



# PSERS Active Member Newsletter

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A publication of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Public School Employees' Retirement System

## Inside this Issue:

- ◆ Your Annual Statement of Account is Coming Soon
- ◆ Important Note about Deferring Your Retirement Benefit
- ◆ Questions to Ask Yourself and Your Investment Services Provider Before You Invest

& More...

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## Keeping Your Information Safe Online

October is Cybersecurity Month! PSERS utilizes industry best practices for security controls within its systems to keep our members' data safe. Some examples of these best practices include:

- **PSERS has an Information Security Office** dedicated to overseeing PSERS information security policies, standards, compliance, and risk assessments. This office coordinates information security efforts and incident response should an incident occur.
- **PSERS requires MFA (Multi-Factor Authentication) for connections to the Member Self-Service (MSS) Portal.** MFA requires additional information, such as verification by a phone call or text, besides your username and password to access a website. This is an added layer of security to protect data.
- **PSERS encrypts all data at rest within its systems.** Data encryption is a method of protecting data by encoding it. Once it is encoded, it can only be accessed or decrypted by the correct encryption key. If accessed without permission, the data is unreadable.
- **PSERS does not allow third parties to pull information from the MSS Portal.** Some financial entities have applications that pull your data from other websites to show a more complete view of your finances. While this is convenient, the ways in which certain services collect—and store—sensitive data like your financial account log in and transactions could pose a risk to your confidential data.
- **PSERS provides encryption of data in transit for the MSS Portal.**
- **PSERS monitors member accounts and logins to its systems.**

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## PSERS Board of Trustees Meeting Schedule

October 11, 2023 - Audit, Compliance, and Risk Committee Meeting

October 12, 2023 - Investment Information/Deliberation Committee Meeting

October 19-20, 2023 - Board and Committee Meetings

December 6, 2023 - Audit, Compliance, and Risk Committee Meeting

December 7, 2023 - Investment Information/Deliberation Committee Meeting

December 14-15, 2023 - Board and Committee Meetings

PSERS Board meetings are held in Harrisburg at PSERS, located at 5 N 5th Street.

In addition to Board meetings, Committee meetings are held throughout the year. All PSERS Board meetings are open to the public.

For exact meeting times or if you would like to attend and require an accommodation to participate, please contact Tivia Danner, PSERS Executive Office at [tidanner@pa.gov](mailto:tidanner@pa.gov).

(Keeping Your Information Safe Online...Continued)

### Tips to Protect Your Information

**1. Register for your MSS account.** One of the most critical and easiest steps you can take to keep your accounts safe is to register them online. PSERS safeguards your account by requiring several pieces of information during account registration including your PSERS ID, social security number, and date of birth. To further protect your account, we recommend that you register for your PSERS account online. If you have not registered your PSERS account online, you are at a greater risk of having your accounts compromised. Fraudsters, for example, like to target unregistered accounts that they can set up with their own data points like phone number and email address. You are more secure by registering your accounts online.

When registering for your account, avoid having a common username (e.g., JohnSmith). Someone who has a similar username may mistakenly enter your username with their password, triggering a notification that your password was entered incorrectly.

Members who are also part of PSERS Defined Contribution (DC) Plan can register for their DC Plan account by logging into MSS and clicking the single sign on link.

**2. Pay attention when PSERS notifies you of changes to your account.** PSERS will notify you when there is a change made to your account (e.g., change of address, phone number, email address, direct deposit information, beneficiary information, username). **If you did not make a change, contact PSERS as soon as possible. If you have an online account, also change your password.**

## Your Annual Statement of Account is Coming Soon

Your annual *Statement of Account* as of June 30, 2023, will be sent to you soon!

Members with a Member Self-Service (MSS) account and who have paperless delivery will receive an email when their *Statement of Account* is available.

Please review your statement and verify that the information is accurate. Your statement provides information that assists you in planning for your retirement, such as:

- Address and demographic information (e.g., date of birth).
- Nominated beneficiaries. If you have not nominated beneficiaries, you may do so in your MSS account or by submitting the *Nomination of Beneficiaries* (PSRS-187) form.
- Wages, service credits and eligibility points earned during the school year.
- Total service credits earned.
- Estimated Retirement Date based on superannuation (retirement without early retirement reductions).
- Estimated Final Average Salary based on the data reported by your employer(s).

- Estimates for retirement options if you are eligible and were to retire at the end of the school year for which the statement was generated.

### **Generate Your Own Retirement**

**Estimates** - You can generate your own retirement estimates using the calculator in your MSS account or on the PSERS website [psers.pa.gov](https://psers.pa.gov). By using the estimate calculator in your MSS account, the most recent information reported by your employer is automatically entered in the relevant fields.

### **Need Help?**

*A Statement of Account Insert containing frequently asked questions and two Understanding Your Statement of Account presentations are available on the PSERS website under Active Members>Statement of Account.*

**Scan this QR code to visit the *Statement of Account* page on the PSERS website.**



## Important Note about Deferring Your Retirement Benefit

Vesting (deferring retirement) postpones receipt of your monthly retirement benefit until a later date. Vesting your account may eliminate penalties of an early retirement. It may also protect a death benefit greater than the value of your contributions and interest for your beneficiary.

If you choose to defer your retirement and/or distribution of your defined contribution (DC) account, please be aware of Internal Revenue Service (IRS) mandates regarding Required Minimum Distributions (RMD) at your Required Beginning Age.

The IRS requires that retirement benefits begin to be distributed by April 1 of the calendar year following the year in which a terminated vested member reaches their Required Beginning Age or when an active member terminates service after having attained their Required Beginning Age. If there is a failure to comply with the RMD requirements, Federal law imposes a penalty tax payable by you equal to 25% on the amount not distributed.

The IRS determines the Required Beginning Age based on your date of birth. Refer to the chart below for your Required Beginning Age:

If you were born:	Your Required Beginning Age is:
Before 7/1/1949	70.5
7/1/1949 - 12/31/1950	72
1/1/1951 - 12/31/1959	73
On or after 1/1/1960	75

*PSERS will notify you of this mandatory benefit in the year in which you attain your Required Beginning Age. If you do not file an application to retire, PSERS will automatically calculate the amount payable to ensure that the IRS-defined RMD threshold is met. If you have questions regarding RMD, we encourage you to seek advice from your tax consultant or the IRS.*

***It's important to keep your address up to date. You can change your address and email address with PSERS through the Member Self-Service (MSS) Portal.***

## PSERS Behind the Scenes Introduction to PSERS Internal Audit Office (IAO)

The PSERS Internal Audit Office (IAO) performs high-quality audit, assurance, and consulting services to address key risks central to PSERS' strategies and objectives. Guided by professional standards and using innovative approaches, the IAO fulfills its mission by:

- Providing a wide range of quality independent internal auditing services for PSERS.
- Supporting PSERS efforts to achieve its objectives through independent assurance and consulting services.
- Performing independent assessments of PSERS risk management and internal controls.

IAO provides a "second set of eyes" to ensure compliance and assess the efficiency of operations. The IAO is also responsible for preventing and addressing any potential fraud, waste, and abuse of PSERS resources. IAO focuses on offering assurance around business-process risks and controls while adapting to a dynamic risk landscape.

IAO is currently separated into three groups with technical knowledge and experience in the following business areas:

- Investments
- Pension and financial reporting
- Information technology and areas outside of investments, pension, and financial reporting



*Please meet our internal auditors in the IAO. From left to right: Connie, Stephanie, Mei, Kristen, and David.*

# Questions to Ask Yourself and Your Investment Services Provider Before You Invest

**Information Courtesy of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Banking and Securities**

**Source:** *Cutting through the Confusion: Where to Turn for Help with Your Investments*

As a PSERS member, you will receive a benefit from PSERS Defined Benefit (DB) and/or Defined Contribution (DC) Plan when you retire. Your retirement income is typically made up of three components: your PSERS benefit, social security, and your individual savings and investments.

If you are not comfortable handling your own investments, the good news is there are thousands of financial services professionals who can help with financial and investment decisions. Unfortunately, finding the right investment services provider may seem almost as confusing, intimidating, and time-consuming as choosing the right investments.

The key to finding the right investment services provider for you is to ask the right questions—both of yourself and of prospective providers. Remember, there are no foolish questions. Any reputable provider should be happy to discuss these issues with you and answer any questions you may have.

## Questions to Ask Yourself Before You Invest:

- Do I need help developing strategies to reach my financial goals or do I simply want suggestions on appropriate investment products to implement my goals?
- Do I want assistance with a few specific areas, or do I need a comprehensive plan for my finances?
- Do I already have a portfolio of investments that I need help managing?
- How involved do I want to be in decisions about my specific investments?
- Would I prefer paying for investment services through a fee, commissions, a percentage of assets in my account, or a combination of these?
- Would I prefer working with someone who is primarily considered a broker, an advisor, or a combination of the two?
- How important is it to me that my provider has a legal obligation to act in my best interests and disclose potential conflicts of interest?

## Questions to Ask Your Investment Services Provider

- What products and/or services do you offer? Are these offerings limited to certain types of products or only proprietary products?
- What qualifications and experience do you have to offer those products and services?
- How do you charge for those services? Do you receive compensation from other sources if you recommend that I buy a particular investment product?
- Will you break out all fees and commissions?
- Would my account be an advisory account or a brokerage account?
- Are you required by law to always act in my best interests? Will you put that commitment in writing?
- What potential conflicts of interest do you have when recommending investment products to me, and will you disclose those conflicts?
- Will you provide me with a written record of any disciplinary history for you and your firm?
- Will you give me your regulatory disclosure statements—*Form ADV*, which must be filed by investment advisors and/or *Form U4*, filed by brokers?

For more information, visit: <https://www.dobs.pa.gov/Documents/Publications/Brochures/Cutting%20through%20the%20Confusion-Brochure-print.pdf>

## Free Educational Programs to Help You Understand PSERS Retirement Benefits

PSERS Foundations for Your Future (FFYF) education programs are open to any school employee at any time in their career. These programs help you better understand your PSERS retirement benefits and plan for your future. Regardless of the position you hold with your employer or how close you are to retirement, we recommend that you attend this free program at least once prior to retirement.

FFYF programs are held online and around the Commonwealth. They provide members with the opportunity to meet and interact with a PSERS retirement representative.

FFYF programs cover topics that will help you better understand your retirement by answering questions such as:

- What are my benefits through PSERS?
- When can I retire?
- How is my pension calculated?
- What does my retirement estimate mean?
- What are the retirement milestones?
- What are purchases of service?
- How do I apply to purchase service?

The schedule for FFYF programs and a copy of the FFYF presentation can be found on the PSERS website by selecting *Leaving Employment>Foundations for Your Future*. A recording of the FFYF presentation is also available on the same webpage.

**Scan this QR code for a schedule of upcoming FFYF programs!**



*In the event of inclement weather, a FFYF program may be cancelled or rescheduled if the facility where it is to be held has closed or dismissed early. Please check the PSERS website to verify that the date and/or location of the meeting you wish to attend has not changed due to weather conditions or other unforeseen circumstances. Registration is not required for in-person programs, and you are free to bring guests.*

## **Within 12 Months of Retirement? Attend PSERS Retirement Exit Counseling**

**For members planning on completing their *Application for Retirement* (PSRS-8) within the next twelve months, PSERS provides retirement education to ensure members understand the details and impact of their PSERS retirement choices.**

When you attend a Retirement Exit Counseling (REC) session, trained retirement representatives will provide an overview of your retirement options and answer your questions. Our retirement representatives will also assist you in the completion of your retirement paperwork. Sessions are offered in-person and online.

Retirement counseling is for all public school employees, from part-time support staff such as cafeteria workers to full-time teachers and administrators...every public school employee who is a member of PSERS!

To attend a REC session, you must have a current, PSERS staff-prepared retirement estimate. You can request one by calling PSERS during normal business hours or by submitting a *Request for Retirement Estimate* (PSRS-151). Because PSERS will perform a thorough account review for your estimate, please allow 4 – 6 weeks for processing.

Once you have requested your estimate, you can schedule a REC session. You must contact PSERS to make your appointment for this small-group counseling session by calling 1.888.773.7748.

If you need immediate assistance or if you can't request an estimate in time, please contact PSERS for options.

**Even if you have a financial advisor, you should attend a PSERS REC session with one of our trained retirement representatives who will help you understand your PSERS retirement benefits when you're ready to retire. Your advisor may also attend.**

**Also, be aware of PSERS deadlines. Submit your *Application for Retirement* within 90 days of termination from school service so that you can receive retroactive payments to the day after your termination.**

**PSERS**  
5 N 5th Street  
Harrisburg PA 17101-1905

**Toll-Free: 1.888.773.7748**

**Local Calls: 717.787.8540**

**FAX: 717.772.3860**

**Website Address:**  
***psers.pa.gov***

**Email Address:**  
***ContactPSERS@pa.gov***

**PSERS is proud to be an equal opportunity employer supporting workforce diversity.**

**PSERS**  
**5 N 5th Street**  
**Harrisburg PA 17101-1905**

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**Important Information from the  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Public School Employees' Retirement System**



**Website**  
[psers.pa.gov](http://psers.pa.gov)

Register for PSERS' Member Self-Service (MSS) Portal to access your retirement account online, anytime!



**Call or Fax**

**Toll-Free: 1.888.773.7748**  
**Local Calls: 717.787.8540**  
**FAX: 717.772.3860**



**Send us a Secure Message  
through your MSS Account!**

Don't have an MSS Account?  
Complete the Contact Form on our  
website.