaining until termination:	_____
• Include subsequent years (if applicable)	
Subtract sick days already recorded on your record	_____
Additional sick days, if any, that may be granted and available for retirement credit	_____

### Example

With 180 days (one school year) remaining until you retire, you have 210 available sick leave days. Your employer grants you an additional 130 days in an attempt to give you two full years of service credit at retirement. These added days cannot be reported to TRS because they were not available for your use; at the time they were granted, you had sufficient sick leave available to cover the remainder of your employment (180 days until retirement less 210 days already on record). You use five days during the school year. At termination, the district reports 205 (210-5) days of unused, uncompensated sick leave to TRS. You will receive credit for 1.206 of a year ( $205 \div 170 = 1.206$ ).

TRS will not grant service credit for days:

- lost as a result of a district imposed sick leave cap;
- not reinstated or granted sufficiently far in advance of retirement to be available for use;
- granted contingent upon a future event such as retirement;
- only available for catastrophic or extended illnesses;
- accumulated in excess of a per illness limitation;

- reportable to another retirement system;
- earned in years for which you took a refund that has not been repaid;
- available for use in a non-TRS-covered position;
- or recorded in other states, even if you purchased out-of-system credit.

TRS will not grant service credit for any days you withdrew from a sick leave bank in excess of the days you deposited into the bank and did not use.

### Granted days

The following situations are regarded as granting sick leave in excess of the normal annual allotment. The three-step formula must be applied to the extra days as of the date they are added to your record to determine if they are available for use.

- granted from a sick leave bank to preserve your personal sick leave balance in the final year(s) of service;
- bonus days awarded for good attendance or for not using sick or personal leave;
- bonus days awarded for reaching a minimum accumulation of sick leave;
- sick leave days awarded in lieu of payment for extra duties;
- unused bereavement leave days converted to sick leave;
- unused vacation days converted to sick leave;
- unused personal leave days that accumulate two-for-one as sick leave or personal leave;
- personal leave days that are not available for use as sick leave but accumulate as sick leave if unused; or
- unused, non-designated or no-reason days converted to sick leave.

### Personal leave days

If unused and unpaid personal leave could be used in the event of illness, they are also reportable for sick leave service credit.

### Vacation

You will not receive service credit for unused vacation days.

# Chapter 6: Optional Service Credit

*You can obtain additional credit towards your retirement through purchases of optional service or repayment of refunds.*

There are several types of optional service. Most have a direct relationship to certified teaching in the public schools, but there are certain exceptions such as military service and private school credit.

To begin the process of purchasing optional service credit, call TRS at 877-927-5877 (877-9-ASK-TRS) and request the optional service type's form. In all cases, you must submit the appropriate documentation to TRS to purchase the credit. We urge you to do so at the earliest possible opportunity to avoid disappointment. With the passage of time, records may become lost, destroyed, or much more difficult to obtain. Once reported to TRS and verified, the qualifying event is a permanent part of your record at TRS and can be used in calculating your benefit estimates.

You are under no obligation to purchase optional service that you have reported to TRS.

## When to purchase

Purchases of most service credit must be completed before you retire. The only exception is credit for pregnancies and adoptions.

In addition, federal tax laws do not permit your survivors to initiate or complete an optional service purchase or refund repayment after your death.

## Cost

Your cost for out-of-system service, part-time teaching, unreported substitute teaching, homebound teaching, leave of absence, involuntary layoff, pregnancy leave, adoption leave or paid student teaching credit is equal to the amount that would have been required had the service been earned under TRS, plus interest, usually at the rate of 6%, from the date the contributions would have been due to the date payment is made. Military service and private school credit costs are specified within their sections.

## THIS Fund Contribution

For service performed on or after July 1, 1995, all active TRS members, except employees of state agencies, are required to make contributions to the Teachers' Health Insurance Security Fund (THIS Fund) when making an optional service credit purchase to help finance the Teachers' Retirement Insurance Program. Active military service purchases are an exception to this contribution rule.

The THIS Fund amount will vary according to the purchase year; it is calculated by using the same rate that was required that year. For example, the 1995 THIS contribution rate would apply for a 1995 maternity leave optional service credit purchase. The payment must be made to the THIS Fund with a separate check.

## Out-of-system service

**Illinois law does not permit credit for teaching service that is also used in any other statutory, public employee retirement system except Social Security or a military allotment.** You may not receive retirement benefits from two public pension systems for the same years of service.

The following types of full-time, part-time or substitute public school teaching qualify as "out-of-system" service:

- other states, territories, or dependencies of the United States,
- Chicago public schools, and
- public common schools operated by the United States.

In addition, employment by a public agency in professional speech correction or special education in Illinois, another state, territory, or dependency of the United States qualifies.

The following types of service do not qualify because they were not performed in a public common school:

- colleges or universities, and
- military instructional centers.

## Service requirements

Your out-of-system service must be followed by a minimum of five years of creditable service earned with TRS, the Public School Teachers' Pension Fund (CTPF) or the State Universities Retirement System (SURS). Once the minimum service requirement has been met, you may establish your out-of-system service and pay for it at any time.

The out-of-system service cannot exceed two-fifths of your total creditable service with TRS at retirement. The overall maximum is 10 years. At the time of retirement, you must meet all service requirements for the out-of-system service to be creditable. If you do not meet all service requirements, TRS will refund the contributions for the ineligible service. No interest will be paid.

## Reporting

The member, school district, and retirement system must complete the Out-of-System Service Certification form using actual school records.

## Part-time teaching

You may be eligible to purchase credit for part-time teaching if you worked part-time between July 1, 1969 and June 30, 1990. If you worked in a permanent and continuous position during the entire school term, you have already received credit. If your service was not permanent and continuous, you may purchase the credit.

## Reporting

The member and the school district must complete the Part-time Service Certification form using actual school records.

## Substitute and homebound teaching

Before July 1990, substitute teaching service was not covered by TRS. You may, however, purchase credit for this service. In addition, you may purchase credit for homebound instruction and tutoring service that was paid by a TRS employer.

## Reporting

The member and the school district must complete the Substitute or Homebound Service Certification form using actual school records.

## Leave of absence or involuntary layoff

You may purchase service credit for approved leaves of absence or involuntary layoffs.

A leave of absence is “approved” if:

- you did not resign;
- your employer promised renewed employment at the end of the leave; and
- your employer, through its board, officially approved your leave; or
- your leave qualifies under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act, as certified by your employer.

A layoff is involuntary if it is due to a reduction in force (RIF) authorized under the School Code. An involuntary leave does not include a dismissal for cause or other performance-related reasons.

To qualify, you must return to service under TRS or the State Universities Retirement System (SURS) after the leave or layoff for one year or the period of the leave/layoff, whichever is less.

## Reporting

The member and the school district must complete the Leave of Absence Certification form using actual

school records. For an involuntary layoff, a letter from the employer indicating the RIF must be received.

Since July 2001, TRS has requested school districts to annually report any approved leave of absences.

## Pregnancy or adoption credit

You may purchase credit for periods of absence from a TRS-covered position due to pregnancy or adoption prior to July 1983.

To qualify, you must have returned to covered employment with either TRS or State Universities Retirement System (SURS) for one year or the period you were away from teaching due to pregnancy, whichever is less.

Although it is advantageous to purchase the credit as soon as possible, there is no deadline. Annuitants or members may purchase all or a portion of the credit to which they are entitled, but annuitants may make only one purchase.

## Credit Maximum

You may purchase a maximum of three years for all leaves of absence, involuntary layoffs, and absences due to pregnancy or adoption.

## Reporting

Send us a completed Pregnancy Service Certification or Adoption Service Certification form and all required supporting documentation.

## Paid student teaching

Public Act 103-0525, effective Aug. 11, 2023, added a new provision to the Illinois Pension Code to allow TRS members to purchase optional service credit for paid student teaching.

The paid student teaching must have been rendered on or after August 7, 2019, the original effective date of the School Code provision that allows school districts to pay salary to student teachers.

## Reporting

The member and the school district must complete the Paid Student Teaching Certification form using actual school records.

## Military service

You may purchase two types of military service:

- military service that immediately followed Illinois public school teaching, and
- military service that did not immediately follow Illinois public school teaching.



You may purchase up to five years of credit, but only two may be for service that did not immediately follow TRS-covered employment.

### **Military service immediately following teaching**

If you were drafted or enlisted while teaching, you may be able to purchase up to five years of credit. This credit must be purchased before you retire. To qualify, your military service must have begun within 12 months of teaching service under TRS or CTRF, the plan for Chicago teachers. Credit is granted for actual military service as well as for federally-sponsored teacher training that followed your discharge from the military.

#### **Reporting**

Send us a copy of your U.S. Government Form DD-214 or its equivalent.

#### **Cost**

Your cost is equal to the contributions to TRS that would have been required had you continued teaching. Interest is charged, usually at the rate of 6%, from the date the contributions would have been due to the date payment is made.

### **Military service NOT immediately following teaching**

If you were not teaching in a position covered by TRS or CTRF at the time you joined the military, you may be eligible to purchase up to two years of credit for your military service. This credit must be purchased before you retire.

#### **Reporting**

Send us a copy of your U.S. Government Form DD-214 or its equivalent.

#### **Cost**

The cost is based on the total normal cost in effect on the date of application. This rate, which is determined by our actuaries each year, includes both employer and employee contribution costs. The rate is multiplied by the salary for your first year of teaching after military service.

The salary must be for a position that required mandatory contributions to TRS. Interest, usually at the rate of 6%, is added from the date of first membership in the system or when the contributions would have been due, whichever is later, until the balance is paid.

### **Obtaining a Form DD-214**

Written requests for duplicate form DD-214 must be signed and mailed to:

National Personnel Records Center  
(Military Personnel Records)  
9700 Page Ave.  
St. Louis, MO 63132-5100

### **Private school credit**

The Illinois Pension Code allows a limited opportunity to purchase credit for service as a teacher or administrator in a recognized Illinois private school. Post-secondary institutions are not included. Retired members may not purchase this service. **You must apply for this credit on or before June 30, 2028.**

To qualify, you must have:

- been employed in a private school recognized by the Illinois State Board of Education,
- been certified as a teacher or administrator during the period of private school service,
- completed at least 10 years of contributing TRS service, and
- established at least one full-time salary following the private school service.

#### **Credit maximum**

A maximum of two years of private school credit may be purchased. If you previously purchased two years of private school credit, you may not purchase additional private school credit.

#### **Reporting**

Send us a completed Recognized Illinois Non-public Service Certification form.

#### **Cost**

For each year of service credit purchased, the member must contribute the normal cost in effect on the date of the application. This rate, which is determined by our actuaries each year, includes both employer and employee contribution costs. The rate is multiplied by the salary for your first year of full-time employment in a TRS-covered position following the private school service. Interest, calculated at the actuarial assumed rate of return, begins on the first date of full-time TRS employment following the private school service and continues until the contribution is paid.

## **Service canceled by a refund**

When you take a refund of your TRS contributions, your TRS membership ends and all creditable service is canceled. This service cannot be reinstated or used for calculating benefits until you:

- repay the entire refund with interest from the date the refund was made until the date you repay the refund; and
- complete one year of TRS creditable service following the refund, or
- complete two years of creditable service under a reciprocal retirement system.

Remember, Illinois law does not permit credit for teaching service that is also used in any other statutory, public employee retirement system except Social Security or a military allotment.

# Chapter 7: Payment Options

Several options are available to pay for optional service, refunds, or 2.2 upgrades.



The table below will help you select an option.

	Optional Service	Refund	2.2 Upgrade	THIS Fund*
<b>After-tax lump sum</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>After-tax installment</b>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Tax-sheltered rollover</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

\* Must be paid with separate check to THIS Fund.

## Lump-sum or installment payments

You may make a lump-sum payment directly to TRS when you purchase optional service credit, upgrade your service credit to the 2.2 benefit formula or repay refunded service. Only purchases of optional service credit or repayments of refunds may be made in installment payments directly from you to TRS. Each installment payment must be a minimum of \$50. If your total balance due is less than \$50, your payment must be for the full amount due. You may not make after-tax, direct installment payments for the cost to upgrade to the 2.2 benefit formula.

For service performed on or after July 1, 1995, all active TRS members, except employees of state agencies, are required to make contributions to the Teachers' Health Insurance Security (THIS) Fund when making an optional service credit purchase to help finance the Teachers' Retirement Insurance Program. The THIS Fund amount will vary according to the purchase year; it is calculated by using the same rate that was required that year. For example, the 1995 THIS contribution rate would apply for a 1995 maternity leave optional service credit purchase.

The payment must be made to the THIS Fund with a separate check.

We accept personal checks, money orders, and cashiers' checks. Cash and credit card payments are not accepted.

## Rollovers

TRS can accept rollover contributions (other than after-tax contributions) from:

- another qualified Section 401(a) or 401(k) or Keogh plan;
- an annuity plan described in Internal Revenue Code (IRC), Section 403(a);
- a tax-sheltered annuity contract described in IRC, Section 403(b);
- an individual retirement account or annuity (IRA) under IRC, Section 408(a) or Section 408(b) that is eligible to be rolled over and would otherwise be included in gross income;
- a conduit individual retirement account described in IRC, Section 408(d);
- a Simplified Employee Pensions Plan (SEP) under IRC, Section 408(k);
- a Savings Incentive Match Plan for Employees (Simple IRA) under IRC, Section 408(p), if there has been participation in the plan for at least two years; and
- an eligible deferred compensation plan under IRC, Section 457(b) which is maintained by a state, political subdivision of a state, or any agency or instrumentality of a state or political subdivision of a state.

Additionally, TRS will also accept spousal rollovers of distributions from Section 401(a), 401(k), Keogh, 403(a), 403(b) and 457(b) plans that the member's deceased spouse participated in or that have been divided by a Qualified Domestic Relations Order.

Roth IRAs are not eligible for rollover.

TRS cannot process the payment without a correctly completed Rollover Certification form that provides written confirmation from the transferring plan that the amounts deposited are eligible for rollover treatment. Rollover eligibility is governed by federal law and providers' rules and regulations.

The rollover cannot exceed the amount due to TRS. For more information about rollovers and to obtain the form to initiate the rollover, please contact us.

# Chapter 8: Supplemental Savings Plan

*Saving for the future is important. The SSP can help you Bring More to your retirement savings strategy.*



The TRS Supplemental Savings Plan (SSP) is an optional 457(b) retirement savings plan that allows you to contribute a portion of every paycheck to your future retirement goals. The SSP is designed to supplement your TRS pension; it does not replace it. When you retire, you will be able to receive your monthly TRS pension from the defined benefit program and may also draw on your SSP account balance, however you see fit!

## Eligibility

Active TRS members who are full-time or part-time contractual employees are eligible for the SSP. However, eligible TRS members can participate in the SSP only after their employer formally agrees to participate in the SSP. **All retired and inactive TRS members are not eligible for the SSP.**

## Automatic enrollment

Automatic enrollment is an easy and convenient way to begin contributing to the SSP. Active TRS members who are full-time or part-time contractual employees **first employed** in a TRS-covered position on or after January 1, 2023 and employed by an SSP participating employer will be automatically enrolled in the SSP at 3% of their pre-tax compensation unless they choose to opt out prior to their automatic enrollment effective date. Members who are automatically enrolled in the SSP will have their contributions invested in the Target Date Retirement Fund closest to their expected retirement date at age 65. Members receive instructions by mail on their enrollment options in advance of their automatic enrollment effective date.

## Member contributions

You can elect the amount you want to contribute per paycheck to your SSP account (in whole dollar increments or in whole percentage increments of your

pre-tax compensation). You must contribute a minimum of \$30 per pay period on a pre-tax and/or Roth after-tax basis if you choose to contribute in whole dollar increments.

## SSP contributions applicable to all participating employers

Your pre-tax and/or Roth after-tax contribution elections will apply to all eligible compensation across all participating employers. This means that SSP participants working for multiple employers will have their contribution election deducted by each eligible employer. For example, a participant working for two employers that have adopted the SSP, who elects to contribute \$30 per pay period will see that amount deducted by both employers for a total of \$60 per pay period. Further, if you are automatically enrolled in the SSP and contributing the 3% automatic pre-tax contribution and are then hired as a TRS-covered full-time or part-time contractual employee by a second employer that has adopted the SSP, the 3% automatic contribution election will automatically be applied with respect to employment at the second employer. **If you work for multiple employers, please consider carefully the amount you want to contribute in total across all employers.**

## Catch-up contributions

- Age 50+ Catch-up – available starting the calendar year you turn 50 years of age.
- Special Catch-up – available in the three years prior to the year you reach Normal Retirement Age.

Both catch-up provisions cannot be used during the same calendar year. You must use the catch-up provision that yields the higher contribution limit. For current IRS limits on catch-up contributions, go to [www.voya.com/IRSlimits](http://www.voya.com/IRSlimits).

## Rollovers

The Plan does accept pre-tax and Roth after-tax rollover balances from eligible retirement savings plans. You may want to seek the help of a financial or tax advisor prior to requesting a rollover.

## Beneficiary designation

Designate and change your beneficiary information online anytime at [trsilssp.voya.com](http://trsilssp.voya.com).



## Vesting

Vesting means ownership of the money in your account. You're always 100% vested in your own contributions, employer matching\* and non-elective contributions, any rollover contributions and any investment earnings on those contributions.

\* Members who elect to withdraw their automatic contributions through a permissible withdrawal will forfeit any associated employer matching contributions.

## Plan fees

To cover plan-related expenses such as record keeping, member education and administrative professional services, an annual, flat-dollar fee of \$100, referred to as the Plan Administrative Fee, will be assessed to each SSP account, in addition to investment option fees and expenses. The Plan Administrative Fee will be assessed on a quarterly basis (\$25/quarter) and will be visible to you through the SSP participant website as part of your transaction history as well as on your account statements.

## Withdrawal options

The following types of withdrawals are available through the SSP:

- Rollover Source
- Termination/Installment
- Age 59½
- Partial Termination
- Unforeseeable Emergency
- Required Minimum Distribution
- Military Leave
- Permissible Withdrawal\*\*

\*\* Only available to automatic enrollment participants within 90 days of their first contribution.

Withdrawals may be subject to ordinary income tax.

## Local TRS SSP representatives

Eligible members have ongoing access and support from local TRS SSP representatives. They are available to assist you with a variety of services to help you meet your retirement needs.

To schedule a virtual appointment, go to: <https://trsssp457b.timetap.com> and follow the prompts.

Information from registered Plan Service Representatives is for educational purposes only and is not legal, tax or investment advice. Local Plan Service Representatives are registered representatives of Voya Financial Advisors, Inc., member SIPC.

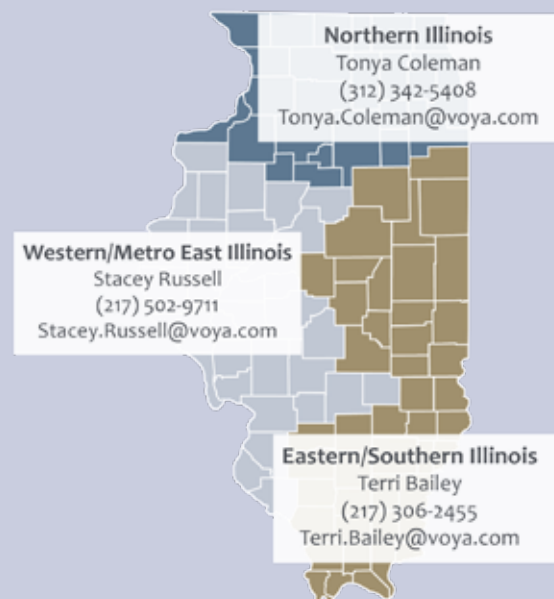
## Investment options

Choose an investment strategy that aligns with your goals, risk tolerance and time horizon to meet your future needs. You can invest in any mix of the SSP options available and you can change your investment elections or the investment of your balance at any time.

You should consider the investment objectives, risks, performance, charges and expenses of the investment options offered through the SSP carefully before investing. The fund prospectuses and information booklet containing this and other information can be found at [trsilssp.voya.com](https://trsilssp.voya.com), by contacting your local TRS SSP representatives, or through the TRS SSP Service Center at 844-877-4572 (844-TRS-457B). Please read the information carefully before investing.

## Learn more or enroll

For more details on all of the Plan's benefits, investment education resources, and features including videos, articles, newsletters and savings calculators, visit the participant website at [trsilssp.voya.com](https://trsilssp.voya.com).



# Chapter 9: Retirement Benefits

*You've been preparing children for their futures while we've been building your retirement security. Whether you are retiring soon or years from now, we can help with your retirement planning.*



## Retirement annuity

Your retirement benefit will be provided for your lifetime.

### Eligibility

To be eligible for a TRS retirement annuity, the Illinois Pension Code requires you to terminate active service as a teacher. It is not permissible to prearrange post-retirement employment. To meet federal guidelines, TRS requires a genuine resignation and that the employment relationship be severed prior to the commencement of benefits.

To establish termination of service, two conditions must be met. First, you must formally resign from your teaching position. Second, you must wait 30 calendar days from the date of resignation before performing any post-retirement teaching for the same employer. The 30 calendar day wait period does not apply if the post-retirement teaching is for another employer.

Designations such as “temporary,” “interim,” and “independent contractor” will not suffice to establish termination of active service if the continued employment is with the same employer.

An annuitant who has established termination of service may not return to post-retirement teaching in the same school year he or she last contributed to TRS.

Once pension eligibility is established, retiring members must comply with post-retirement employment limitations ([see Chapter 12: “Post-retirement Matters”](#)).

In addition to terminating service, you must meet one of the following age and service credit requirements:

Years of Service	Age
5	62
10	60
20	55 (reduced annuity)
35	55*

\* If you are eligible to receive a retirement annuity of at least 74.6% of the final average salary and will reach age 55 between July 1 and Dec. 31, we consider you to have attained age 55 on the preceding June 1.

\* If you are a TRS member currently employed by a state of Illinois agency, you may retire under the Rule of 85 if you meet eligibility criteria. Contact TRS to see if you qualify.

Under federal law, inactive members are required to take a TRS distribution at age 70½ (or age 72 if born on or after July 1, 1949).

### Annuity calculation

To determine your annuity, we use either an actuarial annuity calculation or an average salary/service credit calculation, whichever results in a higher benefit. The actuarial calculation is based on interest and mortality rate factors, which are subject to change. The average salary/service credit calculation (whose terms are defined in this section) yields a larger retirement annuity for most members with current or recent service; the maximum retirement benefit is 75% of the average salary. There is no limit on the actuarial annuity benefit.

The actuarial benefit has been eliminated for teachers who became members on or after July 1, 2005, as a result of Public Act 94-0004. For most TRS members, the 2.2 formula calculation results in a larger benefit than the actuarial calculation. The actuarial calculation usually benefits members with exceptionally long careers or long periods of inactive status.

Average salary is the average of the four highest consecutive annual salary rates within the last 10 years of creditable service with one exception. Public Act 102-0016 removes the consecutive years requirement for members who are retiring on or after June 1, 2021 and the 2020-21 school year is used in the member's final average salary. The final average salary will be based on the four highest years within the last 10 years of creditable service.

If you have less than a full year during your final year of teaching, we use a special procedure to calculate average salary.

Each annual salary rate after June 30, 1979, cannot exceed the previous year's full-time rate by more than 20 percent. Any earnings above this limit are excluded. The 20% cap on salary increases applies only to service you performed for the same employer. Consolidation of school districts does not constitute a new employer; therefore, the 20% cap still applies.

Years of creditable service determine the percentage of the average salary to which you are entitled. If you do not upgrade service to the 2.2 formula, you are entitled to the following formula for service credit earned prior to July 1, 1998:

- 1.67% for each of the first 10 years
- 1.9% for each of the second 10 years
- 2.1% for each of the third 10 years
- 2.3% for each year over 30 years

For post-June 1998 service, you receive 2.2% for each year of service.

A special provision applies to members who had at least 24 years of service credit as of July 1, 1998. If you do not upgrade to the 2.2 formula and you had at least 24 years of service prior to July 1998, you will receive 2.2% for each year of service earned after June 1998 up to 30 years and then 2.3% for each year of service over 30 years.

### Maximum retirement benefit

If you are qualified to receive a benefit of at least 74.6% of final average salary, we will round this percentage up to the 75% maximum retirement benefit. If all of your service credit is with TRS, you will receive the maximum benefit with 34 years of service credit if you are eligible for an unreduced annuity.

### Reduced retirement annuity

If you retire between the ages of 55 and 60 with at least 20 but fewer than 35 years of service, your retirement annuity is reduced by 6% for each year (half % per month) that you are under age 60. A reduced annuity is based on your average salary, years of service, and age.

## 2.2 upgrades

You may upgrade all of your pre-July 1998 service to the 2.2 formula by making an additional contribution. The contribution is equal to 1% multiplied by your highest salary rate in the four consecutive school years immediately prior to, but not including, the school

year in which you apply for the upgrade times the number of years of creditable service you earned prior to July 1, 1998, or up to 20, whichever is less. For information about receiving a refund or reduction of your 2.2 upgrade cost, [see “Refunds or reduction of the 2.2 upgrade cost” in this chapter.](#)

## Reversionary annuity

When you retire, you will receive a standard annuity from TRS unless you elect to receive a reversionary annuity. The standard annuity provides the largest amount payable throughout your lifetime. A reversionary annuity reduces the retirement annuity amount to provide an additional monthly annuity to a surviving, designated dependent beneficiary after your death.

Electing to receive a reversionary annuity should be a careful decision because of its costs, possible reduction in death benefits, and irrevocability. If you elect a reversionary annuity, remaining contributions are not payable at the time of your death.

Regardless of the type of annuity you select, your dependent will receive death benefits from TRS after your death if you have named him or her to receive such benefits on your Beneficiary Designation form ([see Chapter 15: “Death Benefits”](#)).

If you elect the reversionary annuity, you must designate the dependent beneficiary to whom you wish the reversionary annuity be paid. This beneficiary does not have to be the same as the death benefit designee.

### Qualifying the beneficiary

In order to qualify your dependent beneficiary for the reversionary annuity, the following must occur **prior to retirement**:

- resign from your position,
- complete and return the Retirement Application naming your beneficiary,
- complete all required payments (optional service, etc.) and
- provide proof of dependency.

Once you have selected a dependent beneficiary to receive the reversionary annuity, the selection cannot be changed and there is no continuing requirement that a dependent relationship exist between you and the beneficiary. In other words, whether or not the beneficiary is dependent on you at the time of your death has no bearing on his or her eligibility to receive the reversionary annuity.

Election of a reversionary annuity is irrevocable. However, if your designated beneficiary predeceases you and you send us a certified copy of the death certificate, we will reinstate your retirement annuity to the full amount on the first day of the month after we receive your beneficiary's death certificate. You will not receive any retroactive adjustments.

## **Single-sum retirement benefit**

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If you have fewer than five years of creditable service, you are eligible to receive a single-sum retirement benefit at age 65. The benefit is the actuarial equivalent of a retirement annuity consisting of 1.67% of your final average salary for each year of creditable service. To be eligible for this benefit, you must terminate TRS-covered employment and complete an application for a single-sum retirement annuity.

Once you receive the single-sum benefit, you may teach in a TRS-covered position without restriction and you will not be required to make contributions.

## **Refunds or reduction of the 2.2 upgrade cost**

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You may receive a refund with interest or a reduction of your 2.2 upgrade cost:

- For every three years you teach and earn regular service credit after July 1, 1998, the equivalent of one year of your 2.2 upgrade cost will be reduced or refunded with interest.

If you retire with more than 34 years of service credit, you may receive:

- a 25% reduction in upgrade costs for each year of creditable service beyond 34 years, up to a maximum of 100 percent. Partial years are prorated.

## **Refund of survivor benefit contributions**

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### **Eligibility**

When you apply for a retirement annuity or while you are receiving a retirement annuity, you may take a refund of your survivor benefit contributions if you

have creditable service after July 24, 1959, and you do not have a dependent beneficiary (see “Types of beneficiaries” in Chapter 15).

The refundable amount is 1% of total gross creditable earnings for each year of teaching service after July 24, 1959.

### **Effect of receiving a refund**

When you receive a refund of your survivor benefit contributions, you waive all rights to your beneficiaries' receiving survivor benefits. However, your remaining accumulated retirement contributions, if any, still remain payable to your beneficiaries upon your death. The survivor benefit refund may be repaid with interest if you return to teaching and earn one year of creditable service.

### **Application procedure**

When you are applying for retirement or at anytime thereafter, you may request a Refund of Survivor Benefit Contributions Application form from us. However, the form will not be sent until the processing of your retirement is complete. Return your completed form to our Springfield office. Within six weeks after we receive your completed application, we will process your refund and will forward it to the Office of the Comptroller for payment.

### **Impact on Social Security**

If you qualify to receive a single-sum retirement benefit or take a refund from TRS instead of a monthly benefit, you may wish to ask if your Social Security benefits will be reduced. For Social Security information, you may call (800) 772-1213 or visit [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) online.



# Chapter 10: Reciprocal Service

*If you have service in more than one public retirement system in Illinois, you may qualify for enhanced retirement and survivor benefits by selecting a reciprocal retirement.*



Reciprocity offers the following advantages:

- Service credit in any of the reciprocal systems may be used to meet service qualification requirements for a pension.
- The highest final average salary earned is used by each of the reciprocal systems to calculate the retirement benefit. This practice usually results in a higher benefit.
- Members may reinstate refunded service at a reciprocal system once they have established two years service credit at another reciprocal system.

You must have at least one year of service credit in any system you wish to use for reciprocity. The one exception to this rule is if you participated in IMRF as a teacher aide and earned less than 12 months of IMRF service credit, and were next employed in a position covered by TRS. If this applies, you may apply your IMRF service toward a reciprocal pension even though it does not meet the 12-month requirement. You cannot use credit from another system if you have taken a refund or if the credit has already been applied to a pension. If you previously took a refund from a reciprocal system, contact the system to determine if you may repay the refund you received.

To retire with reciprocity, your total years of reciprocal service must equal the minimum qualifying period under each system to be eligible for retirement.

If the service periods overlap, the reciprocal benefits will be adjusted proportionately. Members who have significant amounts of overlapping service may want to consider retiring independently under each system rather than using the reciprocal act.

Reciprocity applies only to retirement and survivor benefits. In most cases, it cannot be used for disability and insurance purposes.

Members wishing to select reciprocity must apply to each retirement system. The systems will then exchange information in order to determine the benefits payable. When payments begin, you will receive separate checks from each system. The use of reciprocity is entirely voluntary.

If you are within five years of retirement, you may receive a reciprocal benefit estimate by contacting your current retirement system. That system will gather information from the other reciprocal systems and provide you with a consolidated estimate.

In addition to TRS, systems under the Illinois Retirement Systems Reciprocal Act include:

- County Employees' Annuity and Benefit Fund of Cook County,
- Forest Preserve District Employees' Annuity and Benefit Fund of Cook County,
- General Assembly Retirement System,
- Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund,
- Judges' Retirement System of Illinois,
- Laborers' Annuity and Benefit Fund of Chicago,
- Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Retirement Fund,
- Municipal Employees' Annuity and Benefit Fund of Chicago,
- Park Employees' Annuity and Benefit Fund of Chicago,
- Public School Teachers' Pension and Retirement Fund of Chicago,
- State Employees' Retirement System of Illinois, and
- State Universities Retirement System of Illinois.

# Chapter 11: Applying for and Receiving Retirement Benefits

*This is an exciting time for you. Your teaching career is almost complete. You have new experiences waiting.*



The retirement process begins with you contacting us about your plan to retire and ends approximately 60 to 90 days after your retirement date when you receive your first annuity payment.

## Personalized retirement interview

You may take advantage of our personalized retirement interview by calling a TRS benefits counselor or logging on to the secure member area of our website. When you plan to retire, you should contact us approximately three to four months before your retirement date.

Simply provide your Social Security number, the date you will retire, and your federal withholding status and number of exemptions to start the process. During your interview, we will discuss any optional service or credit under reciprocal systems, upgrading any pre-July 1998 service credit, enrolling in the Teachers' Retirement Insurance Program, and signing up for direct deposit.

TRS will complete the retirement forms with you over the telephone or online in about 15 minutes. You should receive your personalized forms within 10 business days.

## Optional Tier 1 Accelerated Annual Increase (AAI) Program Decision

This program is a one-time accelerated pension benefit payment (AAI payment) equal to a portion of your future annual pension increases. In return for this AAI payment, you must waive the 3% compounded annual increase applied to your pension. Instead, you will receive a 1.5% noncompounded annual increase beginning at a later date.

Before your retirement claim is processed by TRS, you must first decide whether to participate in the AAI Program. **If you declined to participate in the AAI**

**Program during your PRI, you do not have to do anything further.**

If you requested to receive more information about participating in the AAI Program during your PRI, you will receive a brochure, payment estimate and a formal election form. You must complete and return the form. **Your decision to participate is final and irrevocable.**

## Effective date of retirement

Once you meet the eligibility requirements (see [Chapter 9: "Retirement Benefits"](#)), your retirement annuity will begin on the later of:

- the day following the last day for which you earn salary that counts toward retirement, or
- the day on which you attain the minimum qualifying age.

## Annuity payments

You will receive your first annuity payment approximately 60 to 90 days after we receive a signed application form, any remaining payments due from you, and the Supplementary Report and Sick Leave Certification forms from your employer.

A notification of first payment letter will be mailed to you when your retirement paperwork is completed. This notification will contain your Member ID to create an online account in the secure member area if you haven't already established one. You will need your Member ID, Social Security number and your birth date to set up your account. Once you are in the secure area online, you may view your monthly annuity checks and year-end statement.

The Office of the Comptroller mails payments on the last working day of each month. The payment you receive on the first day of the month represents the annuity you earned for the preceding month. Please notify us if your payment has not arrived after 30 days from the issue date.

To protect our annuitants, we have the right to suspend retirement annuities if two payments remain uncashed. Once we learn the circumstances behind the uncashed payments, we will mail the suspended payments to the annuitant.

## **Direct deposit**

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Annuitants, beneficiaries, and disability recipients are encouraged to have payments electronically deposited into a bank or other financial institution. Direct deposit is a safe and convenient way to ensure that your payments are received automatically each month.

To authorize direct deposit of benefit payments, you and your financial institution must complete and sign the Depository Agreement for TRS Benefit Payments form. Please return the agreement form with original signatures no later than the 15th day of the month. Your next check will be mailed directly to your home address. In following months, your payment will be directly deposited into your account on the first banking day of each month. You will not receive a monthly statement from TRS.

## **IRS Section 415 benefit limitations**

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Section 415 of the Internal Revenue Code imposes limitations on benefits paid by qualified plans, like TRS. TRS must determine if your retirement annuity exceeds the federally-allowed payment limit.

If your retirement annuity exceeds the payment limit, the excess balance of your monthly retirement annuity will be paid from the Teachers' Retirement Excess Benefit Fund. You will receive two annuity payments each month because payment is being made from two separate funds, the Teachers' Retirement Trust Fund and Excess Benefit Fund.

For example, if you receive \$7,000 per month from the Teachers' Retirement Trust Fund and \$1,000 from the Teachers' Retirement Excess Benefit Fund, the federal withholding will be taken from the Teachers' Retirement Trust Fund and will be based on a monthly pay of \$8,000 and your filing status (single, married, etc.).

You will receive a 1099-R and a W-2 annually for taxes. All federal withholding will appear on your 1099-R and will be taken out of your Teachers' Retirement Trust Fund annuity payment.

Your first year in retirement, TRS will send a letter in January explaining that you receive a benefit from the Excess Benefit Fund. You will receive a W-2 for those benefits but the benefit is not subject to Illinois state income tax. Keep this letter in the event it is requested by the Illinois Department of Revenue.

# Chapter 12: Post-Retirement Matters

*Annuitants will want to be aware of special issues, such as health insurance, automatic annuity increases, post-retirement employment limitations, and re-entry into active membership.*



## Health insurance

In addition to current participants, enrollment in the Teachers' Retirement Insurance Program (TRIP) is open to:

- any member who has eight or more years of TRS service credit and is receiving a monthly retirement benefit;
- any beneficiary who is receiving a monthly survivor benefit from a member who had eight or more years of service credit; or
- any member who is receiving a disability benefit, regardless of the years of service credit.

TRIP is a comprehensive program of quality health-care coverage for retired teachers and their eligible dependents. TRS's role is to provide members with basic coverage information, enroll them in the program, and collect the appropriate premiums. The State of Illinois Department of Central Management Services (CMS) determines coverage benefits, establishes premiums, negotiates contracts with the insurance carriers, and resolves coverage and claim issues. CMS administers TRIP as set forth in the State Employees Group Insurance Act of 1971.

No TRS monies are used to fund TRIP.

There are four times when you may enroll in TRIP:

- when you apply for monthly retirement benefits or disability benefits,
- when you turn age 65 or become eligible for Medicare,

- when coverage by a former group plan is terminated, or
- during the annual Benefit Choice Period.

Enrollment information, including premiums and a summary of benefits, is provided in our *TRIP Summary* publication that is available on our website.

TRS members with at least five years of service with a qualified state of Illinois agency may be eligible for benefit options under the State of Illinois Group Insurance Plan. At retirement, we will send information to members who qualify for the plan.

## Annual increases in annuity

Nearly all annuitants receive a 3% annual increase in their annuities. You will receive the increase on the later of:

- Jan. 1 following your first anniversary in retirement or
- Jan. 1 following the date you reach age 61.

The increase is effective in January of each year and is reflected in the payment you receive in February. This increases your monthly benefit and is not a retroactive lump-sum payment. When we calculate the first increase percentage, we determine the number of years that have elapsed since your TRS retirement annuity began and the effective date of your initial increase, and then multiply that amount by 3%. This increased benefit continues until the next annual increase of 3% is applied.

Some annuitants may receive increases in their annuities prior to the initial post-retirement increase due to minimum annuity legislation. If you are affected, we will notify you.

## Employment limitations for annuitants

While you are receiving a retirement annuity, certain restrictions apply regarding employment you may accept, the types of positions in which you may be employed, and the number of days and hours you may work.

### Employment limitation

You may be employed by any college, university, or private school without limitation. In addition, you may be employed by a school district in a position not covered by TRS without limitation. For example, as a



retired teacher you may be employed as a bus driver for any number of days or hours. You may also be employed in public school systems outside the state of Illinois without limitation.

### **Termination of service requirements and eligibility to return to post-retirement employment**

To be eligible for a TRS retirement annuity, the Illinois Pension Code requires you to terminate active service. To satisfy the termination of service requirement, you must comply with the following guidelines at retirement:

- You must formally resign from your teaching position.
- You must wait at least 30 calendar days from the date of retirement before performing any duties requiring teacher licensure for the same employer.
- You cannot prearrange post-retirement employment that requires teacher licensure with the same employer prior to 30 days after the effective date of retirement.

Designations such as “temporary,” “interim,” and “independent contractor” will not suffice to establish termination of active service if the continued employment is with the same employer.

Once pension eligibility is established, you must comply with post-retirement employment limitations.

After you have established termination of service, you may not return to post-retirement employment in the same school year you last contributed to TRS.

You cannot return to post-retirement employment in a TRS-covered position until the definition of an annuitant has been met.

You become a TRS annuitant upon:

- cashing a retirement annuity payment or
- 10 calendar days after the date the first retirement annuity payment is deposited in the member's designated bank account by electronic fund transfer.

### **120 days/600 hours limitation**

Following the school year in which you last contributed to TRS, you may be employed in a TRS-covered position for up to 120 paid days or 600 paid hours per school year and still receive a retirement annuity. **The 120 days/600 hours limit is in effect through June 30, 2026.**

State law does not allow optional TRS participation. You may not avoid TRS reporting by calling yourself an independent contractor, vendor or consultant.

If you work only full days (five or more hours per day), each day is counted toward the 120 days limitation. If you work all partial days (fewer than five hours) or a combination of full and partial days, the time worked is counted toward the 600 hours limitation. Each full day (five or more hours) is counted as five hours, even if you actually worked more than five hours on that date. For partial days, the actual number of clock hours worked is counted. For example, if you worked on two days during a given week, three hours on Tuesday and seven hours on Thursday, a total of eight hours (three for Tuesday and five for Thursday) would be counted toward the 600 hours limitation. It is your responsibility to keep a record of your hours worked to ensure you do not exceed the limitation.

Only work that requires teacher licensure (including summer school and substitute teaching) is subject to the 120 days/600 hours post-retirement employment limitation. All time that a teacher or administrator is required to be present for licensed duties is subject to the limitation. This includes preparation periods and time before, between, and after classes. For administrators, this includes all time that is required to be spent on administrative duties, such as attendance at board meetings and contract negotiations.

Extra duties that do not require teacher licensure are not subject to the 120 days/600 hours post-retirement employment limitation.

A person who received a single-sum retirement benefit is not subject to these limits.

### **Exceeding the limitations**

If you exceed the employment limitations during any school year,

- we must be notified,
- your retirement annuity will be suspended,
- you will re-enter active membership, and
- your employer must remit TRS contributions on all creditable earnings after the employment limitations are exceeded.

There are two circumstances where you will be required to repay all annuity payments in full from the date of retirement:

- if you resume teaching in the same school year in which you retired or
- if you exceed the employment limitations in the first school year following retirement.

Special consequences apply if you exceed employment limitations following retirement under any 5&5 Early Retirement Incentive (ERI) program. Call Member Services, 877-927-5877 (877-9-ASK-TRS), for information.

## Special circumstances

### Retirement Under Reciprocal Act

If you retire under the Illinois Retirement Systems Reciprocal Act, you must adhere to the post-retirement employment limitations of each retirement system that is, or will be, paying you a retirement benefit. Post-retirement employment in one system does not limit work in another system. Therefore, you should contact each applicable reciprocal system about employment limitations that may apply to you. All systems will discontinue benefits if the limits are exceeded.

### Retiree Return to Work Program

To help alleviate the classroom teacher shortage problem in Illinois, a law that allows retired TRS members to teach for a full school year in districts declared to have subject shortage areas **has been extended until June 30, 2027**. Under the law, retired teachers who go back to approved subject shortage areas are not limited to post-retirement work restrictions of 120 days or 600 hours imposed on other retirees. The regional superintendent must designate the employment to be in a subject shortage area and TRS must give final approval in order for a retiree to be able to return to work without limitation.

### Retirement with CTPF

In 2019, the law changed when Public School Teachers' Pension and Retirement Fund of Chicago (CTPF) retirees start contributing to TRS. CTPF retirees who return to teaching in a TRS-covered position will start contributing to TRS immediately. Contributing only after working 120 days/600 hours no longer applies.

## Re-entry into active membership

As an annuitant, the only way you can re-enter active membership is:

- to teach in a TRS-covered position in the same school year in which you last contributed to TRS or
- to teach beyond the 120 days/600 hours limitation (see “120 days/600 hours limitation” in this chapter).

If you resume active TRS member status,

- contributions are required on all creditable earnings, and
- you are required to send us a new age retirement annuity application form when you file for retirement again.

If your second retirement date occurs in less than one year, your retirement is reinstated. If it follows completion of at least one year but less than three years of creditable service, your annuity will be recomputed using the law in effect on your first retirement date. If at least three years of creditable service have been established after you re-enter active membership, your annuity will be recomputed based on current law, including any legislation that changed benefits while you were in retirement the first time.

# Chapter 13: Medicare and Social Security

*As an active TRS member, you may be required to contribute toward Medicare coverage. However, you do not contribute to Social Security on your TRS-covered earnings. We will not reduce your TRS benefit because of any Social Security benefit you may receive.*



## Medicare

All public employees hired after March 31, 1986, are required to make contributions toward Medicare coverage. Persons who change employers after that date are also subject to the Medicare tax. Currently, these individuals and their employers each contribute 1.45% of salary to Medicare.

Annuitants who return to teaching after March 31, 1986, also contribute to Medicare, regardless of the number of days they teach. Annuitants and their employers each pay the 1.45% Medicare tax.

TRS annuitants with 40 credits of coverage under Social Security will receive free Medicare Part A (hospital insurance) coverage at age 65. A TRS annuitant may also obtain free Medicare Part A coverage as the result of paying the Medicare tax on covered employment. In addition, a TRS annuitant may have Medicare hospital coverage at age 65 if his or her spouse has worked in Social Security-covered employment at least 40 credits and if the spouse is at least age 62. If you are a widow or widower of a Social Security-covered spouse, you are eligible for Medicare Part A at age 65. Please contact Social Security to verify your eligibility.

If you do not qualify for free Medicare coverage, you can purchase Medicare Part A coverage through monthly premium payments. Medicare Part B (medical insurance) is optional and must be purchased

separately from Social Security through monthly premium payments. Annuitants must have both Medicare Parts A and B to enroll in the Teachers' Retirement Insurance Program (TRIP) TRAIL MAPD plan. For information about Medicare Part D, please contact Medicare.

For additional information, read Social Security Publication CMS-10050, *Medicare & You* at: <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/EN-05-10043.pdf>. Premium rate information is also available on the website.

## Social Security

Active TRS members do not contribute to the retirement and disability program under Social Security on their TRS-covered earnings. However, they may accumulate credit under Social Security through other employment that is not covered by TRS.

Annuitants who return to teaching do not contribute to Social Security.

You may sign up to get your Social Security Statement online at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov).

The statement provides you with an earnings history under Social Security, the number of credits you have earned, and an estimate of benefits you will receive (provided you have earned sufficient credits of coverage).

## Social Security benefit reductions

TRS will never reduce your TRS benefits because of Social Security benefits.

Federal law regarding the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) was recently changed by the Social Security Fairness Act.

TRS does not administer Social Security benefits. For questions about your Social Security benefits, contact the Social Security Administration at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov), 1-800-772-1213 (toll free) or 1-800-325-0778 (TTY).

# Chapter 14: Disability Benefits

*If you become ill or injured, TRS can help.*



Nonoccupational and occupational disability benefits are available to you when you are unable to work.

If you are receiving nonoccupational or occupational disability benefits or a disability retirement annuity,

you may be gainfully employed within certain limits detailed in this chapter. You do not need to resign to become eligible for nonoccupational or occupational disability benefits. Members also accrue service credit while receiving both types of benefits.

Disability payments may be electronically deposited.

See “Direct Deposit” in Chapter 11.

## Temporary nonoccupational disability benefits

### Eligibility

If you are a full-time teacher, you must have three years of service credit, have become disabled while teaching (or within 90 days of teaching), and use all accumulated sick, personal and vacation leave days to qualify for nonoccupational disability benefits.

If you are a part-time or substitute teacher, you are eligible for disability benefits if you have three years of service credit and have worked as a teacher for at least 340 hours in either the school year in which the disability occurs or the preceding school year. Your disability must have occurred within 90 days of your last day of teaching.

Service credit under the State Employees’ Retirement System of Illinois (SERS), the State Universities Retirement System (SURS), and the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF) count toward your eligibility for a disability benefit and the total period during which the disability benefit is payable unless such service is concurrent with your TRS service.

### Application procedures

Approximately one month before your accumulated sick leave expires, you must notify us in writing and

request a disability application packet. Your request should include your:

- name,
- TRS Member ID or the last four digits of your Social Security number,
- current mailing address,
- email address,
- phone number,
- type of disability and due date if pregnant,
- last day worked (or will work), and
- the last day that paid or unpaid sick, personal and/or vacation leave days are exhausted.

Forms must be completed by you, your current employer, and two state-licensed physicians (one physician in cases of pregnancy). The physicians’ reports must be based on examinations that occurred within 90 days of your last day of teaching.

When an individual is employed under an agreement for fewer than 12 full months, neither the 31-day requirement nor the leave time utilization requirement is satisfied during periods not covered by the agreement.

### Applying if time elapsed since you last worked

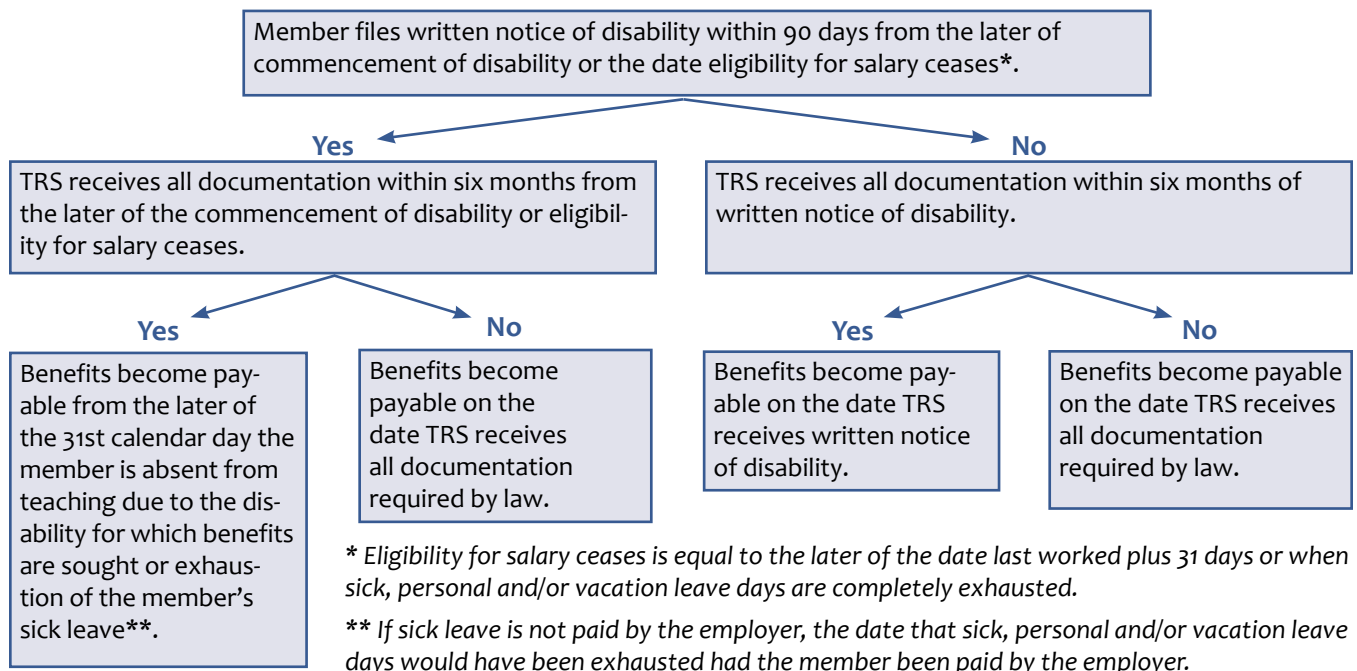
You must exhaust your employer-granted sick, personal and vacation leave days before receiving a disability benefit. However, your disability eligibility is still dependent on providing evidence of disability as determined by physician exams conducted within 90 days of your last day of active teaching and subsequent annual exams if one year or more passes before you apply for TRS disability benefits. One physician is required for pregnancy and all other reasons require two physician examinations throughout the duration.

### Benefit amount

Your temporary nonoccupational disability benefit is equal to 40% of the greater of the contract rate reportable to TRS in effect at the time the benefit becomes payable or the contract rate reportable to TRS on the date your disability began. If you are a noncontractual teacher, we use an annualized salary rate based on your actual earnings to determine your benefit.



## Effective date



## Annual increases

On Jan. 1 following the fourth anniversary of the effective date of your disability benefit, your monthly benefit will increase 7%. Thereafter, your benefit increases by 3% of the current benefit each Jan. 1.

## Employment limitations

As a recipient of a disability benefit, you are prohibited from teaching in any capacity and from gainful employment. "Gainful employment" is defined as earning more than \$10,000 per year or the proportional ratio if less than a calendar year while in receipt of a temporary disability or occupational disability benefit.

If you exceeded the earnings limitation of \$10,000 per calendar year or the proportional ratio if less than a calendar year, your disability benefits will be terminated. You will be required to repay TRS any disability benefits you receive after the termination date if your benefit is terminated.

## Duration of benefits

Nonoccupational benefits cease if you:

- resume teaching (see "Law allows limited, part-time teaching" in this chapter);
- engage in or are able to engage in gainful employment;
- are no longer disabled;
- have received benefits for a period equal to one-fourth of your service credit;

- request termination of the benefit; or
- become eligible and apply for a disability or age retirement annuity.

Temporary disability benefits due to pregnancy expire six weeks following a normal delivery, or eight weeks following a Cesarean delivery. However, if complications arise during pregnancy or delivery, the disability period may be extended. With the submission of appropriate medical documentation, the member may remain on disability until she no longer qualifies for benefits.

If a disability benefit is discontinued because you resume teaching in a non TRS-covered position or are otherwise gainfully employed and you are disabled again due to the same cause within 90 days, the benefit will resume at the previous rate once we receive written notification and verification of your disability and you are no longer receiving salary.

You may be eligible to transfer from a nonoccupational disability benefit to a disability retirement annuity or an age retirement annuity. The effective date of the retirement annuity is the first day of the month after we receive your disability retirement annuity application form or age retirement annuity application form. Please refer to **Chapter 9: "Retirement Benefits"** and, in this chapter, the **Disability Retirement Annuity eligibility requirements**.

## Occupational disability benefits

### Eligibility

No minimum service requirement must be met before you are eligible to receive occupational disability benefits. However, you must be working in a TRS-covered position and have been disabled due to a duty-related injury or illness as determined by the Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission or your employer's workers' compensation insurance carrier to be eligible for this benefit. If you are a part-time or substitute teacher, you are also eligible for occupational disability benefits.

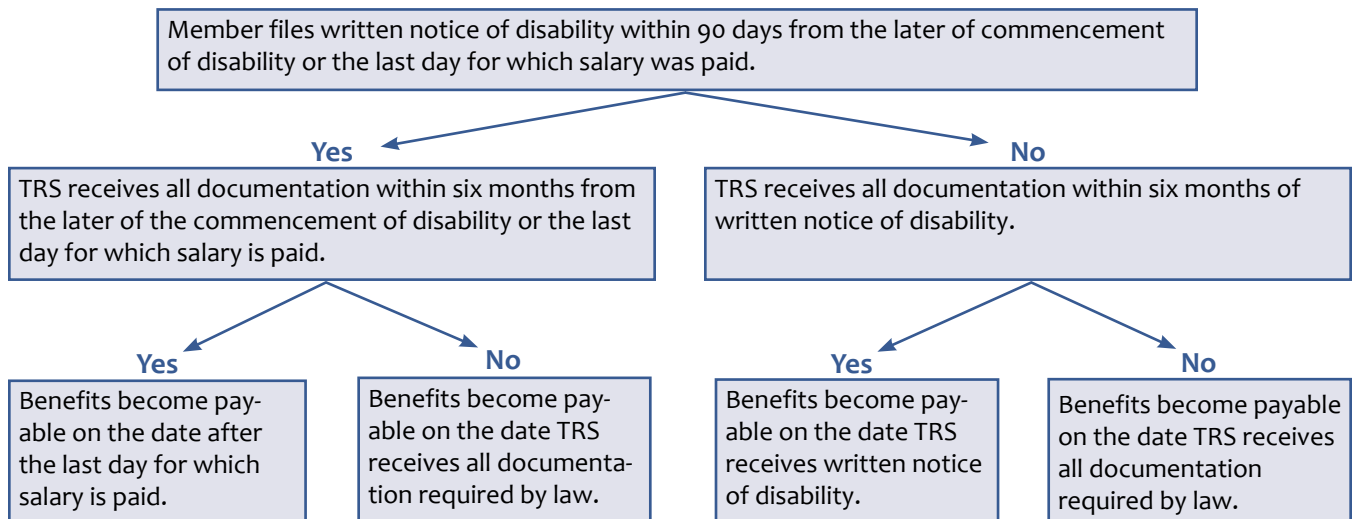
Members who are receiving payments from their employer's workers' compensation insurance company should retain all pay stubs or be able to provide detailed benefit payment records. TRS **may** be able

to grant service credit for members on workers' compensation who do not earn a full year of service credit in the year workers' compensation benefits were received.

### Application procedures

To receive a benefit, notify us in writing that you are seeking an occupational disability benefit and request a disability application packet. We will require verification that the disability was duty-related from you, your employer, and two state-licensed physicians. Each physician's report must be based on an examination that occurred within 90 days of your last day of teaching. In addition, we must receive a copy of the final settlement from the Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission or the insurance carrier with which your employer has a workers' compensation policy with a finding that the disability was employment-related.

### Effective date



### Benefit amount

Your occupational disability benefit is equal to 60% of the greater of the contract rate in effect at the time the benefit becomes payable or the contract rate on the date your disability began. This benefit is reduced by any amounts you receive under workers' compensation. Once workers' compensation benefits expire, we will pay the full 60% if you remain eligible for the benefit.

### Annual increases

On Jan. 1 following the fourth anniversary of the effective date of your disability benefit, your monthly benefit will increase by 7%. Thereafter, your benefit increases by 3% of the current benefit each Jan. 1.

### Employment limitations

As a recipient of a disability benefit, you are prohibited from teaching in any capacity and gainful employment. "Gainful employment" is defined as earning more than \$10,000 per year or the proportional ratio if less than a calendar year while in receipt of a disability or occupational disability benefit.

If you exceeded the earnings limitation of \$10,000 per calendar year or the proportional ratio if less than a calendar year, your disability benefits will be terminated. You will be required to repay TRS any disability benefits you receive after the termination date if your benefit is terminated.

## Duration of benefits

Occupational disability benefits cease when you:

- resume teaching (see “[Law allows limited, part-time teaching](#)” in this chapter);
- engage in or are able to engage in gainful employment;
- are no longer disabled;
- request termination of the benefit; or
- become eligible and apply for an age retirement annuity.

If the disability benefit is discontinued because you resume teaching in a non TRS-covered position or are otherwise gainfully employed and you are disabled again due to the same cause within 90 days, the benefit will resume at the previous rate once we receive written notification and verification of your disability and you are no longer receiving salary.

You may be eligible to transfer from an occupational disability benefit to an age retirement annuity if you meet age and service credit requirements. The effective date of the retirement annuity is the first day of the month after we receive your age retirement annuity application form. (See [Chapter 9: “Retirement Benefits”](#) for the eligibility requirements for an age retirement annuity.)

You may choose to take a nonoccupational benefit even if you have an employment-related disability. This election cannot be changed at a later date.

## Disability retirement annuity

### Eligibility

If you remain disabled after the nonoccupational disability benefit eligibility period has expired, you are eligible for either a disability retirement annuity or a standard age retirement annuity (if you meet the age and service credit requirements). You may switch to either a disability retirement annuity or a standard age retirement annuity (if you meet the requirements) at any time while you are receiving a nonoccupational disability benefit. (See “[Retirement Benefits](#)” for information about an age retirement annuity.) No service credit is earned while you are receiving a disability retirement annuity.

### Application procedures

When the eligibility period for nonoccupational disability benefits is due to expire, we will notify you. Before the benefit expires, you may either send us a letter or call us to request a transfer to a disability retirement annuity or an age retirement annuity.

## Effective date

The disability retirement annuity is effective:

- the day following the last day for which disability benefits are payable or
- the first of the month after we receive your completed disability retirement annuity application form.

## Benefit amount

Your disability retirement annuity is the greater of:

- 35% of the greater of your last annual contract salary or your annual contract rate on the date your disability began (we use an annualized salary rate based on actual earnings for noncontractual teachers);
- the amount computed by the retirement formula reduced by 0.50% for each month you are under age 60 with less than 20 years of service credit; or
- the amount computed by the retirement formula reduced by the 0.50% for each month you are under age 55 with 20 years of service credit; or
- the amount computed by the retirement formula with no reduction if you are age 55 or older with at least 20 years of service credit.

Your initial benefit will be increased by the amount of any annual increases that you have been granted while you were receiving a nonoccupational disability benefit.

## Employment limitations

While you are receiving a disability retirement annuity, you may not be employed by any other public or private school, college, or university in a teaching position, including subbing.

However, gainful employment in any area other than teaching is permitted or in any area of TRS-covered or SURS-covered employment as indicated under “[Law allows limited, part-time teaching](#).”

The combined income from the disability retirement annuity and the earnings from the nonteaching occupation cannot exceed your benefit-based salary rate. To calculate your earnings limitation, subtract your annual gross annuity from the salary rate on which your benefit was based.

If you have earnings above this limit, your disability retirement annuity may be reduced or suspended. If your earnings from a nonteaching occupation exceed the salary rate upon which your disability retirement annuity benefit was based, your benefit will be

terminated including Teachers' Retirement Insurance Program (TRIP) insurance.

For those returning to employment in any area other than teaching, the salary rate for purposes of this calculation will increase 15% after you have received a disability retirement annuity for 10 years.

### Duration of benefits

The disability retirement annuity will continue until:

- your disability ceases or
- you resume teaching (**see “Law allows limited, part-time teaching” in this chapter**) or
- you are eligible and apply for an age retirement annuity.

If you resume teaching in a non TRS-covered position after receiving a disability retirement annuity and are disabled again for the same cause within 90 days, the benefit will be reinstated at the previous rate after we receive your completed disability benefit application form and required medical documentation. In this case, benefits will begin the day following the last day for which you are paid by your employer.

### Annual increases

Your disability retirement annuity will increase annually beginning the earlier of the Jan. 1 following:

- the fourth anniversary of the date you were granted the disability benefit or
- the date you turn age 61 or your first anniversary in retirement, whichever is later.

If the first annual increase follows the fourth anniversary of the date you were granted the disability benefit, the increase will be 7% of the current annuity. When the first annual increase is due to your attainment of age 61 or your first anniversary in retirement, the increase will be calculated like the first increase for an age retirement annuity. After the initial increase, your annuity will increase by 3% of the current benefit each Jan. 1.

### Law allows limited, part-time teaching

The law allows individuals who have received TRS disability benefits **for one year or more** to return to teaching if their medical conditions improve, allowing part-time work.

On a limited basis, you may substitute or part-time teach for a TRS-covered or SURS-covered employer

without loss of your disability benefit. Your combined earnings from your teaching and your disability benefit cannot exceed 100% of the salary rate upon which the benefit was based under the limited, part-time teaching law.

For those returning to teaching with a TRS-covered or SURS-covered employer under the limited, part-time teaching law, the salary rate for purposes of this calculation will **not** increase 15% after receiving a disability retirement annuity for 10 years.

If you exceed the salary rate upon which your benefit was based, your benefit will cease including Teachers' Retirement Insurance Program (TRIP) insurance.

You may not teach for any employers not covered by TRS or SURS. This includes substitute work.

Part-time is defined as “employed for fewer than four clock hours per day or fewer than five days per week.”

If you plan to return to teaching on a limited basis, you must contact us to request a Limited Return to Work Program Certification form. This form must be completed and returned to us prior to your return to teaching. We will acknowledge receipt of the form and confirm your eligibility.

This law applies to all members receiving nonoccupational disability benefits, occupational disability benefits, and disability retirement annuities.

### Medical examinations

To substantiate your continued eligibility for any type of disability benefits, we may require additional medical examinations and request medical and other records. The frequency of re-examination is governed by individual circumstances; however, you must have medical examinations at least once a year while you are receiving nonoccupational or occupational disability benefits. If you are receiving a disability retirement annuity, periodic medical examinations may be required. If you do not submit to medical examinations or provide the necessary information, your benefits will be discontinued, including insurance, if applicable, until you consent to the examination. If your refusal continues for one year, all rights to your annuity will be revoked.



# Chapter 15: Death Benefits

*You can take comfort in knowing that your benefits will help take care of your family after your death.*



We provide two types of death benefits: a beneficiary refund, which consists of any remaining accumulated contributions, and survivor benefits.

Each benefit may be paid to separate beneficiaries or both benefits may

be paid to the same beneficiaries.

The type of benefit for which beneficiaries are eligible is determined by their status at the time of your death. **Effective June 1, 2011, Illinois law entitles a party to a civil union to the same legal obligations, responsibilities, protections, and benefits as are afforded or recognized by the law of Illinois to spouses.** A dependent beneficiary may choose between a lump-sum payment or monthly benefits. A nondependent beneficiary receives a lump-sum payment. If we do not have a Beneficiary Designation form on file for you, death benefits are distributed as follows:

- a **beneficiary refund** is paid to your surviving spouse or civil union partner, or if there is not one, to your estate and
- **survivor benefits** are paid to an eligible dependent beneficiary, or if there is not one, to your estate.

## Types of beneficiaries

A dependent beneficiary is:

- a spouse to whom you have been married for at least one year, except where a child is born of the marriage in which case the one-year period is not applicable;
- a civil union partner to whom you have been partnered for at least one year;
- an unmarried natural or adopted child under age 18, or between ages 18 and 22 if he or she is a full-time student in an accredited educational institution, or an unmarried child of any age who

is dependent by reason of a physical or mental disability and claimed as a dependent on your final federal income tax return; or

- a dependent parent who received at least half of his or her support from you for the 12-month period immediately prior to your death.

For an adopted child to be an eligible dependent beneficiary, the adoption proceedings must have been finalized prior to the member's death and while the child was a minor. For purposes of determining dependency, "disability" is defined as an inability to engage in any substantial gainful activity by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment that can be expected to last for a continuous period of 12 months or more.

Children, unless named as a beneficiary on the Beneficiary Designation form, are only eligible for benefits if they are the children of the surviving parent who will receive monthly benefits. In the case of a divorce, if the member names the new spouse or civil union partner and had children with the prior spouse or civil union partner, those children are not eligible for monthly survivor benefits.

A parent may be an eligible dependent beneficiary only if there is no other dependent beneficiary.

A nondependent beneficiary is any other designated person or entity that is not a dependent beneficiary.

You may designate a primary beneficiary on the Beneficiary Designation form to receive survivor benefits. If this individual is a dependent beneficiary, he or she may select either monthly benefits or a lump-sum benefit. Only a lump-sum benefit is payable if you designate both a dependent and a nondependent primary beneficiary.

Alternate beneficiaries named on your Beneficiary Designation form will receive benefits only if all designated primary beneficiaries are deceased. If your beneficiary designation includes more than one person, the benefits are divided equally among the living beneficiaries of that class (primary or alternate).

The automatic designation option on the Beneficiary Designation form is an alternative to naming specific individuals. Automatic designation names all eligible dependents as beneficiaries. If no dependent beneficiaries survive, the benefits are paid to your estate.

## Designating a Trust

A trust can receive monthly survivor benefits on behalf of a minor child or a disabled dependent beneficiary. A trust cannot receive monthly survivor benefits on behalf of an adult dependent who is not disabled.

To pay a monthly survivor benefit to a trust, the following language is required in the trust.

*“The trust is authorized to receive TRS monthly survivor benefits on behalf of (insert beneficiary name). The trustee will use the monthly TRS survivor benefit solely for the care and benefit of (beneficiary name) and will not divert (beneficiary name)’s benefits to some other purpose inconsistent with Article 1 or Article 16 of the Illinois Pension Code.”*

## Beneficiary Refund

Accumulated contributions are refunded as a lump-sum payment.

If you are an active or an inactive member, your beneficiaries will receive a return of all of your retirement contributions, plus interest, and the portion paid towards the annual increase in annuity. Refer to your TRS Benefits Report for the contributions and interest that are refundable after your death.

If you are an annuitant, your beneficiaries will receive excess accumulated contributions minus the amount you received as a retirement annuity.

## Survivor benefits

Two types of survivor benefits exist: lump-sum and monthly.

### Eligibility

Nondependent and dependent beneficiaries are eligible for a lump-sum survivor benefit if your death occurs:

- while you are an annuitant;
- while you are employed as a teacher;
- within the first 12 months following your last day of earnings as a teacher;
- while you are on an approved leave of absence;
- while you are receiving a nonoccupational or an occupational disability benefit; or
- while you are an inactive member and you have 20 or more years of service. For the purpose of determining eligibility for a benefit, service credit under the State Employees’ Retirement System of Illinois, the State Universities Retirement System,

and the Public School Teachers’ Pension and Retirement Fund of Chicago is considered.

Nondependent beneficiaries are not eligible for monthly survivor benefits.

Dependent beneficiaries are eligible for monthly survivor benefits if you had:

- 1.5 years of TRS service credit; **and**
- at least 60 days of creditable service during the 18 months preceding your death.

If you are an annuitant and had at least one year of service after July 24, 1959, your beneficiaries are eligible for survivor benefits, provided that you had not taken a refund of those contributions prior to your death. If you are an annuitant, did not have service after July 24, 1959, and die after January 1, 1982, your surviving dependent beneficiaries are eligible for survivor benefits to a maximum of \$200 per month plus a \$1,000 one-time, lump-sum payment.

When Survivor Benefits Begin for Dependents		
Dependents	Member status at time of death	
	Active or Inactive	Annuitant*
Spouse or civil union partner with minor children or Spouse or civil union partner age 50 or Dependent parent age 55	On the date of member's death	First of the month following the date of member's death
Spouse or civil union partner not age 50 at time of member's death	When spouse or civil union partner turns age 50 if married at least one year	
Dependent parent not age 55 at time of member's death	When parent turns age 55	
* Your retirement annuity is payable through the month of your death.		

## Duration of monthly benefits

Monthly survivor benefits will continue for the life of your spouse or civil union partner. A minor child will receive benefits until he or she reaches age 18 (or age 22 if he or she is a full-time student), marries, or dies, whichever is earlier. An adult child who is dependent by reason of a physical or mental disability may

receive monthly survivor benefits for his or her life-time if:

- he or she does not marry;
- he or she is not capable of substantial gainful employment; and
- we periodically receive a physician certification verifying his or her continuing disability.

Survivor benefits are payable through the end of the month in which the beneficiary's death occurs. No further benefits are payable.

### Teachers' Retirement Insurance Program (TRIP) coverage

Dependent insurance coverage is terminated at midnight on the day of the member's death. Dependents who are eligible for a monthly survivor benefit may re-enroll in TRIP and coverage will be reinstated retroactively to the date of cancellation.

### Annual increases in benefits

Beneficiaries of members **who elect the AAI Program** and are eligible for monthly survivor benefits or monthly reversionary benefits will receive 1.5% non-compounded annual increases beginning the Jan. 1 occurring on or after the first anniversary of the applicable annuity. Each 1.5% annual increase is calculated using the original survivor or reversionary benefit.

Beneficiaries of members **who do not elect the AAI Program** and are eligible for monthly survivor benefits or monthly reversionary benefits will receive 3% compounded annual increases beginning the Jan. 1 after the applicable annuity begins. Each 3% annual increase is calculated using the current survivor or reversionary benefit, which includes prior increases.

### Death notification

Upon death, a family member should provide the deceased member's name, Social Security number, and date of death. We will forward a letter and the appropriate forms to the member's designated beneficiaries for completion. The application requires that beneficiaries provide a certified copy of the member's death certificate as well as copies of a marriage or civil union certificate and a birth certificate for a surviving spouse or civil union partner.

Dependents may also receive a Survivor Benefits Election form to select either a monthly benefit or a lump-sum payment. This form will be accompanied by information regarding direct deposit of payments, federal income tax withholding, the Teachers' Retirement Insurance Program (TRIP), and the taxability of survivor benefits. Once we receive the

completed application and all required documents, benefits will be processed and then issued by the Office of the Comptroller.

An annuitant's retirement benefits are payable through the end of the month in which his or her death occurs. The final payment to a deceased annuitant would be issued the first of the month following the date of death. Any payments issued to the annuitant beyond the final payment must be returned to TRS.

### Determining survivor benefits

TRS disbursements are not subject to Illinois individual income taxes. However, they are subject to federal taxes (with the exception of occupational disability benefits).

Types of Beneficiaries		
Time of Death	Dependents	Nondependents
<b>While employed or employed within 12 months of last day of credit</b>	Lump sum up to the highest salary rate in the last four years or \$1,000 and a monthly benefit <sup>1</sup> generally not less than \$400 <sup>2</sup> or \$600 with minor children <sup>3</sup>	Lump sum up to the highest salary rate in the last four years
<b>Annuitant or inactive member with 20 or more years of service<sup>5</sup></b>	Lump sum of \$3,000 or 1/2 of the highest salary rate in the last four years <sup>4</sup> or \$1,000 and a monthly benefit generally 50% of member's earned benefit at time of death	Lump sum of \$3,000 or 1/2 of the highest salary rate in the last four years <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dependent beneficiaries are eligible for monthly survivor benefits if you had 1.5 years of TRS service credit and at least 60 days of creditable service during the 18 months preceding death.

<sup>2</sup> Certain circumstances might provide a monthly annuity less than \$400 per month for an active member.

<sup>3</sup> TRS will pay 50% of the member's earned retirement annuity at death if it is greater than the above amounts.

<sup>4</sup> Certain lump sums may be greater if the annuitant or inactive member has been in retirement or out of service for less than five years.

<sup>5</sup> Beneficiaries of inactive members with less than 20 years of service are not eligible for survivor benefits.

# Chapter 16: Refund of Retirement Contributions

*If you cease teaching, you may receive a refund of your retirement contributions.*

A refund of contributions should be carefully considered because it terminates your benefits and will be costly to repay if you return to teaching service.



If you terminate teaching with a TRS employer, you may apply for a refund of your retirement contributions. This refund consists of

the portions used to pay the retirement annuity and the annual increases in the annuity.

If you receive a refund of retirement contributions, you are not entitled to any other refunds. The contributions for the Teachers' Retirement Insurance Program and the 1% survivor benefit contribution are not refundable.

## Refund of retirement contributions

You may request a refund of your TRS contributions. The amount refunded is at the rate of 7% of creditable earnings prior to July 1, 1998, and 8% of creditable earnings thereafter without interest.

### Eligibility

If you have terminated your teaching duties with a TRS employer, you may apply for a refund of the retirement contributions. If you are on sick leave, a sabbatical leave, or an unpaid leave of absence, or have accepted TRS employment service with a new employer, you are not considered to have terminated service and are not eligible for a refund.

### No hardship loans

The law prohibits borrowing from your retirement contributions. A loan from TRS is prohibited even if you are in a state of financial distress.

### Effect of receiving a refund

When you accept a refund, you forfeit all rights to TRS benefits. If you are considering a refund, you may want to contact us for an estimate of potential retirement and survivor benefits forfeited by accepting the refund. If you choose not to receive a refund, your

contributions will remain with us and will eventually provide a retirement benefit. If you have fewer than five years of service credit, you may receive a lump-sum retirement benefit at age 65 (see “Single-sum Retirement Benefit” in Chapter 9). If you have five or more years of service, you may receive a retirement annuity (see Chapter 9: “Retirement Benefits”).

### Transfer of credit

We cannot transfer creditable service directly to a retirement system in another state. However, many retirement systems permit the purchase of out-of-system service. We will provide the other system with verification of Illinois teaching service if you accept a refund and send us a written request. You may then make payment for service directly to the other system if this is required or request a rollover of refundable contributions.

### Application procedure

A refund of your TRS contributions can be requested via email at [members@trsil.org](mailto:members@trsil.org).

Please include: your full name, current address, contact phone number, the last four digits of your Social Security number, last employer(s) and the month and year you last worked in a TRS position (or expected if still working).

TRS will send you the application by regular mail. The application can be returned any time after you have formally resigned from your TRS-covered position. We will process your refund and forward it to the Office of the Comptroller for payment when four months have passed since your final day of teaching.

## Refunds eligible for rollovers

Payments of refunds for retirement or survivor benefit contributions may be either made directly to you or directly rolled over to an eligible retirement plan that you specify. In a direct rollover, the eligible rollover distribution (the taxable portion) is paid directly from us to an individual retirement account (IRA) or another qualified retirement plan that accepts rollovers. By using a direct rollover, you avoid a 20% federal withholding deduction on direct payments. Also, if you choose a direct rollover, the distribution is not taxed until it is withdrawn from the IRA or other qualified retirement plan.



## **Taxability of refunds**

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Refunds are not subject to the Illinois individual income tax. However, any portion of the refund attributable to contributions made by either you or your employer that were excluded from taxable income in the years the contributions were made is subject to federal income tax.

For tax planning purposes, if your correct and complete application is received by the close of business on Dec. 5, it will be processed in the current tax year. If your application is received after Dec. 5, it will be processed in the next tax year.

We will notify you of the taxable portion of your refund. We also will report the refund payment to the Internal Revenue Service on IRS Form 1099-R and will send you a copy of this form in January in the year after the refund is taken.

Special tax consequences and penalties may apply to refund payments. You should consult a professional tax consultant for details of the taxability of refunds. Additional information is also contained in Internal Revenue Service Publication 575, *Pension and Annuity Income* online at:

[www.irs.gov/file\\_source/pub/irs-pdf/p575.pdf](http://www.irs.gov/file_source/pub/irs-pdf/p575.pdf).

## **Repayment of refunds**

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Refunds of retirement contributions may be repaid with interest from the date of the refund to the date

of the repayment. However, service credit previously forfeited may not be used as a basis for payment of benefits prior to completion of one year of TRS-covered service following the refund.

If you have resumed service in a reciprocal system, the Illinois Retirement Systems Reciprocal Act requires you to complete two years of creditable service before service credit can be reinstated through repayment of a refund.

## **Assignment of contributions and loans**

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By law, you are protected from creditors placing a lien on, garnishing, or confiscating contributions you have made to TRS. This provision does not extend to federal tax levies and state of Illinois involuntary withholding. You may not assign your TRS contributions to a creditor or borrow against your account funds.

# Chapter 17: Our Website, trsil.org

*We are meeting your needs on the web 24 hours a day, seven days a week.*



## **Your information source**

Publications, videos and more are at your fingertips.

Read or print out brochures, newsletters and booklets for your reference under the publications section of the Member Services area. We have videos on retirement, disability, and death and survivor benefits so you can view the information you need at your convenience. You'll also find driving directions, TRS contact information and forms. A site search engine will also help you locate what you need quickly.

TRS also has areas with current information about investments, the TRS Board of Trustees, news releases, vendor information, TRS careers, the strategic plan and employer services.

## **Your MyTRSIL member account online**

MyTRSIL is your online record available to you 24/7. All members must register with multifactor authentication (MFA) to create a MyTRSIL member account. MFA provides extra layers of security to protect you in case someone tries to access your account.

For your protection, an email is automatically sent to you if any changes are made to your online account.

## **What you can do in MyTRSIL**

### **All members**

- View and update your mailing and email addresses and phone numbers.
- Upload documents to TRS.
- View beneficiaries for death benefits and print a new form to change beneficiaries.

### **Active and inactive members**

- View your service credit and earnings.
- View your annual TRS Benefits Report.
- Create personalized pension benefit estimates.
- Complete the personal retirement interview at retirement.

### **Retired members or those receiving disability benefits**

- Request an income verification/insurance premium verification letter.
- View and print your monthly/annual pension earnings statement.
- Print a form to add/change direct deposit.

The following sections explain the features available to you after you log in.

### **Personalized benefit estimate**

The calculator will take information from your TRS record and use it to help you estimate your retirement income. Please have your retirement date, current salary, projected salary, and eligible sick leave days ready so you can complete the estimate.

Web estimates are in exactly the same format as estimates received from TRS Counseling Services. If you have questions about your web estimate, we can view your estimate to help you.

### **Uploading documents to TRS**

Birth certificates and all other TRS forms can be completed and then uploaded directly to the Springfield office. It's easy to do; no stamps or mailing time. Uploading is more secure than emailing or sending a document by U.S. mail. This process decreases the paper mail that TRS receives daily and must scan by hand into the computer system.

### **How to upload**

- Login to your MyTRSIL member account.
- Locate "Member Services" from the choices on the left navigation bar.
- Under "Member Services," select "Document Upload."
- Select the specific form name or "Other" and complete your upload.

## TRS Benefits Report

The TRS Benefit Report is available only through your online TRS member account. We annually prepare a TRS Benefits Report for each active member. This report will be available in late November/early December and you will be notified via email when it is ready for viewing. The statement covers the previous fiscal year, July 1 through June 30.

The statement provides information about service credit, contributions, and beneficiaries. It also lists your earnings history and outlines pending and most types of terminated service credit.

When you receive your statement, review it carefully and contact us immediately if you suspect that any information has been omitted or incorrectly stated. Additionally, you may want to update your beneficiary designation by filing a new Beneficiary Designation form. It is available in your MyTRSIL member account or call us at 877-927-5877 (877-9-ASK-TRS).

### Correcting Benefits Report errors

Active members should report their name change or change of address to their employer.

If you have a change to your birth date or beneficiaries, please call us at 877-927-5877 (877-9-ASK-TRS).

Your employer provides TRS with the service credit and earnings information that appears on your statement. Please discuss any errors with your employer before contacting us.

Employers must send us corrections for reporting errors that occurred in the last four years. If additional contributions are due, your employer must pay the amount due; however, your employer may require reimbursement from you. Similarly, if contributions have been overpaid, we will issue a refund to your employer who is responsible for providing refunded amounts to you.

## Address and phone updates

The contact information we have on file for you will be shown on the first screen when you log in to MyTRSIL. Review your information and make updates to your address and phone numbers if necessary.

### Email addition or updates

The primary way we contact members about news, events and benefit information is through email because it's an efficient, environmentally friendly and cost-saving measure.

It is preferable that your email on file with TRS is your **personal email and not a work email** used for school district employment so that you never lose access to receiving information from your pension system.

Your email on file will be shown on the first screen when you log in under Email Information. If your email is missing or it is your work school district email, please update it with your personal email address.

Your email address will always remain confidential. Additionally, we will never send confidential information online.

## Personalized Retirement Interview

Your online Personalized Retirement Interview (PRI) will help you make choices while providing us with the information we need to personalize your retirement application forms and ready them for your signature. Please use this online service only when you are within six months of retirement and know when your last day of work will be or your last paid day. Plan on the process taking 30 minutes.

# Chapter 18: Important Reminders

*It is important that you contact us when your mailing address changes and that you periodically review your beneficiary designation.*



## Mailing address

You should keep a current home address on file with us so that we can mail correspondence and other information to the correct location. For expedited address changes, you can update it in your online member account, MyTRSIL. Select Member Login on [trsil.org](https://trsil.org) to begin. Or, you can download a Change of Address form from the TRS website at [trsil.org/change-of-address-form](https://trsil.org/change-of-address-form). When you've completed the form, you can either upload it within the MyTRSIL secure area online or mail it to the TRS office.

## Beneficiary Designation

The Beneficiary Designation form allows you to designate beneficiaries to whom death benefits will be distributed. You initially completed this form when you became a TRS member. For information about the types of beneficiaries you may designate and the

benefits they may receive, see Chapter 15: “Death Benefits.”

Periodically review your beneficiary designation and be sure to change it whenever necessary. Some events that may require a beneficiary update include: marriage, divorce, births, deaths or dependents reaching adulthood.

If you are an active member, your TRS Benefits Report contains your designated beneficiaries. You may view this in the secure member area online.

To update your beneficiary designation, download your personalized form by visiting the secure member area of our website. Part of the form will be prefilled with information on file for you. If you cannot access your online account, email [members@trsil.org](mailto:members@trsil.org) and provide your full name, last 4 digits of your Social Security number and mailing address and we will mail the form to your address.

To quickly and efficiently send the completed form back to TRS, use the Document Upload feature within the secure area. You may also fax it to 217-753-0964 or mail it to the Springfield office.

You can also verify your beneficiary designation by calling us at 877-927-5877 (877-9-ASK-TRS). Due to confidentiality rules, we can provide this information only to members.

## Taxability of TRS Benefits

TRS disbursements are not subject to Illinois individual income taxes. However, they are subject to federal taxes (with the exception of occupational disability benefits).



# Chapter 19: How to Reach Us

*Have a question? We have answers.*



## Member Services

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### Springfield office address

2815 West Washington Street  
Springfield, Illinois 62702-3397

### Lisle office address

4200 Commerce Court, Suite 101  
Lisle, Illinois 60532-3611

### Driving directions for counseling

[trsil.org/contact/driving-directions](https://trsil.org/contact/driving-directions)

### Phone number

For Springfield and Lisle:  
877-927-5877 (877-9-ASK-TRS)  
Illinois Relay: 800-526-0844 TTY or 711

### Phone hours

7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday – Friday  
(central standard time)

### Email

[members@trsil.org](mailto:members@trsil.org)

### Fax

Springfield: 217-787-2269

Lisle: 630-505-9607

### Teachers' Retirement Insurance Program (TRIP)

<http://MyBenefits.illinois.gov>

MyBenefits Service Center:

844-251-1777 or 844-251-1778 (TDD/TTY)

8 a.m. – 6 p.m., Monday – Friday (central standard time)

## EEO/ADA Issues

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217-814-2149

[director\\_of\\_human\\_resources@trsil.org](mailto:director_of_human_resources@trsil.org)

## Administration

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217-814-2000

[administration@trsil.org](mailto:administration@trsil.org)

## Employer Services

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888-678-3675

[employers@trsil.org](mailto:employers@trsil.org)

## Investments

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217-814-2001

[investments@trsil.org](mailto:investments@trsil.org)

## Press Contact

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217-814-2177

[public\\_information\\_officer@trsil.org](mailto:public_information_officer@trsil.org)