EMPLOYER bulletin

Employer Contact Information

Toll-Free: (866) 353-1844
Local: (717) 787-1755
FAX: (717) 783-8760

Jayne Buchwach
Supervisor
(717) 720-6325
jbuchwach@pa.gov

Carolina Baez
(717) 720-6320
cbaez@pa.gov
Allegheny, Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset, Washington and Westmoreland Counties

Rose Diehl
(717) 720-6323
rosdiehl@pa.gov
Armstrong, Beaver, Bradford, Butler, Cameron, Centre, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, Lycoming, McKean, Mercer, Potter, Sullivan, Tioga, Union, Venango, Warren Counties and Warrior Run SD

Ellen Harrington
(717) 720-6321
eharringto@pa.gov
Charter Schools, Philadelphia County and Philadelphia School District

Rosie Mesich
(717) 720-6324
rmesich@pa.gov
Adams, Chester, Cumberland, Dauphin, Delaware, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lancaster, Mifflin, Montgomery, Perry, and York Counties

Vacant
Contact Jane Buchwach
Berks, Bucks, Carbon, Columbia, Lackawanna, Lebanon, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, Montour, Northampton, Northumberland, Pike, Schuylkill, Snyder, Susquehanna, Wayne and Wyoming Counties

Contract Record Letters to School Employees

Recently, PSERS began sending letters to school employees when new contract records were submitted to PSERS by their employer. Contract records are the method employers use to send position information for all eligible school employees. Contract records include, but are not limited to, the following information for each position filled by each employee:

- Job Title
- Employment Type (full-time or part-time)
- Wage Type (hourly, salaried, or per diem)
- Work Status (e.g., working, on leave, terminated, etc.)
- Start Date of the Work Status
- End Date of the Work Status

PSERS uses the information contained in contract records to track employment records. This enables PSERS to ensure that public school employee accounts are maintained accurately. This information is vital when creating member *Statements of Account*, processing purchase of service requests, and calculating timely member retirement benefits. When any of the contract record fields are changed by employers submitting a new contract record, their employees will receive a letter notifying them of the changes.

PSERS recognizes that some of the terms and titles on the letter may be confusing to both school employees and employers. For this reason, plans are underway to redesign the letter so that it contains clearer explanations and definitions. In the meantime, school employees should contact PSERS directly with any questions they may have concerning this letter.

Email Domain Change for Commonwealth Employees

On Friday, July 29, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania officially changed the primary email domain from state.pa.us to pa.gov. This means that email addresses that ended in state.pa.us, now end in pa.gov. For example, the general email address to contact the PSERS Employer Service Center is now ContactESC@pa.gov. Please take a moment to make this change to your contact information. No change was made to the PSERS website. Our Web address continues to be www.psers.state.pa.us.

Sabbatical Leave When Unable to Return to Work

Ordinarily, if an employee is to receive full credit for an approved sabbatical leave, the employee must return to work for the employer that granted the leave for a period equal to at least one school year immediately following the leave. If the employee is prevented by the employer from returning to the same position he or she held prior to the sabbatical leave, or is unable to return to work due to illness or physical disability, the employer must provide PSERS with written documentation in order for the employee to receive full service credit with PSERS. The employer's letter to PSERS must:

1. Be on school letterhead and include the following information:

   - Member Name

   - Member SSN

   - The reason the employee did not return to work (i.e. furlough, position eliminated, medical condition)

   - Doc #5626 (written or typed in the upper right hand corner of the letter)

2. Be signed by an authorized person.

3. Be faxed to (717) 772-3860; mailed to PSERS, PO Box 125, Harrisburg PA 17108-0125; or scanned as a PDF file and emailed to your ESC representative.

If an employee returns for only part of the required time, and does not have an approved medical leave or is prevented by the employer from returning to the same position, he or she would only receive proportional credit based on the period of time that the employee did return.

Entering Manual Demographic Records

When creating or editing manual employee demographic records, you may see the following message: "Warning – Address will be standardized to postal specifications upon file approval." When you see this warning, a highlighted box will also appear in the middle of the record containing the employee's standardized address. You MUST click "Save" a second time to accept the standardized address. If you do not click "Save" a second time, the standardized address will not be entered into PSERS' system and the employee's address will be invalid. School employees with invalid addresses may not receive important pension related information such as *Statements of Account* and the *Active Member Newsletter*.

Please contact your Employer Service Center representative if you have any questions about entering manual Member Demographic Records. You can also refer to Chapter 3 - **Member Demographic Information** of the *Employer Reference Manual* found on the PSERS website under Employers, Employerpedia, and Reference Manual.

Employer Administrator Security

The Security Administrator is the person who assigns permissions to specific employees (sub-users) to allow them access to PSERS Employer Web. In many cases, this task falls on the IT Director, Business Manager, or Superintendent. The security administrators should periodically review the status of employees who are given permission to use the Employer Web. Doing this will prevent fraudulent reporting by individuals who should no longer have access to the system.

If the security administrator is leaving employment or changing jobs and will no longer be the administrator, you must submit two (2) *PSERS Employer Security Administrator Authorization* (PSRS-1270) forms. One PSRS-1270 will indicate "Delete Employer Security Administrator." Another PSRS-1270 form must be submitted once a new security administrator is hired or assigned to this position. PSERS will transfer the users previously under the old security administrator to the new security administrator. Do not simply pass along the previous administrator's user name and password to the new administrator. For more information you can refer to Chapter 1 - **Accessing the Online System** of the *Employer Reference Manual*.

Return to Service Reminder

Whether you are hiring for a full-time position or finding a substitute teacher to fill in for the day, please keep in mind the rules of employing PSERS retirees. Employment of a PSERS retiree should only occur if:

- An emergency rises which increases the workload and creates a serious impairment of service to the public or causes a shortage of appropriate subject certified teachers or other personnel.

- The retiree is employed under separate contract by a Pennsylvania public school in an extracurricular position, and his or her duties must be performed primarily outside regular instructional hours and not as part of the mandated educational curriculum.

Employers must make the effort to first consider a non-retiree before hiring a retiree for any position. PSERS has the right and may conduct investigations into instances of employers hiring retirees when other options may be available. The employer will be required to provide documentation to PSERS to support the need to employ a retiree in an emergency or shortage position.

If PSERS finds that a retiree working for you does not qualify for any of the return to service exceptions, the retiree's monthly payment will be suspended. The retiree will become an active contributing member of PSERS again and the value of his or her pension is frozen. This result may not be beneficial to your employee because it is more likely that the pension they receive from PSERS is higher than the income received from a part-time employment. Even if the employment ceases immediately, the employee must go through the retirement process again.   During this difficult economy, the employee may find themselves without employment or retirement income for several months. For these reasons, suspension of monthly benefits is not anyone's desired outcome.

For more information on return to service exceptions please refer to the PSERS publication *PSERS Return to Service Guidelines and Clarifications* found on our website under Publications.

Training a Backup Person

Do you have a colleague who can take over for you if you ever went on an extended leave or were promoted to your dream job? Who is going to enter pension information in your absence? PSERS strongly recommends that someone be designated and properly trained as a backup to work with the pension administration system.

We often find an employee is given the responsibility of dealing with the pension system without any guidance of what the work entails. Does another person know how to prepare and submit Work Reports? Do they know when and how to submit payments? Do they know where and who to contact for assistance? Though PSERS is happy to assist a new person to become acquainted with the workings of the system, the time spent doing so may cause delays in payment submissions and report processing. Late submissions from employers could negatively impact the school district due to the possibility of withholding of subsidies. Having a backup person already trained to take over at a moment's notice is the key for PSERS processing continuity for our members and for your school.