

Changes in pension benefit amounts and 2023 tax documents

We've made it easy for you to start 2024 off right. Here you'll find important information to get you ready for the new year.

Changes in your benefit amount

Any time there is a change in your monthly benefit amount, we will send you a Statement of Benefit Payment. If you are enrolled in the OPERS Vision or Dental Plan, you may receive a Statement in January showing a change in your benefit amount due to coverage changes or changes in premium amounts. Many retirees will see a change in their net pension benefit amount in February due to Federal tax withholding changes. Statements of Benefit Payment will also be viewable through your OPERS online account near the end of the month prior to the change taking effect.

Changing your tax withholding

Most retirees review their tax withholdings once they file taxes for the previous year. The best way to do this is through your online account, which allows you to see the impact that a change would make to your net monthly benefit amount.

2023 IRS Documents

2023 IRS Form 1099-R – OPERS will mail the 2023 IRS Form 1099-R by the end of January 2024. Approximately a week prior to mailing, this document will be available to view and print from your online account. OPERS will send an email notification when it can be viewed. Your Form 1099-R will not provide your vision and dental premium deductions for 2023. If needed, this information is available by signing in to your OPERS online account and accessing your 2023 OPERS Health Care Premium Receipt.

Please consult the IRS or your tax advisor if you have additional tax questions.

2023 IRS Form 1095-B – The IRS Form 1095-B provides evidence of health care minimum essential coverage.

OPERS creates a Form 1095-B for each primary plan participant who met minimum essential coverage requirements in 2023. The IRS requires health plan sponsors to provide access to these forms. OPERS will provide access to this form, but we will not provide a paper copy by mail. The IRS Form 1095-B does not have to be filed with tax returns as it is a reference document that confirms health plan coverage.

In late January 2024, OPERS benefit recipients who participated in the Health Reimbursement Arrangement and/or Retiree Medical Account plans in 2023 will be able to access their Form 1095-B through their OPERS online account. Simply log in to your account, access your documents, select "Form 1095-B" and print for your records. Additionally, participants can request a copy of their Form 1095-B using the messaging center within their online account or by calling OPERS at 1-800-222-7377.

OPERS Health Care Program Reminders

DON'T FORGET!

You can access your Via Benefits HRA account by logging into your OPERS online account. There is a hyperlink available within your OPERS online account to view and manage your HRA.

- ✓ Log into the OPERS account at www.opers.org.
- ✓ Under the "Benefit Summary" click on "View your Health Reimbursement Arrangement".
- ✓ This link will take you directly to your Via Benefits account where you can view your balance and submit claims.

Take the guesswork out of MetLife vision and dental claims by requesting prior authorization for services

MetLife recommends that you request prior authorization for vision and dental treatment before receiving services. Prior authorization allows you to confirm that services will be covered by your MetLife policy and to receive an estimate of any out-of-pocket costs.

Following these steps before receiving services from a vision or dental provider will eliminate surprise charges following your treatment.

- ✓ Visit metlife.com/opers to see if the provider is within the MetLife network; **and**
- ✓ Contact the provider to confirm that they are in-network with MetLife.
- ✓ Contact MetLife to request prior authorization be completed to confirm that the services are covered and to receive an out-of-pocket cost estimate.



OPERS News

OPERS News is a quarterly newsletter providing news and information to retired members of the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System. This publication allows us to communicate vital information concerning retirement benefits to our members.

This newsletter is written in plain language for use by members of the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System. It is not intended as a substitute for federal or state law, nor will its interpretation prevail should a conflict arise between it and the Ohio Revised Code, Ohio Administrative Code or Internal Revenue Code. If you have questions about this material, please contact our office or seek legal advice from your attorney.

Contact information:

opers.org
1-800-222-7377
Monday - Friday
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
newsfeedback@opers.org

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For more information on the OPERS Board of Trustees, visit www.opers.org.

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OPERS is here to help

Below are tips for interacting with us and some helpful information based on questions we frequently receive from retirees.

Do you have a question about your retirement benefit?

- Call us at **1-800-222-7377**
- Visit **opers.org** and log in to your online account for account information and self-service options



When is the best time to call OPERS?

Hours of Operation - Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

✓ **Best time to call -**
Early mornings

✓ **Best days to call -**
Mid week

✓ **Busiest time of year -**
October-February

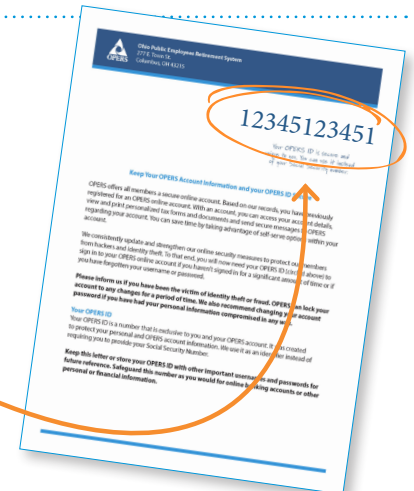
What is my OPERS ID and where do I find it?

- It's an eleven-digit number that is unique to you and associated with your account.
- Find it at the top right of any recent mailing from OPERS.

Why do I need an OPERS ID?

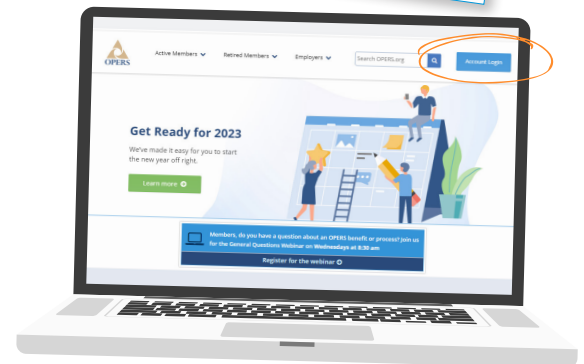
- To use instead of your Social Security Number when contacting OPERS - **Store your OPERS ID in a safe place!**
- To register your online account.
- To access your online account if it's been a significant amount of time since you last logged in, or if you've forgotten your username or password.

OPERS ID



What can I do with an OPERS online account?

- View and update personal information, like your address and phone number.
- View and print a breakdown of your monthly benefit and personalized tax forms and documents.
- Contact OPERS via the online message center.



Who can I call if I have a question about my HRA, medical insurance or vision/dental coverage?

- Call **Via Benefits at 1-844-287-9945** for questions about your HRA, reimbursements or Medicare plan enrollment or **1-833-939-1215** for Pre-Medicare plan enrollment.
- Call **MetLife at 1-888-262-4874** for questions regarding your OPERS dental and/or vision coverage.

Or you can call us at **1-800-222-7377** and use the phone system prompts to be directly connected to the appropriate vendor.

For OPERS Disability Benefit Recipients

Return *Employment and Earnings Statement* to avoid interruption of benefits and HRA deposits.

Annually, OPERS disability benefit recipients are required to complete and mail to OPERS an *Employment and Earnings Statement*, even if work did not occur in the previous year.

The statement allows disability benefit recipients to report any employment as well as total earnings, employer information and job descriptions. Only income from employment should be reported; spousal support, child support, and volunteer service is not required information. However, if you applied for Disability Benefits on or after Jan. 7, 2013, you are required to report any Social Security income. OPERS will mail *Employment and Earnings Statements* beginning Feb. 7, 2024.

The *Employment and Earning Statement* submission will be waived for disability recipients meeting one of the following criteria:

- A disability recipient who is under legal guardianship.
- A disability recipient who resides in a skilled nursing facility.
- A disability recipient is age 70 and older as of Dec. 31, 2022.

You will be able to access your *Employment and Earning Statement* through your online account. If you misplace the copy we mail to you in February, you can log in to your OPERS online account and print a new form. You can print, complete and then upload or mail the form to OPERS.

The image shows two overlapping forms from OPERS titled "Statement of Employment and Earnings After Receipt of a Disability Benefit". The forms contain various fields for personal information (Social Security Number, First Name, Last Name, Age, Date of Birth, City, State, ZIP Code, Home Phone Number, Work Phone Number, Cell Phone Number, Email Address) and employment details (Employer Name, Address, City, State, ZIP Code, Hours Per Week, Weeks Per Year). There are also checkboxes for "Are you self-employed?" and "Work or Working Address?".

If OPERS does not receive your completed statement by **April 15, 2024**, your **May 2024 disability benefit payment and subsequent monthly payments will be suspended until we receive the form.**

In addition, if you do not provide this form, your monthly Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) deposits and any enrollments in the OPERS vision and dental plans will be terminated effective **May 1, 2024.**



HRA policy following termination of disability benefits

Effective Jan. 1, 2024, upon the termination of a disability benefit, recipients receiving a monthly Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) deposit from OPERS will have a 24-month spend down period to use the funds within their HRA. The spend down period begins the month in which their disability benefit was terminated. This means that affected benefit recipients must submit qualified medical expenses for reimbursement within those 24 months to use up the remaining balance in their HRA or it will forfeit without the ability to be reinstated.

Please note that if a recipient has their disability terminated and chooses to refund their account, their HRA balance will be immediately forfeited since they would no longer be an OPERS member.

If your disability benefit terminated prior to Jan. 1, 2024, you will have until Jan. 1, 2026 to spend down the funds within your HRA by submitting qualified medical expenses.

Qualified medical expenses must have been incurred during the

period in which you received your disability benefit. Examples of a qualified expense may include what's listed below.

Please refer to opers.org for additional examples of qualified expenses.

- *Premiums* – Part A, Part B, Medical, Prescription, Dental, Vision
- *Out-of-Pocket Expenses* – Copays, Deductibles, Miscellaneous Expenses (e.g., medications, glasses, etc.)

AS A REMINDER, OPERS PARTNERS WITH VIA BENEFITS, WHO SERVES AS THE OPERS CONNECTOR AND ALSO ADMINISTERS THE HRA. IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW TO USE YOUR HRA, YOU MAY CALL VIA BENEFITS AT 1-844-287-9945 (TTY: 711) MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY, 8 A.M. TO 7 P.M. EASTERN TIME OR ESTABLISH A VIA BENEFITS ONLINE ACCOUNT AT [MARKETPLACE.VIABENEFITS.COM/OPERS](https://marketplace.viabenefits.com/opers).



Via Benefits reaching out to OPERS retirees

Outreach will address health care coverage; here's what to expect

In consultation with OPERS, Via Benefits, our health care connector vendor, facilitates outreach campaigns to get in touch with retirees to alert them to information they need to make the right health care choices during open enrollment and throughout the year. The campaign is multifaceted and is conducted via letters, email and, in some cases, direct calls from Via Benefits.

The outreach calls made during the open enrollment period explain that OPERS retirees eligible for Medicare must enroll in individual Medicare medical coverage through Via Benefits to qualify for an OPERS HRA deposit. The Via Benefits representative will also be able to help retirees evaluate their coverage options.

Outside of the open enrollment season, subsequent direct calls will be made to gauge whether retirees would like to shop for other options in light of Medigap premium increases. Via Benefits also will reach out to retirees as they age into Medicare.

If you are suspicious about the authenticity of a caller purporting to be from Via Benefits, hang up and call Via Benefits at 1-833-939-1215 (for Pre-Medicare benefit recipients) or 1-844-287-9945 (for Medicare-eligible benefit recipients) to confirm.

We understand that many of our retirees are concerned about fraud when it comes to health care, especially over the phone. When a representative from Via Benefits calls an OPERS member, the representative will:

- ✓ Identify themselves as calling from Via Benefits Insurance Services.
- ✓ State that the call is being recorded.
- ✓ Ask for the benefit recipient by his or her full name or have the benefit recipient state the full name for verification. It isn't sufficient to only state the benefit recipient's last name.
- ✓ Verify two of the following three pieces of information: phone number, date of birth, or ZIP code.





Safeguard your personal information over the phone

Recently, a few retirees have reported receiving a phone call from someone claiming to represent OPERS and offering a variety of services.

OPERS DOES NOT make outbound calls to our members or retirees offering retirement counseling, health insurance counseling or financial advising. If you receive a call from an individual offering these services on behalf of OPERS or the “Federal or State retirement system”, do not provide this caller with your personal information. If you have a question about your OPERS account or the health care program, please contact us directly.

OPERS rolls out health care education initiative

The OPERS education staff is taking a new approach to health care education, designed to provide targeted information to increase knowledge of health care topics among retirees.

The initiative includes a series of new educational presentations taking a deep dive into health care related issues that are important for members and retirees to understand.

The first two address the specifics of Medicare, from the point of view of active members and of Pre-Medicare retirees who soon will age into Medicare. The information initially will be available as seminars and eventually as webinars and recorded presentations housed on the OPERS website.

The initial phase of the initiative focuses on understanding Medicare, and is geared toward the following active and retired groups:

- Members who are close to turning 65 and planning to retire
- Members who are over 65 and have chosen to keep working
- Retirees who are close to turning 65

Some of the topics discussed during the seminars include:

- When to enroll in Medicare and an individual Medicare plan, and what you’ll need during enrollment
- The difference between Medigap and Medicare Advantage plans
- How to use the OPERS Health Reimbursement Arrangement



OPERS will send email invitations to members and retirees in the situations described above. Keep an eye on your inbox for dates, locations and registration instructions. To explore all the seminars, webinars and recorded presentations OPERS offers, visit opers.org and click on “Member Education.”



Fourth quarter 2023

OPERSNEWS

News and information for retired members of
the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System.



If you no longer wish to receive a paper copy of your newsletter and would like to receive the electronic version, log into your OPERS online account and update your correspondence preferences to electronic.

2024 OPERS benefit payments schedule

Pension benefit payments will be issued on the first business month. If that day falls on a weekend or holiday, payments will be last business day of the previous month. The exception to this rule when, for tax purposes, the payment must be issued on the first of the month.



Listed here are the dates that OPERS issues your monthly benefit funds. Banks will sometimes post these funds to your account earlier or later than this date and we receive questions when there is a change in this practice. Please direct these questions to your bank. We issue the funds to your bank, but don't have control over when your bank posts them to your account.

- 2024 -

- January 2
- February 1
- March 1
- April 1
- May 1
- May 31 (June)
- July 1
- August 1
- August 30 (September)
- October 1
- November 1
- November 29 (December)