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This handbook, provided by the State Employees' Retirement System (SERS) presents you with a general overview of your benefits. It explains SERS eligibility requirements, pension contributions, optional service credit and overall benefits. These benefits, when combined with other income, are designed to provide you with financial security in retirement.

This information applies to all active state employees. When you terminate employment, your benefits will be determined by the laws in effect on that date. Read this booklet carefully and keep it for reference. Make sure your loved one is also familiar with this handbook and that he or she knows where your important papers are located.

The Member Handbook is intended to serve as a supplement to your annual Benefit Statement, which includes personal benefit information pertaining to you. If you have questions about the information in this handbook, call us at the appropriate phone number listed on page 2.
ADDRESSES & PHONE NUMBERS

SPRINGFIELD
2101 S. Veterans Parkway, P. O. Box 19255
Springfield, IL  62794-9255
General: 217-785-7444  Fax: 217-785-7019
Accounting: 217-785-7191  Fax: 217-785-7019
Deaths: 217-785-7366  Fax: 217-524-2293
Disabilities: 217-785-7318  Fax: 217-785-6961
Insurance: 217-785-7150  Fax: 217-557-0510
Pensions: 217-785-7343  Fax: 217-524-2293
Refunds: 217-785-7187  Fax: 217-785-6964
Service: 217-785-7167  Fax: 217-785-6964

CHICAGO
Michael A. Bilandic Building
160 North LaSalle Street, Suite N725
Chicago, Illinois  60601
312-814-5853  Fax: 312-814-5805

TDD/TTY
A Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD/TTY) is available for members and annuitants who are hearing or speech-impaired. You may access this service at 217-785-7218.

INTERNET
SERS is on the Internet at http://www.state.il.us/srs. Our goal is to educate you about the retirement, disability and death benefits provided under SERS.

The website provides an overview of benefits, and gives you easy access to a variety of

You can contact us Monday thru Friday from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. You may e-mail us with any questions and/or comments at: ser@mail.state.il.us.
information: current retirement issues, how to contact us, answers to frequently asked questions, and education opportunities through our Benefit Seminars and pre- and post-retirement workshops.

We also have a pension calculator which allows you to get an unofficial projection of your pension benefit. The calculator is an educational tool to help you develop personal retirement strategies.

Our website contains our annual financial report, a summary of the Illinois State Board of Investment annual financial report, and a link to other state agencies.

RECIPIROCAL SYSTEMS
In addition to SERS, the following systems participate in the Retirement Systems’ Reciprocal Act. For more information on the Reciprocal Act, see page 15.

Chicago Teachers’ Pension Fund
203 North LaSalle, Suite 2600
Chicago, IL  60601
312-641-4464   Fax 312-641-7185
www.ctpf.org

County Employees’ Annuity & Benefit Fund of Cook County
33 North Dearborn Street, Suite 1000
Chicago, IL  60602-3103
312-603-1200   Fax 312-603-9760

Forest Preserve District Employees’ Annuity & Benefit Fund of Cook County
33 North Dearborn Street, Suite 1000
Chicago, IL  60602-3103
312-603-1200   Fax 312-603-9760
General Assembly Retirement System
2101 South Veterans Parkway
P. O. Box 19255
Springfield, IL 62794-9255
217-782-8500 Fax 217-557-5154
www.state.il.us/srs

Judges' Retirement System
2101 South Veterans Parkway
P. O. Box 19255
Springfield, IL 62794-9255
217-782-8500 Fax 217-785-7019
www.state.il.us/srs

Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund
2211 S. York Road, Suite 500
Oak Brook, IL 60523-2337
630-368-1010 Fax 630-368-5399
www.imrf.org

Laborers' Annuity & Benefit Fund of Chicago
221 North LaSalle Street
Suite 748
Chicago, IL 60601-1301
312-236-2065 Fax 312-236-0574

Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Retirement Fund
111 East Erie, Suite 330
Chicago, IL 60611-2898
312-751-3222 Fax 312-751-5699
www.mwrd.org

Municipal Employees' Annuity & Benefit Fund of Chicago
221 North LaSalle Street
Room 500
Chicago, IL 60601-1301
312-236-4700 Fax 312-236-2383
www.meabf.org

Park Employees' Annuity & Benefit Fund of Chicago
55 East Monroe, Suite 2880
Chicago, IL 60603
312-553-9265 Fax 312-553-9114
www.chicagoparkpension.org

State Universities Retirement System
1901 Fox Drive, P. O. Box 2710
Champaign, IL 61825-2710
217-378-8800 Fax 217-378-9800
www.surs.org

Teachers' Retirement System
2815 West Washington Street
P. O. Box 19253
Springfield, IL 62794-9253
800-877-7896 Fax 217-787-2269
www.trs.illinois.gov
ANNUAL BENEFIT STATEMENT
In August, you will receive your Annual Benefit Statement. This statement includes information regarding your beneficiary(ies), credited service, contributions, retirement, disability, and death benefits.

BENEFIT CLAIMS
In order to receive any benefit, you must apply for it with the Claims Division and provide proof of age. Your agency’s Retirement Coordinator can assist you in filing a claim.

After you begin receiving benefits, you should notify SERS if you change your name, address, or wish to change your beneficiary(ies) for the lump sum death benefit.

All SERS records are maintained according to your Social Security number. Therefore, make sure your Social Security number is correct when filing a claim.

SOCIAL SECURITY
All Social Security benefit claims must be made directly to the Social Security Administration. You will need to provide your Social Security number and proof of age.

GROUP INSURANCE
Upon approval of a SERS benefit claim, participation in the Group Insurance Program continues as described in your CMS group insurance handbook. Failure to pay your insurance premiums will result in termination of group coverage.

All benefit claims and appeals are reviewed by the SERS Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees. If your claim is denied, or you question the payment of any benefit, you or your representative may file a written appeal or request a hearing before the Executive Committee.
SEMINARS & WORKSHOPS

Topics covered in all workshops include:

- Financial Planning
- Deferred Compensation
- Entitlements
- Social Security
- Group Insurance
- Estate Planning

SEMINARS
Benefit Seminars, which explain SERS benefits in detail, are conducted throughout the state by request.

PRE-RETIREMENT WORKSHOPS
Pre-retirement workshops are offered throughout the state for all state employees and their spouses.

Investing in Your Future (IYF) is an introductory workshop for employees under age 45. The main emphasis is money management, consumer debt, and investing for the future.

Education for Tomorrow’s Choices (ETC) is a two-day workshop for employees 5-15 years from retirement. It asks participants to realistically assess their future needs and lifestyle, and take the necessary steps to achieve those goals. The ETC stresses medium-range planning.

Countdown to Retirement (CDR) reviews financial planning for and explains the transition to retirement. The CDR is for employees within three years of retirement.

To enroll in a Benefit Seminar or pre-retirement workshop, contact your agency’s Retirement Coordinator. Your Retirement Coordinator’s name is listed in your Annual Benefit Statement. If you have questions about the workshops, call us at 217-785-6979.
2. SERS MEMBERSHIP
ELIGIBILITY & CONTRIBUTIONS

COORDINATION WITH SOCIAL SECURITY

With certain exceptions, all members who join SERS must contribute to Social Security.

ELIGIBILITY
After serving a six-month qualifying period, you become a member of SERS and mandatory contributions are automatically credited to your account. If your position is not covered by Social Security, membership begins immediately.

CONTRIBUTIONS
Contributions are based on a percentage of total compensation, including overtime pay. All contributions are credited to your account, regardless of the source.

EMPLOYER PICK-UP
Some state employees have all or a portion of their contributions “picked-up” or paid, by the State of Illinois. Whether your agency participates in the Employer Pick-Up Program and the pick-up percentage, is determined by the elected official who oversees your agency, board or commission.

If you receive a lump sum refund of contributions, the employer pick-up contributions are included, along with any contributions which may have been deducted from your pay. The employer pick-up is also included in the calculation of any death benefit involving member contributions.
# Employee Contributions

## Regular Retirement Formula Contributions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pension</th>
<th>Survivors' Benefit</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members with Social Security</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>.5%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members without Social Security</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* If you have no eligible survivors when you retire, you will receive a refund of the survivors’ portion of your contributions.

## Alternative Retirement Formula Contributions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With Social Security</td>
<td>8.0% + .5% = 8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without Social Security</td>
<td>11.5% + 1.0% = 12.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** If you do not qualify for the alternative formula when you retire, you will receive a refund of the alternative formula contributions in excess of the regular formula contributions.
MEMBERSHIP SERVICE
This includes full and partial months of state employment after January 1, 1944, when contributions were credited to your account.

CREDITED SERVICE
Credited service is the total amount of credit toward retirement, including any optional credit that may have been purchased and any free military service that may have been granted.

You earn credited service for each month you make the required contributions (see below). The amount of credited service affects the amount of your retirement—the more months of service, the greater the benefit.

OPTIONAL SERVICE CREDIT
Optional service credit is time that may be purchased to increase your pension. It includes: qualifying periods, short periods of employment, leaves of absence, military service (paid), and the repayment of a refund (refer to page 13). All optional service credit must be paid and established before retirement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Employees</th>
<th>Hourly Employees</th>
<th>Daily (per diem) Employees</th>
<th>Monthly Credit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 +days</td>
<td>75+ hours</td>
<td>10+ workdays</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 - 14 days</td>
<td>38 - 74 hours</td>
<td>5-9 workdays</td>
<td>½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;8 days</td>
<td>&lt;38 hours</td>
<td>&lt;5 workdays</td>
<td>¼</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MAKING PAYMENTS FOR PERIODS WHEN YOU DID NOT CONTRIBUTE

If you wish to establish credited service for periods of employment when you did not contribute, you may make a retroactive payment of the contributions and interest, either in a lump sum or installment payments.

Qualifying Periods
A qualifying period is the time a state employee may have served before becoming a SERS contributing member. This includes the 12 months of employment before becoming a member prior to January 1, 1972, or 6 months for a person entering state service on or after January 1, 1984.

Short Periods
A short period is intermittent service not exceeding the qualifying period time when no retirement deductions were taken.

Leaves of Absence
You may establish service credit for periods of less than one year spent on an authorized leave of absence, provided the period of leave began on or after January 1, 1982. You may also establish service credit for more than one authorized leave of absence. The total period of service established can then exceed one year.

Military Service
Military service includes active duty in the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, or Coast Guard, or any of the women’s auxiliaries.
SERS grants two types of military service credit:

1. **Free credit with no contributions if ALL of the following conditions are met:**
   - You were a state employee within 6 months immediately before entering military service.
   - You returned to state employment within 15 months after honorable discharge.
   - You establish creditable state service immediately before and after military service.

2. **Paid credit, with contributions**
   If you do not qualify for free military service credit, you may purchase up to four years of military credit by paying the required employee and employer contributions, plus interest, provided:
   - You were not dishonorably discharged;
   - The service credit purchased does not exceed five years, when added to the military service granted under Item 1;
   - This service credit must be purchased while you are an employee.

Interest is calculated from the date you last became a member of SERS, or November 19, 1991, whichever is later. If you returned to state employment after July 1, 1963, the total military service credit may not exceed 5 years.

Contact the Service and Refunds Division of SERS to determine if you are eligible to establish additional service credit. You will be notified in writing of any amount due, and the credit that may be established.
IF YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS WERE REFUNDED

If you terminated state employment, received a refund of your contributions and were later re-hired, you may reestablish your credited service by repaying the refund with interest after completing at least two additional years of credited service with SERS, or any of the Illinois Public Retirement Systems that participate in the Retirement Systems’ Reciprocal Act.

TAX-DEFERRING OPTIONAL SERVICE PURCHASES

SERS allows you to tax-defer optional service credit purchases through payroll deduction. This lets you defer taxation until retirement. The tax-deferred withholding is made through an irrevocable payroll agreement for the total amount of service credit purchased.

You may also transfer funds from your Deferred Compensation account to purchase permissive service credit or repay a refund. Service credit is granted only after a refund or service purchase is paid in full. If you die, a partial service credit may be granted based on contributions and interest paid on the date of your death.

In the case of retirement, termination, or absences of more than one year, you can choose to make an after-tax lump sum payment for the balance due, or the contributed amount can be refunded with taxes withheld and reported as income in that calendar year. Any after-tax lump sum payment must be made no later than 30 days after SERS notifies you of the amount due.
If you are off the payroll for less than one year, the missed payroll deductions must be paid according to IRS rules and regulations. This may be done with by either doubling your normal payroll deduction, or by a transfer from a qualified rollover account. No optional service purchase deductions can be made from a disability benefit payment.

LUMP SUM SALARY PAYMENTS
Most employees will receive a lump sum payment at retirement for unused vacation and sick days earned between January 1, 1984 and December 31, 1997. This lump sum payment can be used to purchase any tax-deferred optional service credit. This election must be completed before you leave state service.

Unused Sick Leave
Unused and unpaid sick leave can be used to meet service eligibility requirements and increase your retirement benefit. This additional service credit does not affect final average compensation.

Paid Sick & Vacation Time
If you receive a lump-sum payment for sick leave, vacation, or personal days when you retire, you may establish credit for this time to meet service eligibility requirements and increase your retirement benefit (21 days of sick & vacation leave equals one month of service credit). This additional service credit does not affect final average compensation. You can make the required contributions on a pre or post-tax basis. To be eligible for this option, your retirement date must be effective within 90 days of resignation.
ROLLOVERS
You may rollover money from another qualified pension plan, or an Individual Retirement Account (IRA), 403b or 457 containing money from a qualified total distribution to purchase optional service credit.

You may also transfer money while still employed from your Deferred Compensation account (457b) or tax-sheltered annuity (403b) to purchase permissive service credit or repay a refund. To do so, you must obtain and complete a Transfer/Rollover Certification form from the Service & Refunds Division.

SERVICE UNDER OTHER ILLINOIS PUBLIC RETIREMENT SYSTEMS
If you have at least one year of credited service under an Illinois Public Retirement System, your service under that system may be used to determine your eligibility for a benefit from SERS. This amount is based on the benefit formula and service credit in each system, and is paid to you by each system. Annual pension benefit increases are made in accordance with each system’s statutes.

Under the Reciprocal Act, the highest final average compensation is used for computing benefits under all systems. However, total benefits cannot be higher than it would have been if all service were in one system. If benefits are being paid under reciprocity, and you are granted service credit by more than one system for the same period of time, each system will reduce its credit proportionately.

In general, the rules of each retirement system apply in determining eligibility for a benefit. For reciprocal system’s addresses and phone numbers, refer to pages 3 & 4.
F A C

Level Income

Pension Increases

Nonoccupational Disability

Qualified Survivor
3. SERS BENEFITS
REGULAR RETIREMENT BENEFITS

RETIREMENT FORMULA
The regular retirement formula applies to most SERS members.
Covered: 1.67% for each year of service
Non-Covered: 2.2% for each year of service

ELIGIBILITY
A SERS member may retire and receive a pension benefit:
• When your age and years of service equal 85 years (Rule of 85).
• Between the ages of 55-60 with a minimum of 25 years of service credit. The pension is reduced 1/2 of 1% for each month under age 60.
• At age 60, with a minimum of eight years of service credit.

Pension benefits are based on three factors: final average compensation, years of creditable service, and the retirement formula.

Covered Example: The member is covered under Social Security, is 60 years old, has 30 years of credited service, and a final average compensation of $3,600 per month.

30 years x 1.67% = 50.1% • 50.1% x $3,600 FAC =$1,803.60 per month, or $21,643.20 annually.

Non-Covered Example: The employee is not covered by Social Security, is 60 years old, has 30 years of credited service, and a final average compensation of $3,800 per month.

30 years x 2.2% = 66% • 66% x $3,800 FAC =$2,508.00 per month, or $30,096.00 annually.
FINAL AVERAGE COMPENSATION
Your retirement benefit is based on final average compensation and credited service. For regular formula employees, final average compensation is the 48 highest consecutive months of service within the last 120 months of service. Examples for both covered and non-covered members are below left.

REDUCED RETIREMENT BENEFIT
A regular formula member can retire between the ages of 55-60 with 25-30 years of service with a pension reduced 1/2 of 1% for each month under age 60.

ANNUAL PENSION INCREASES
If you retire under the Rule of 85, you are eligible for your first 3% increase on January 1 following your first full year of retirement, even if you are not age 60. If you retire at age 60 or older, you will receive a 3% pension increase every year on January 1, following your first full year of retirement.

If you retire before age 60 with a reduced retirement benefit, you will receive a 3% pension increase every January 1 after you turn age 60 and have been retired at least one full year. These pension increases are not limited by the 75% maximum.

The maximum regular retirement benefit is 75% of final average compensation.
ALTERNATIVE RETIREMENT BENEFITS

RETIREMENT FORMULA
The Alternative Formula applies to members in certain positions with 20 years of alternative service.
Covered: 2.5% for each year of service
Non-Covered: 3.0% for each year of service

ELIGIBILITY
Members eligible for the alternative formula may retire at age 50 with 25 years of service, or at age 55 with 20 years of service.

FINAL AVERAGE COMPENSATION
For an alternative formula employee, final average compensation is the rate of pay on the last day of employment, or the average of the last 48 months of compensation, whichever is greater.

Alternative Formula Example #1: The employee is not covered by Social Security, is 50 years old, has 26 years, 8 months (320 months) of credited service, and a final average compensation of $5,000 per month.

\[
26 \text{ Years, 8 months } \times 3\% = 80\% \times $5,000 = $4,000 \text{ per month, or } $48,000 \text{ annually.}
\]

Alternative Formula Example #2: The employee is covered by Social Security, is 50 years old, has 32 years (384 months) of credited service, and a final average compensation of $4,000 per month.

\[
32 \text{ Years } \times 2.5\% = 80\% \times $4,000 = $3,200 \text{ per month, or } $38,400 \text{ annually.}
\]
Positions eligible for benefits under the alternative formula:

- State Policeman
- Fire Fighter
- Air Pilot
- Special Agent
- Secretary of State Investigator
- Conservation Police Officer
- Revenue Investigator
- Department of Human Services Security Employee (includes Mental Health police)
- Central Management Services Police Officer
- Department of Corrections’ Security Employee (includes Prisoner Review Board)
- Dangerous Drug Investigator
- State Police Investigator
- Attorney General Investigator
- Controlled Substance Inspector
- State’s Attorneys Appellate Prosecutor Investigator
- Commerce Commission Police Officer
- State Fire Marshal Arson Investigator
- State Highway Maintenance Worker

ANNUAL PENSION INCREASES

Alternative formula retirees receive their first 3% pension increase on January 1 following the first full year of retirement after age 55. These increases are not limited by the 80% maximum.
A security employee will receive the security formula for alternative formula service only!

SECURITY EMPLOYEES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR THE ALTERNATIVE FORMULA

A security employee with either the Department of Corrections or the Department of Human Services is not eligible for the alternative formula until they have 20 years of alternative service in the previously mentioned positions.

However, these employees are eligible for the security formula (below) with 20 years of membership service, which may include regular formula and reciprocal service. Final average compensation is based on the four highest of the last ten years.

The age and service requirements for these employees are:

• Any age, when your age (years & whole months) plus years of service credit (years & whole months) equal 85 years (1020 months) (Rule of 85).

• Age 60 with 20 years of credited service.

• Between ages 55-60 with 25-30 years of credited service (reduced 1/2 of 1% for each month under age 60).

SECURITY RETIREMENT FORMULA

Covered: 2.5% for each year of service
Non-Covered: 3.0% for each year of service
You must apply for benefits in order to receive them. Contact your agency’s Retirement Coordinator approximately 30 days before retiring so they can begin the separation process.

We will mail you a retirement packet which includes a retirement application, forms and information regarding insurance, taxes, and electronic funds transfer. This process cannot start until we receive your completed application.

Your retirement benefit is paid monthly for your lifetime. Your pension will start on the first day of the month following withdrawal from service. You will receive your first pension check approximately six weeks after your retirement date.

If you elect Direct Deposit, the first two checks are mailed to you. After that, all future checks will be electronically deposited into your bank account on the 19th of every month. You are required to notify SERS of any changes to your mailing address after retirement.

OPTIONAL FORMS OF PAYMENT
SERS allows you to choose several optional forms of payment.

Level Income
This option allows members who have paid into SERS and Social Security to receive their benefits at a level amount throughout their retirement years by combining their Social Security and SERS benefit. The Level Income option can be helpful when a member retires.
before the age when (s)he qualifies for a Social Security benefit.

Under Level Income, SERS pays an amount (based on your estimated Social Security benefit) in addition to your regular retirement benefit until you qualify for Social Security benefits. At this time, your pension is reduced regardless of when you actually begin receiving Social Security and regardless of how much this benefit actually is. This reduced amount will be paid for your lifetime. If you choose Level Income, it is your responsibility to apply for Social Security benefits.

Reversionary Annuity
This option reduces your monthly retirement benefit to provide a lifetime income for your designated dependent after your death. The monthly amount paid to your dependent after your death may not be less than $10, and may not exceed the amount of your reduced benefit. This benefit is in addition to the survivors’ benefit.

The reversionary annuity is useful for providing income to a surviving spouse or other dependent who doesn’t work, or worked very little, and won’t receive much retirement or Social Security income. If you choose the rever-
Reversionary annuity, it cannot be rescinded. If the designated dependent dies before you, the reversionary annuity is void and your retirement benefit is not recalculated. The reversionary annuity does not have an annual cost of living increase.

**Reversionary Annuity Example #1**

A member is planning on retiring at age 60 with a monthly retirement benefit of $4,000. His dependent spouse, age 58, is eligible for the reversionary annuity. He decides to provide his spouse with 100% of his retirement benefit after his death.

In order to provide his spouse with 100% of his retirement benefit, he chooses the reversionary annuity. The member will receive a reduced retirement benefit of $3,566.40 per month, plus he will receive the yearly 3% increase until his death.

After he dies, his spouse will receive 100% of the retirement benefit being paid at his death for her lifetime, and may be eligible for a survivor benefit. If the spouse dies before the member, the reversionary annuity is void, and the member’s retirement benefit cannot be recalculated.

**Reversionary Annuity Example #2**

A member, age 60 with a retirement benefit of $4,000 per month, decides to provide his dependent spouse, age 58, with 50% of his retirement benefit after his death. In order for his spouse to receive 50% of his retirement benefit, he chooses the reversionary annuity. His retirement benefit is reduced to $3,770.80 per month, plus he will receive the yearly 3% increase, until his death.

After he dies, his spouse will receive 50% of the retirement benefit being paid at his death for her lifetime, and may be eligible for a survivor benefit. If the spouse dies before the member, the reversionary annuity is void, and the member’s retirement benefit cannot be recalculated.
Qualified Illinois Domestic Relations Order (QILDRO)
A QILDRO allows for the division of a retirement benefit or a refund of contributions due to divorce. It does not establish a new benefit, nor does it create a new member or beneficiary.

Generally, the QILDRO orders the payment of a benefit to the spouse as the alternate payee. It may also be payable to a child or other dependent as the alternate payee.

A member may not choose a benefit type that would diminish the alternate payee’s benefit without written consent from the alternate payee. The QILDRO is usually issued at the time of divorce and sent to the member’s retirement system. It is recorded and retained until the member applies for a refund, retirement benefit or dies.

Any member employed with a reciprocal retirement system before July 1, 1999 must sign a consent form for the QILDRO to go into effect. A member who begins employment with an Illinois public retirement system after July 1, 1999 accepts the QILDRO as a condition of employment. A copy of the QILDRO process may be obtained from SERS.

RETURNING TO EMPLOYMENT AFTER RETIRING
If you return to state employment on a contractual basis, or to the private sector, your SERS retirement benefit is not affected. However, if you return to state employment after retirement, you should notify the SERS Claims Division immediately.

The QILDRO does not apply to lump sum death benefits, survivor annuities, or disability benefits.
Nonpermanent Reemployment
If your employment with the state lasts less than 75 working days during a calendar year (any part of a day is counted as a full day), you will continue to receive your pension payment. During your employment, you make no contributions to SERS, but you must contribute to Social Security. If you work more than 75 working days, your pension benefit will end on the 76th day, and you will resume contributing to SERS.

Permanent Reemployment
If you are reemployed by the state on a permanent basis, you will not be eligible for pension benefits while working. You will make contributions to both SERS and Social Security during your employment, and earn additional credited service.

After you again retire from state employment, you must reapply for a pension. Your new pension amount will be the benefit earned before reemployment, plus the pension amount earned during reemployment.

If you re-enter state service within three years after retiring, you may qualify to have your new retirement benefit computed as though you never retired. To qualify, you must repay all of the pension benefits you received, plus interest. This repayment may be made in a lump sum, by installments paid within five years after your reemployment, or before your next retirement date, whichever is first.

If you choose not to complete installment payments before retirement or the end of the five-year period, your installment payments will be refunded and your pension will not be recomputed.
If you become disabled and are unable to perform the duties of your position while actively employed, you may receive disability benefits which partially replace your working income.

For disability benefits, final average compensation is the rate of pay on the date of the disability, or the 48 highest consecutive months of service within the last 10 years, whichever is greater.

NON-OCCUPATIONAL DISABILITY BENEFITS

If you become ill or injured from causes not work-related, you could be eligible for non-occupational disability benefits if:

- SERS determines that you are disabled.
- You have at least 18 months of credited service with SERS (Teachers’ or State Universities Retirement Systems service can be used to establish 18 months with SERS).
- You have used all your accumulated sick leave.
- You are granted a medical leave of absence.
- You and your agency have submitted the required forms to SERS.

APPLYING FOR BENEFITS

You must apply in order to receive benefits. It is important to file an application for a disability benefit with SERS when it appears your disability will continue beyond 30 days after you stop working. Your application must be...
received within 90 days from the date you were removed from the payroll to prevent a possible loss of benefits.

The application process requires you to obtain a physician’s report certifying you are unable to perform your assigned duties. You must also sign a release form giving SERS access to your medical records.

If you are eligible for Social Security benefits, SERS takes the initial amount of your Social Security benefit into account when determining your disability payment. A SERS representative may assist you with the Social Security disability application process.

WHEN PAYMENTS BEGIN & END

Once SERS determines your eligibility, benefits begin on the latest of:

• The 31st day of absence from work because of disability (including periods when sick pay was received).

• The last day you received wages (including periods when sick pay was received).

• If your application is not received within 90 days after your removal from the payroll, your benefit will begin on the date the application is received.

Nonoccupational Disability Benefits End When:

• You exhaust one-half of your credited service.

• Your disability ends.

• You resume employment.

If you receive any type of Social Security benefit while you are disabled, SERS needs to know to determine if it will affect your SERS disability benefit.
• You reach age 65 (If your disability begins after age 60, benefits are payable for up to five years).

If your disability ends and you become disabled from the same cause within 60 days after you resume state employment, the 30 day waiting period is waived. The benefit amount for the second period of disability is the same as the first.

**BENEFIT AMOUNT**

Your disability benefit equals 50% of your final average compensation on the date you were removed from the payroll. If you pay into Social Security and are under 65, your benefit will be reduced by the amount payable from Social Security. If you’re over 65, your benefit will be reduced by the amount of pension you are eligible for from Social Security.

Any SERS disability benefits received during the same time as a retroactive Social Security payment will result in an overpayment. You are required to repay SERS the overage amount.

**TERMINATION OF DISABILITY**

If your benefit is terminated because you received disability benefits for one-half of your credited service, but you are still disabled, you become eligible for a retirement annuity if:

• You are age 60 and have at least 8 years of credited service.

• You are age 55 and have at least 15 years of credited service.

• You are age 50 and have at least 20 years of credited service.
SERVICE CREDIT
While you receive disability benefits, your SERS account will continue to be credited with service and contributions as if you were working.

BENEFIT INCREASE
Each non-occupational disability benefit paid by SERS is increased 7% on January 1 after four years of being granted the benefit. On each January 1 following the date of the 7% increase, there is a 3% benefit increase.

OCCUPATIONAL DISABILITY BENEFITS
Occupational disability benefits are paid if you are unable to work due to a work-related illness or injury.

Applying for Benefits
- File a claim with the Illinois Workers’ Compensation Commission (WCC), the Risk Management Division of your agency, or the Risk Management Division of Department of Central Management Services to determine if your disability is work-related.
- File the required forms with the Claims Division of SERS either within:
  - 12 months after your removal from the payroll.
  - 12 months after becoming eligible for benefits under Workers’ Compensation.
  - 12 months after the Illinois WCC approves your Workers’ Compensation benefit.
WHEN PAYMENTS BEGIN & END

Occupational Disability Benefits Begin When:

- SERS determines you are disabled.
- You receive benefits under the Workers’ Compensation or Occupational Diseases Act.
- You are removed from your agency payroll.

Occupational Disability Benefits End When:

- Your disability ends.
- You resume employment.
- You reach age 65. (If your disability begins after age 60, benefits are payable for 5 years).

If your disability benefit is terminated because of age or the five-year limit, you are eligible for a retirement benefit.

BENEFIT AMOUNT

The disability benefit is 75% of final average compensation on the date you were removed from the payroll. This amount is reduced by any payments made under the Workers’ Compensation Act, or the Workers’ Occupational Diseases Act.

SERVICE CREDIT

While you receive disability benefits, your SERS account will continue to be credited with service and contributions as if you were working.

BENEFIT INCREASE

Each occupational disability benefit paid by SERS is increased 7% on January 1 after four years of being granted the benefit. On each January 1 following the date of the 7% increase, there is a 3% benefit increase.
TEMPORARY DISABILITY BENEFITS

This benefit is available in disputed Workers’ Compensation cases when your agency has formally denied all benefits, and an appeal has been filed with the Illinois WCC.

You may be eligible for the Temporary Disability Benefit if:

- SERS determines you are disabled.
- You have at least 18 months of credited service with SERS (Teachers’ or State Universities Retirement Systems service can also be used to establish 18 months with SERS).
- You file an application within 12 months of the date a disability results in the loss of pay.
- Your claim for total temporary disability benefits under the Illinois WCC has been denied.
- You filed an appeal of a denial of total temporary disability benefits with the Illinois WCC.
- You submitted the required forms to SERS.
- You have not received, or had a right to receive, any compensation for at least 30 days.

If the Workers’ Compensation benefit you are receiving is terminated, you may be eligible for temporary disability benefits if:

- SERS determines you are disabled.
- You have at least 18 months of credited service with SERS (Teachers’ or State Universities Retirement Systems service can also be used to establish 18 months with SERS).
• You submitted the required forms to SERS.

• You have filed an appeal with the Illinois WCC, and requested an emergency hearing under Paragraph 19B1 of the Workers’ Compensation Act.

• You have served a 150-day waiting period, or received a decision from the Illinois WCC on your emergency hearing.

**APPLYING FOR BENEFITS**

You must apply in order to receive benefits. It is important to file an application for a disability benefit with SERS after it appears your disability will continue beyond 30 days after your removal from the payroll, or when your Workers’ Compensation benefit is terminated.

Your application must be received within 12 months from the date you were removed from the payroll, or within 12 months from the denial of Workers’ Compensation benefits.

The application process requires you to obtain a physician’s report certifying you are unable to perform in your position. You must also sign a release form giving SERS access to your medical records.

**WHEN PAYMENTS BEGIN & END**

**Temporary Disability Benefits Begin:**

• On the 31st day from the date you last received, or had a right to receive, any compensation if your claim was denied by the Workers’ Compensation Act.

If you contribute to Social Security, SERS takes the amount of your Social Security benefit into account when determining your disability payment. A SERS representative may assist you with the Social Security application process.
• Disability benefits for all periods of disability are payable for a total period of time equal to one-half of credited service not earned while on disability.

**Temporary Disability Benefits End When:**

• Your disability ends.

• You resume gainful employment.

• You reach age 65. (If your disability began after age 60, benefits are payable for up to five years, subject to the one-half service credit limitation).

• A payment is made after determining the state’s liability under the Workers’ Compensation Act or the Workers’ Occupational Diseases Act.

• A final determination is made on the member’s claim by the Illinois WCC.

**SERVICE CREDIT**

While you receive disability benefits, your SERS account will continue to be credited with service and contributions as if you were working.

**BENEFIT AMOUNT**

Your disability benefit equals 50% of your average final compensation on the date you were removed from the payroll. If you pay into Social Security and are under 65, your benefit will be reduced by the amount payable from Social Security. If you are over 65, your benefit will be reduced by the amount of pension you are eligible for from Social Security.

Once the Illinois Workers’ Compensation Commission makes its final determination on a disputed claim, SERS will calculate your benefit to determine if temporary benefits must be repaid.

Any member who accepts a temporary benefit acknowledges and authorizes the recovery rights of SERS.
NON-OCCUPATIONAL DEATH

If your death results from a non-work related cause, your eligible survivors and beneficiaries may qualify for benefits.

Death Before Retirement

If you die while actively employed and have at least 18 months of service, your qualified survivors will be eligible for benefits (see page 38).

If you contribute to Social Security, all monthly benefits payable on your behalf are reduced by one-half of the amount your survivors are eligible for under Social Security (normally age 60), regardless of whether the Social Security benefit is accepted.

The Social Security offset will not reduce the survivor’s benefit to less than 50% of the full monthly benefit amount. In addition to survivor benefits, your pension contributions and interest, will be paid to your named beneficiary(ies).

If you die with no qualified survivors while actively employed, your named beneficiary(ies) will receive your contributions, plus interest, and one month’s salary for each year of service, up to a maximum of six months’ salary.

Death After Retirement

If you die after retiring, survivor benefits are subject to the same maximum’s as those pay-
able during active employment, or 80% of the pension you were receiving when you died, whichever is less.

If 50% of your pension provides a greater monthly benefit than the amounts stated above, it is payable to your survivors. If you have no survivors, your beneficiary(ies) will receive any remaining contributions and interest, or $500, whichever is greater. The Social Security offset applies to coordinated members.

Death After Termination
If your death occurs after termination of state employment, but before retirement benefits begin, you must have eight years of service for your survivors to qualify for survivor benefits.

The survivor benefits payable are subject to the same maximum’s as those payable during active employment, or 80% of the pension amount you were eligible to receive when you died, whichever is less.

If 50% of your earned pension provides a greater monthly benefit than the amounts stated above, it is payable to your survivors. If you die after termination with no survivors, or with less than eight years of service, your named beneficiary(ies) will receive your contributions and interest.

Widow’s Annuity
If you were a member of SERS before July 19, 1961, and die leaving a surviving widow, she may have the option of taking a widow’s annuity rather than a survivors’ benefit.

The survivor benefit is increased 3% on each January 1, following the first anniversary of the benefit.
ELIGIBLE SURVIVOR BENEFITS

Your Spouse: If you are survived by your spouse age 50 or over, and you were married at least one year prior to your death, (s)he will receive $1,000, plus a monthly annuity up to a maximum of $400. (S)he will receive this benefit until death. If 50% of your earned pension provides a greater monthly benefit than the amounts stated above, the higher amount is payable to your spouse.

Your Spouse and Children: If your spouse supports your children under age 18 (22 if full-time student), or a disabled child over 18, (s)he can receive benefits before age 50. (S)he will receive $1,000, plus a monthly annuity up to a maximum of $600. This benefit is payable until your last child reaches age 18 (22 if full-time student), marries, dies, or is no longer disabled. If 50% of your earned pension provides a greater monthly benefit than the amounts stated above, the higher amount is payable to your family.

Your Children: If you are not survived by a spouse, but have children under age 18 (22 if full-time student), or over 18 and disabled, they can receive $1,000 plus a monthly annuity up to a maximum of $600. This benefit is payable until the last child reaches age 18 (22 if full-time student), marries, dies, or is no longer disabled. If 50% of your earned pension provides a greater monthly benefit than the amounts stated above, the higher amount is payable to your children.

Your Dependent Parents: If your spouse or children do not survive you, your dependent parents may be eligible for benefits.
OCCUPATIONAL DEATH BENEFITS

Eligibility
If you die before retirement from a work-related injury or illness, as determined by the Illinois Workers’ Compensation Commission, your survivors are eligible for an occupational death benefit.

If you have no qualified survivors, your nominated beneficiary(ies) will receive your contributions and interest, and one month’s salary for each year of service, up to a maximum of six months salary.

Benefits are paid to qualified survivors as described at right. These amounts are reduced by any payments awarded under the Workers’ Compensation Act, or the Workers’ Occupational Diseases Act.

Annual Increase
The occupational death benefit is increased 3% each January 1, following the first anniversary of the annuity.

Your Spouse: If you are survived by your spouse, (s)he will receive a monthly annuity equal to 50% of your salary. This benefit is payable until death.

Your Spouse and Children: If your spouse has your children under his/her care who are under age 18 (22 if full-time student), or a disabled child over age 18, they can receive benefits up to a maximum of 75% of your salary. This benefit is payable until your spouse dies, or your last child reaches age 18 (22 if full-time student), marries, dies, or is no longer disabled.

Your Children: If you are not survived by a spouse, but have children under age 18 (22 if full-time student), or over age 18 and disabled, they can receive a monthly annuity, up to 50% of your salary. This benefit is payable until the last child reaches age 18 (22 if full-time student), marries, dies, or is no longer disabled.

Your Dependent Parents: If your spouse or children do not survive you, your dependent parents may be eligible for benefits.
LEAVING SERS

If you resign, are discharged, dismissed, or laid-off from state employment, you may choose to withdraw your contributions or leave them in SERS. You must be off the payroll for 14 days to be eligible for a refund of your contributions.

If you choose to leave your contributions in SERS:

• You must have eight years of service under SERS to qualify for a pension.

• You may use less than eight years of service to qualify for a pension under the Retirement Systems’ Reciprocal Act.

If you choose to have your contributions refunded:

• You will receive no interest on your contributions.

• You will forfeit all rights to benefits for yourself and your beneficiaries.

If you withdraw your contributions and later return to state employment:

• You will be eligible to repay your refunded contributions and have your previous credited service restored after you have completed two additional years of credited service.

Credited service under the Retirement Systems’ Reciprocal Act (listed on pages 3–4) can be used to meet this requirement.

When you become eligible, you may restore any previous service by repaying your refunded contributions, plus interest. Payments may be made in a lump sum, or by installments on a pre-tax or post-tax basis. See the Service section for more information.
WHEN BENEFITS OR REFUNDS ARE PAID TO YOU

• You will not be taxed on your contributions until you receive them since SERS is a qualified retirement plan under Section 401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code.

• You pay no Illinois state income tax.

• You will pay federal tax on most benefits. Specific information will be furnished when benefits are payable.

• All benefits and refunds must be declared as income in the year they are received.

• Occupational disability and occupational death benefits are exempt from federal income taxes.

• You may postpone taxation of refunds by ‘rolling-over’ the taxable portion of the payment to another employer plan that accepts it, or to an Individual Retirement Account (IRA).

The best tax treatment for you depends on your individual financial situation. Therefore, we advise all members to check with a qualified tax consultant before receiving benefits or refunds.
Board of Trustees

Defined Benefit Plan

SERS Funding
4. APPENDIX
The State Employees' Retirement System is a defined benefit plan governed by Section 401a of the Internal Revenue Code. In a defined benefit plan, the amount of your retirement benefit is based on your final average compensation and years of service credit.

PLAN DOCUMENT
This handbook attempts to describe SERS benefits in nontechnical language. The official document describing SERS benefits is the Illinois Compiled Statutes, 40 ILCS 5/14, which legally governs the operation of the plan. If there is any variance between this handbook and the plan document, the plan document rules.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
The Board of Trustees is responsible for the operation of SERS. Some trustees serve on the Board because of their position in State government. Others are appointed by the Governor because of their particular expertise. Still others are elected by you, our members. They are as of January, 2008:

Gordon John Mazzotti, Chairman, appointed by the Governor.

John Frigo representing Ginger Ostro, Director, Office of Management & Budget.

Loren Iglarsh representing Daniel Hynes, State Comptroller.

Michele Cusumano, state employee appointed by the Governor.

Joyce King, elected annuitant.

Lori Laidlaw, elected state employee.

ADMINISTRATION
SERS is administered by the board-appointed Executive Secretary.
SERS FUNDING
Contributions are made by the State and its members. All contributions not required for current operations are invested by the Illinois State Board of Investment for the exclusive benefit of our members and their beneficiaries.

To safeguard the proper operation and funding of this multi-billion dollar pension fund, operations are monitored both internally and externally. SERS’ financial and administrative activities are subject to an annual audit by an independent accounting firm under the direction of the state’s Auditor General.

Proper funding includes an actuarial review of the fund balances to ensure that funds will be available for current and future benefit payments.

EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER
The Employer Identification Number of SERS is 37-1026227.

PLAN YEAR
For record-keeping purposes, the plan year is July 1 through June 30.

LEGAL PROCESS
Legal process may be served on the SERS Executive Secretary.

EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS
Membership in SERS does not guarantee continued state employment, nor does it guarantee a right or claim to any benefit not accrued under the terms of the plan document.
Agency Retirement Coordinator: Person in each state agency who interacts with the employees of their agency and SERS.

Alternative Retirement Formula: The retirement formula for state employees in high-risk jobs.

Annual Benefit Statement: The annual benefit statement is mailed in August to active members, and to inactive members in February. This statement summarizes the member’s account and benefits. It includes information on service credit, projected and accrued pension benefits, and lists the member’s beneficiaries.

Automatic Increase in Retirement Annuity: A 3% increase of a member’s retirement annuity each January 1 following the first full year of retirement, or age 60, whichever is later. Under the Rule of 85, the increase is paid on January 1 following the first full year of retirement, regardless of age.

For alternative formula members, the 3% increase is paid on January 1 following the first full year of retirement or age 55, whichever is later.

For survivor, widow or occupational death annuity, a 3% increase is paid on January 1 following one full year of benefits.

Beneficiary for Lump-Sum Death Benefit: The beneficiary chosen by the member to re-
receive SERS benefits. A beneficiary form is kept on file with SERS. This should not be confused with the Group Life Insurance beneficiary, or the Deferred Compensation beneficiary.

**Coordinated/Covered:** A SERS member who contributes to Social Security.

**Credited Service:** The total service certified to a member’s record.

**DD214:** A document issued by the U.S. Armed Forces to verify active duty as it pertains to military service credit.

**Defined Benefit Plan:** Provides a predetermined benefit amount using a formula combining service credit and salary.

**Final Average Compensation (FAC):**
For Retirement and Survivor Benefits – Final Average Compensation is the 48 highest consecutive months of service within the last 120 months of service. For alternative formula employees, FAC is the final rate of pay or final 48 months, whichever is higher.

For Death and Disability Benefits – Final Average Compensation is the rate of pay at the date of death or disability, or the 48 highest consecutive months of service within the last 120 months, whichever is greater.

**Level Income Option:** An option for coordinated/covered members when their SERS benefit is increased for the period before receiving Social Security benefits. Their SERS benefit is reduced when Social Security benefits begin.
This option provides an income leveling effect throughout an individual’s retirement years.

**Informer:** The SERS newsletter for retirees and survivors that contains timely and pertinent information. This newsletter is usually mailed in January, March and September.

**Medical Leave of Absence:** An excused absence without pay, granted to an employee for an illness or injury not job-related.

**Member:** An active SERS employee, any former employee who has contributions credited to their account but has not received a refund, or is not receiving a retirement annuity.

**Military Service:** Service in the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, or any women’s auxiliary allowed as credit by SERS.

**Non-Occupational Disability:** A benefit paid to an individual for an injury or illness not work-related.

**Non-Coordinated/Non-Covered:** A SERS member who does not contribute to Social Security.

**Occupational Disability:** A benefit paid to a member for an injury or illness sustained while performing their duties as a state employee.

**Optional Service Credit:** Periods of employment that can be purchased for additional service credit. Examples include military time, qualifying periods, repayment of refund, leaves of absence, and short periods of employment.
**Pension:** Retirement annuity paid for a member’s lifetime.

**Qualified Plan:** A retirement plan qualified under the Internal Revenue Code allowing SERS and its members certain tax advantages.

**Qualifying Period:** A period of state employment prior to becoming a SERS member.

**Reciprocal Retirement Systems:** There are thirteen Illinois public retirement systems participating in the Retirement Systems’ Reciprocal Act.

**Reciprocity:** A member who has at least one year of credited service under another Illinois Public Retirement System, may use their service under that system to determine eligibility for a SERS benefit.

**Regular Retirement Formula:** The retirement formula for state employees in positions not designated as high-risk.

**Reversionary Annuity:** A member may elect to receive a lesser retirement benefit and provide a greater benefit for a designated beneficiary.

**Retirement Systems’ Reciprocal Act:** Provides continuity of pension credits for individuals who have participated in more than one Illinois public employee retirement system. There are currently thirteen retirement systems participating in the Retirement Systems’ Reciprocal Act.
Rollover: Postponing taxation of distributions by “rolling-over” the payment to another qualified plan, or to an Individual Retirement Account (IRA).

Rule of 85: Allows employees to retire without a penalty when the sum of their age and years of service equals 85 or greater. You must have at least eight years of service to qualify for this benefit.

SERS-O-GRAM: This newsletter is for active SERS employees. It contains timely and pertinent information, and is usually mailed in April and August.

Sick Leave: An absence from work due to illness, or the days that accrue for use in the event of illness. This time may be used to establish additional service credit at retirement.

State Employee: Any person who performs services for the State of Illinois.

Survivor Annuity Beneficiary: A beneficiary (spouse, child, dependent parent) designated by statute to receive a monthly annuity upon the death of the member.

Tax-Sheltered/Tax-Deferred: Contributions made by a member that are not taxed until a benefit is paid.

Temporary Disability: A benefit payable during a period when an injury or illness is being contested. A temporary benefit eventually becomes a nonoccupational or occupational disability.
First Year of State Employment

- Carefully review your most recent Annual Benefit Statement to ensure that SERS records match yours.
- Purchase all allowable service credit. Optional service includes:
  - Qualifying Periods
  - Military Service
  - Refunded Contributions
  - Leaves of Absence
- Visit our website and become familiar with its content.

Early in Your Career

- Carefully review your most recent Annual Benefit Statement to ensure that SERS records match yours.
- Purchase all allowable service credit.
- Attend the preretirement workshop Investing in Your Future.

5-15 Years from Retirement

- Carefully review your most recent Annual Benefit Statement.
- Purchase all allowable service credit.
- Attend the preretirement workshop Education for Tomorrow’s Choices.

3 Years from Retirement

- Carefully review your most recent Annual Benefit Statement to ensure that SERS records match yours.
- Purchase all allowable service credit.
- Attend the preretirement workshop Countdown to Retirement.
- Utilize the estimates in your annual Benefit Statement for planning purposes.
- Contact the local Social Security office for an estimate of your Social Security benefit.

12 Months from Retirement

- Carefully review your most recent Annual Benefit Statement to ensure that SERS records match yours.
- Purchase all allowable service credit.
• Discuss benefit options with family members.
• Contact SERS for an official pension estimate.

**1-2 Months from Retirement**

• Carefully review your most recent Annual Benefit Statement to ensure that SERS records match yours.
• Purchase all allowable service credit.
• Request, complete and return the Application for Retirement Annuity Pension form #3004 to SERS within 30 days of your pension becoming effective.
  Other documents which should be returned with your retirement application are:
  • The Depository Agreement for SERS Benefit Payments (form #3967) if you want your annuity electronically deposited in your bank.
  • A photocopy of your certified birth certificate, if requested on retirement application.
  • Check with the Deferred Compensation office about distribution.

**At Retirement**

• Acquire additional service credit by purchasing your sick and vacation days by completing Form #1404 with your agency payroll clerk before you terminate service.
• Notify your agency of your intent to retire and the date you wish to do so.
• If you need to change your SERS beneficiary, contact SERS for a Nomination of Beneficiary form #101.
• On your last day of employment, resign from your agency by signing the appropriate documents. If you are on disability, you must resign from your leave of absence in order to retire.

**After Retirement**

• If you are 65 or older, contact the Social Security Administration to enroll in Medicare Part B. Send a photocopy of you and your dependent’s Medicare card to SERS.
• After you retire, questions about the group insurance program should be made to SERS.
• Attend the post-retirement workshop *Myths & Realities of Retirement.*