Retiring from Public Employment

For Members in the Member-Directed Plan
The 11-member OPERS Board of Trustees is responsible for the administration and management of OPERS. Seven of the 11 members are elected by the groups that they represent (i.e., college and university non-teaching employees, state, county, municipal, and miscellaneous employees, and retirees); the Director of the Department of Administrative Services for the State of Ohio is a statutory member, and three members are investment experts appointed by the Governor, the Treasurer of State, and jointly by the Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives and the President of the Ohio Senate.

For a current listing of OPERS Board members, please visit www.opers.org

It is your responsibility to be certain that OPERS has your current address on file. If OPERS is not made aware of address changes, we cannot guarantee that you will receive important information pertaining to your OPERS account.

This booklet is written in plain language for use by members of the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System. It is not intended as a substitute for the federal or state law, namely the Ohio Revised Code, the Ohio Administrative Code, or the Internal Revenue Code, nor will its interpretation prevail should a conflict arise between it and the Ohio Revised Code, Ohio Administrative Code, or Internal Revenue Code. Rules governing the retirement system are subject to change periodically either by statute of the Ohio General Assembly, regulation of the Ohio Public Employees Retirement Board, or regulation of the Internal Revenue Code. If you have questions about this material, please contact our office or seek legal advice from your attorney. OPERS is not required to provide health care coverage to retirees or their dependents and will only do so at the discretion of the Board of Trustees.
As a member of OPERS, you have been actively contributing to one of the nation’s premier public retirement systems. Now that you are beginning the retirement application process and making the transition from active member to retiree, OPERS is committed to providing the same exemplary service while making the process simple and convenient. Keep in mind: if you apply for retirement from the Member-Directed Plan and still have contributions in more than one OPERS retirement plan, or another Ohio retirement system at that time, you will be treated as a retiree from all Ohio retirement systems.

**From Active Member to Retiree**

You contributed to the Member-Directed Plan, a defined contribution plan under which your member and a portion of your employer contributions were deposited into your individual account and you directed their investment. Your account value at retirement is based on these contributions and the gains and losses of those contributions.

In addition, a percentage of the employer contributions were credited to a Retiree Medical Account which you can use for the payment of qualified health care expenses after retirement or termination of service and after taking a distribution from your individual account. See page 9 for more information regarding the RMA.

The following information will guide you through the application process. It will also provide you with details about the distribution options available under the Member-Directed Plan. It is important to understand all your options prior to completing any paperwork.

Before beginning the retirement process, please consider meeting with an OPERS counselor in person or over the phone to make sure you fully understand the decisions you must make.

An OPERS counselor can:

- Provide you with benefit comparisons
- Explain your retirement payment options
- Assist you with the necessary paperwork
- Answer your questions and provide education to help you manage your account

You may request a counseling session by phone or schedule a visit to meet with a counselor at our office during regular business hours. To schedule a counseling session, please call our Member Services Center at 1-800-222-7377, or log into your online account. You also may want to consult financial advisors to help you prepare for your retirement. They can help with managing the asset allocation in your individual account during the important years before retirement, as well as help you develop a strategy to ensure your retirement savings last as long as you need. If you need it, they also can help you coordinate all of your retirement savings plans (OPERS, Ohio Deferred Compensation, IRA, 401(k)) to prepare for a comfortable retirement.
Retirement Eligibility

Members participating in the Member-Directed Plan are eligible to retire at age 55.

Three Options When you Separate From Service

You have three options for the funds in your individual account when you terminate employment.

1. Apply for retirement, choose a distribution option and begin taking a payment immediately. Upon becoming eligible to retire, you can take a monthly annuity or annuitize a partial amount and elect to have the remaining account balance rolled over to another company or sent to you directly with taxes withheld. A discussion of these options and further instructions begin in the “Taking a Distribution Immediately” section on page 3.

2. Manage your account until you are ready to retire and submit your application. If you want to leave your individual account on deposit until you decide you are ready to retire and submit your application, your account will continue to be invested as you direct in the OPERS Investment Options. You still can roll over funds from qualified retirement plans into your individual account after you terminate public employment, but you cannot make additional voluntary contributions. A monthly administrative fee of $5 will be charged on all accounts, regardless of the balance. This fee is subject to change. The OPERS Board of Trustees will review the fees annually and make adjustments in future years as necessary. The fee will be deducted from your investment account beginning with the member contributions. If those amounts are depleted, the fee will be deducted from employer contributions then voluntary contributions and rollover deposits.

You must begin taking a distribution by April 1 following the year you turn 70½ or the year you terminate employment, whichever is later. When you are ready to take a distribution, complete the Member-Directed Retirement Application to begin the process (see “Applying for a Retirement Distribution” on page 5).

3. Refund 100 percent of your individual account. If you want a lump-sum refund of your entire individual account instead of electing a retirement benefit, please refer to the Terminating from Public Employment leaflet available online at opers.org. To apply for a refund, access your account online to complete the online refund application. It is important to note that a refund is not the same as retirement. A refund cancels your membership in OPERS and will not provide for ongoing payments.

You must begin taking a distribution by April 1 following the year you turn 70½ or the year you terminate employment, whichever is later.
Taking a Distribution Immediately

At the time you file your application for a retirement benefit under the Member-Directed Plan, you may choose to receive a monthly annuity or annuitize a partial amount and elect to have the remaining account balance rolled over to another company, or sent to you directly with taxes withheld. However, if you are subject to a court order received by OPERS requiring you to designate a former spouse as a beneficiary on a joint and survivor annuity, you will be required to select a monthly joint and survivor annuity through OPERS and to designate your former spouse as a beneficiary.

A monthly annuity provides monthly guaranteed income for you as long as you live. It is a fixed amount and increases with an annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) based on your original pension amount. All benefit recipients who have received benefits for 12 months are entitled to an annual COLA. The COLA is not compounded, it will always be based on your initial retirement benefit, not the benefit plus accumulated allowances. If the CPI used to determine a COLA is negative, no allowance will be granted in the following year.

You may annuitize all or a portion of your individual account. If you annuitize anything less than 100 percent, you must also choose to have the remaining account balance rolled over to another company, or sent to you directly with taxes withheld.

A monthly annuity provides monthly guaranteed income for you as long as you live.
Payment Plan Options

When you retire you will have the following OPERS retirement plans from which to choose, for any portion of your defined contribution account you choose annuitize:

**Single Life Plan**
This is an annuity that is paid solely to the member for life. It terminates at the member's death, with no further monthly payments. If the total allowance received does not equal the amount the member elected to annuitize, the remaining balance is paid to the member's beneficiaries.

**Joint Life Plan**
This is a joint survivor annuity that is paid to the member for life. After the member’s death, payment is made to one beneficiary in a specified amount from 10 to 100 percent. If a member is married at retirement, the member must designate a 50 percent Joint Life Plan to the member’s spouse unless the member obtains spousal consent.

**Multiple Life Plan**
This joint survivor annuity provides payment to the member for life. After the member’s death, payment will be made to the member’s surviving beneficiaries. Members are permitted to designate two to four surviving beneficiaries.
Applying for a Retirement Distribution

Applying for your retirement distribution requires the completion of the Member-Directed Plan Retirement Application (SR1-MD form) available on opers.org.

If you have contributions in one or both of the other OPERS retirement plans (Traditional Pension or Combined plan), you must complete that plan's retirement or online refund application when you are ready to take a distribution from that plan.

After you complete the retirement application form, you must sign it in the presence of a notary. Your employer’s payroll officer will need to certify the last date that you will receive earnable salary. If you are not applying for retirement from the Member-Directed Plan and instead want to apply for a refund, the refund application is an online form that can be completed by accessing your account online at opers.org.

Your retirement application, along with all valid paperwork, can be filed six months prior to your effective retirement date. After filing your retirement application with OPERS, your benefit will be effective on the first of the month immediately following the later of:

• The last date you were paid; or
• Attainment of age 55; or
• The date OPERS receives the retirement application.

You will receive your first benefit payment approximately 30 business days after OPERS receives all valid documentation from both you and your employer.

Impact of Court Orders on Your Retirement Application

If your marriage is terminated by divorce or dissolution and, as part of the property division, the court orders you to designate your former spouse as a beneficiary on a joint and survivor annuity, you are required to designate your former spouse as a beneficiary for a specified portion (i.e. whole percentage) upon our receipt of the court order and upon your applying for retirement. When we receive a copy of the court order, the retirement system may only accept and process your retirement application if you have complied with the court order by designating your former spouse as a beneficiary on a joint and survivor annuity.

If you are not applying for retirement from the Member-Directed Plan and instead want to apply for a refund, the refund application is an online form that can be completed by accessing your account online at opers.org.
Applying for a Retirement Distribution Continued

Should you remarry prior to applying for retirement and are subject to a court order requiring you to designate your former spouse as a beneficiary for a specified portion on a joint and survivor annuity, you may select the Multiple Life Plan to designate your current spouse and former spouse as beneficiaries.

Spousal Consent
If you are married at the time you apply for retirement, your spouse must provide written consent on your retirement application to your choice of distribution option(s) and beneficiary designation(s). If your spouse does not provide written consent and you are not subject to a court order requiring you to designate your former spouse as beneficiary, your annuity will be paid under the Joint Life Plan with your spouse designated as your beneficiary for 50 percent. If you are subject to a court order requiring you to designate your former spouse as beneficiary and your current spouse does not provide written consent, your benefit will be paid under the Multiple Life Plan, with your current spouse and former spouse designated as your beneficiaries.

Proof of Date of Birth and Name Change
At the time you apply for retirement benefits, you will have to submit proof of your date of birth, if you have not already done so. If you choose the Joint Life Plan or the Multiple Life Plan, you must submit proof of date of birth for your beneficiary(ies). In the event you have changed your name, you also must submit supporting documentation, such as a marriage certificate or court order, which shows the change. If you do not have a birth certificate, there are other ways to prove your birth date.
Applying for a Retirement Distribution Continued

A photocopy of any one of the following is acceptable to OPERS. If an original is submitted, it will not be returned:

- A birth certificate
- Valid driver’s license
- U.S. passport
- An official baptismal record
- Your parent’s affidavit supporting your birth
- A life insurance policy issued at least 10 years ago that contains a penalty clause for misstatement of age and that states age or date of birth
- Your child’s birth certificate, which contains your age and/or date of birth
- An official hospital record of birth
- United States Census Bureau records (contact OPERS for a form to complete and send to the Census Bureau)

If none of these documents exists, you may submit for review:

- An affidavit stating that none of the above-listed documents exists
- Any other document(s) that state your date of birth

If you have changed your name, you also must submit supporting documentation, such as a Social Security card, passport, marriage certificate or court order, which shows the change. Please provide complete copies of the documents showing the name change as we do not return original documents.

An original of any one of the following will be acceptable. We will copy and return any of these original documents:

- A family Bible that contains entries of family births
- A United States certificate of citizenship or naturalization
- An original United States passport
Applying for a Retirement Distribution Continued

Benefits and Taxes
All or part of your benefit payment is subject to federal and state income taxation. You should consult with a tax advisor about how these taxes affect your benefit.

Cost-of-Living Adjustment
Member's retiring after Jan. 7, 2013, will receive a COLA starting 12 months after their retirement effective date. COLAs paid through 2018 will be based on a 3 percent fixed amount. Starting in 2019, COLAs will be based on an allowance equal to a percentage of the Consumer Price Index, up to 3 percent. The COLA is not compounded, it will always be based on your initial retirement annuity benefit, not the benefit plus accumulated allowances. If the CPI used to determine a COLA is negative, no allowance will be granted in the following year.

Direct Deposit
Direct deposit for monthly benefit payments is required. OPERS will deposit your monthly benefit directly into your savings or checking account. There is no delay and no danger of losing or misplacing a paper check. You will have easy access to your funds through your financial institution. It is important to keep OPERS informed of any changes in your bank account information to prevent any delay in receiving your monthly benefit. You may access your individual online account at opers.org to change your bank account information. Or, you may notify OPERS of any changes to your bank account information by obtaining a Change Request (F-50) form from our website. You may contact OPERS at 1-800-222-7377 and request to have this form mailed to you. If you mail the form to our office, please allow 30 days for this change to take effect.

Social Security Coordination
If you are eligible for Social Security benefits and are receiving a retirement benefit from OPERS under any of the three OPERS retirement plans, your Social Security benefits may be affected by the Government Pension Offset or the Windfall Elimination Provision. Keep in mind, your OPERS benefit will not be reduced by any Social Security benefit you may receive. The GPO may also affect you if you are eligible for Social Security benefits through your spouse. The GPO is a reduction of Social Security benefits by two-thirds of your OPERS benefit. The WEP may affect you if you qualify for Social Security benefits due to your own work history. The WEP is a modified version of the Social Security benefit calculation. If you have questions concerning the GPO or WEP, contact your local Social Security office or access its website at ssa.gov.
Retiree Medical Account

Under the Member-Directed Plan, a portion of employer contributions is credited to a Retiree Medical Account. Unlike your individual account, OPERS manages and directs the investment of your RMA. Interest, at a rate determined by the Board, is credited annually to your RMA. Upon distribution of your individual account at retirement, the RMA may be used for the payment of qualified health care expenses. Claims can be submitted for dates of service that occur on or after your retirement effective date with OPERS. Distributions from your RMA are tax-free. For more details please see the Retiree Medical Account for Member-Directed Plan Participants fact sheet available at opers.org or call 1-888-672-9136.

The amount in your RMA you are entitled to use toward qualified health care expenses is based on your years of participation in the Member-Directed Plan and your date of hire or plan change effective date (see charts at right).

Regular written statements are mailed to your home address or you can call toll-free at 1-888-672-9136 to obtain your account balance Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. After you begin receiving reimbursements from your RMA, you will receive quarterly statements. In addition, you will receive an Explanation of Payment in any month a disbursement occurs.

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Hired on or after July 1, 2015
Plan changes* effective on or after Aug. 1, 2015

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Payment Plan Changes After Retirement Continued

A monthly annuity payable for your lifetime by OPERS may only be modified based on the following life-changing events: death of a beneficiary(ies); marriage or remarriage; and/or divorce, dissolution or annulment of marriage upon the written consent of your former spouse or a court order permitting the change. You may change your payment plan at any time prior to issuance of your finalized monthly benefit by completing a form available from OPERS; however, if you are subject to a court order, the provisions of the court order may affect the ability to change your plan of payment.

Death of Beneficiary(ies)
If you choose a monthly annuity administered by OPERS and select the Joint Life Plan and your beneficiary dies before you, you will begin to be paid under the Single Life Plan after you submit a copy of the beneficiary’s death certificate. If you select the Multiple Life Plan and one of your beneficiaries dies before you, you will remain under this plan. Your benefit will be recalculated to reallocate to you the amount you previously allocated to the deceased beneficiary after you submit a copy of the deceased beneficiary’s death certificate. There will be no change in the benefit allocation for the other beneficiaries. You will remain under the Multiple Life Plan until there are no longer any designated beneficiaries under the plan. When there are no longer any designated beneficiaries under the plan, your benefit will change to the Single Life Plan. The change in your benefit amount will be effective the month following the beneficiary’s date of death.

Marriage or Remarriage
If you select the Single Life Plan at retirement, your benefit may be recalculated under the Joint Life Plan, if you later marry or remarry, to provide for your new spouse. If you select the Multiple Life Plan, you may only add a spouse due to your marriage or remarriage if you have no more than three beneficiaries designated at the time you marry or remarry. However, if you select the Multiple Life Plan because you were court ordered to select a joint survivor annuity and designate your former spouse as a beneficiary, the specified portion that your former spouse is to receive as your beneficiary cannot be changed upon your designating a new spouse as your beneficiary.

You may select the Joint Life Plan because you are unmarried when you apply for retirement and you were court-ordered to select a joint survivor annuity and designate your former spouse as a beneficiary. If you remarry after retirement, you may select the Multiple Life Plan to add your new spouse. Your former spouse remains as a designated beneficiary. The whole percentage that your former spouse receives as your beneficiary will not be changed under the Multiple Life Plan when you designate a new spouse as your beneficiary.

You have up to one year from your date of marriage or remarriage to change your monthly annuity and to designate your new spouse as beneficiary. If your marriage occurred prior to June 6, 2005, you may change your plan of payment at anytime. You will need to contact us to request the Retirement Benefit Pop Down Request form. The change to the new plan of payment is effective on the date the form is received by our office. Any change in the amount of the benefit will begin on the first day of the month following our receipt of the properly completed form.
Payment Plan Changes After Retirement Continued

**Divorce, Dissolution or Annulment of Marriage**

If you designate your spouse as your beneficiary under the Joint Life Plan, and a divorce, dissolution or annulment occurs after your retirement, you may elect to be paid under the Single Life Plan with the written consent of your former spouse or a court order. The change to the Single Life Plan will be effective the first of the month following our receipt of the properly completed *Retirement Benefit Pop Up Request* form and, if necessary, the appropriate court order. If, after you have changed to the Single Life Plan, you later remarry, your benefit may be recalculated under the Joint Life Plan to provide for your new spouse as set forth above.

If you designate your spouse as a beneficiary under the Multiple Life Plan, and a divorce, dissolution, or annulment occurs after your retirement, you may remove your former spouse as beneficiary with the written consent of your former spouse or a court order. You will remain under the Multiple Life Plan.

Your benefit will be recalculated to reallocate to you the amount you previously allocated to your former spouse upon our receipt of your properly completed *Retirement Benefit Pop Up Request* form and if necessary, the appropriate court order.

There will be no change in the benefit allocation for the other beneficiaries under the Multiple Life Plan. The change in your benefit will be effective the first of the month following our receipt of your properly completed *Retirement Benefit Pop Up Request* form and, if necessary, the appropriate court order. If you later remarry, your benefit may be recalculated under this plan to provide for your new spouse, provided any specified portion to another former spouse, who is a designated beneficiary as required by a court order, remains unchanged. You will have one year from the date of your remarriage to change your benefit to provide for your new spouse.
Returning to Work After Retirement

Re-employment is returning to work in an OPERS-covered position after retirement from OPERS or another Ohio retirement system. After a member retires under any of the OPERS retirement plans, re-employment in a job that is covered by OPERS or another Ohio retirement system, including service in an elected position, may affect continuing receipt of benefits.

Re-employed retirees must notify their employer that they are receiving a retirement benefit from OPERS or another Ohio retirement system. Potential re-employment plans should be discussed with the employer to determine whether there are any restrictions or policies on re-employment. Your current employer is not required to re-hire you after you retire. Re-employed retirees are subject to the following requirements:

- A retiree who has received a retirement allowance for less than two months when re-employment begins will forfeit the retirement allowance for any month of re-employment during the two-month period. This forfeiture applies even if the retiree waives salary for the two-month period.
- Re-employed retirees will continue to receive their retirement benefit and contribute toward the Money Purchase Plan.
- Employee and employer contributions must begin from the first day of re-employment. However, contributions remitted during the first two months after retirement will not be included in the calculation of the Money Purchase Plan annuity.
- An OPERS retiree who is re-employed in a law enforcement position and contributes toward the Money Purchase Plan for the re-employment period is only eligible to contribute at the regular employee rate, not the law enforcement rate.
- There are special requirements for the re-employment of elected officials.

For more information see the Returning to Work After Retirement leaflet or visit www.opers.org.

Retirement Resources

Member Counseling
Our counselors are available weekdays during business hours at the OPERS office to provide you with information about your OPERS retirement plan. You may request and receive a counseling session by phone or schedule a visit to meet with a counselor at our office during regular business hours. To schedule in-person counseling, call 1-800-222-7377.

The OPERS Website – opers.org
Our website is a great resource for retirement information – you can download forms, register for seminars, access OPERS publications and link to other relevant websites.

Online Account
To use your OPERS online account, you’ll first need to register by visiting the OPERS website and clicking “Member Login.” After completing some brief information, you can create a user name and password you can use to log into your online account.
Notes