

WELCOME!

New Member Handbook

A Guide for New Members of the
Maine Public Employees Retirement System

2024



MainePERS

PUBLIC EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM

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Welcome!

Whether you are beginning your career in public service, or are returning, having worked previously for an employer covered under the retirement system, we welcome your membership and look forward to serving your benefit needs.

Maine Public Employees Retirement System (MainePERS) administers the following benefits to eligible employees:

- [Retirement Plans](#)
- [Group Life Insurance](#)
- [Disability Retirement](#)

This brochure gives an overview of these programs. For more detailed information, please refer to your plan specific handbooks, available online at www.mainebers.org (See Publications). You may also contact MainePERS directly.

Highlights of Your MainePERS Benefits

Retirement



Defined Benefit Plan

A Defined Benefit (DB) pension plan provides you an income after you retire, based on your years of service, level of compensation, and your age at retirement. As a member, you contribute a percentage of your earnings to MainePERS, and these contributions earn interest at a rate set by the MainePERS Board of Trustees. The amount you contribute depends on your membership plan.

Key Advantages of Your Defined Benefit Plan

- **Stable Retirement Benefits** - Your age, three highest years of salary, length of service, and accrual rate (for example, 2% for each year of service) determine your benefit. Your benefit isn't affected by the ups and downs of investment returns.

- Benefit Payment Options - When you retire you may choose one of many options offering a lifetime benefit.
- Early Vesting - You are vested after earning only five years of service credit. Being vested means that you are eligible to draw a lifetime monthly benefit upon retirement at the normal retirement age under your plan. Being vested protects your pension coverage even if you decide to leave your MainePERS-covered position, so long as you do not withdraw your contributions.
- Death Benefits - As a member, benefits are available to your survivors if you die before retirement.
- Sound Investment Policies - The System's assets are managed, under the direction of the Board of Trustees, by experienced investment professionals.

MAINE START

While the MainePERS defined benefit pension plans are the foundation for financial security in retirement, most public employees will need to supplement their pension benefits with retirement savings. One option is to save with a systematic, tax-advantaged plan. Many Participating Local District Consolidated Plan (PLD) employers and Public School Districts offer MaineSTART to their employees. MaineSTART offers Traditional (pre-tax) and Roth (after-tax) accounts. These plans provide members a way to contribute an amount determined by them into a diversified mutual fund they select with the goal of supplementing their income during retirement. The contributions and earnings in these plans determine the benefit available at retirement.



FOR MORE INFO

For additional information on the MaineSTART program, visit www.mainestart.org or contact MainePERS at 207-512-3116; toll-free 1-800-451-9800 and Maine Relay: 711.

Group Life Insurance

The MainePERS Group Life Insurance program is available to all State and Teacher members, and to eligible PLD employees whose employers participate in the program.

Enrollment and Premium Payment

You enroll by completing the Group Life Insurance Application. If you apply for group life coverage within the first 31 days of becoming eligible, you may select coverage for yourself and your dependents without having to show evidence of insurability. If you are paying the premium, your employer will withhold it from your pay and forward to MainePERS.


Coverage Levels

You may choose basic and supplemental coverage on yourself, and dependent coverage for your eligible dependents. Basic coverage is equal to your annual gross compensation rounded up to the next one thousand dollars. Supplemental coverage is available at one, two or three times your basic coverage. Basic and supplemental coverage also includes Accidental Death and Dismemberment coverage. Dependent coverage allows you to choose up to \$10,000 of coverage on your spouse and up to \$5,000 on each child depending on their age and marital status.

Beneficiary Designation

You may change your life insurance beneficiary as often as you wish by filing a written request with MainePERS. Designation of Beneficiary forms are available from your payroll personnel, the Forms section of our website, or by calling MainePERS.

FOR MORE INFO



For additional information on the Group Life Insurance program, visit www.maineopers.org/gli (See *Benefits and FAQ sections*). Inquiries may be directed to MainePERS Survivor Services Unit (207) 512-3100, toll-free 1-800-451-9800 or Maine Relay: 711.

Disability Retirement

The disability benefit MainePERS administers is a form of retirement. In general terms, it exists to address situations where a member's medical record evidences that they are unable to perform the essential functions of their job with reasonable accommodation and it is more likely than not that inability is expected to be permanent. As a form of retirement, it is a unique benefit that has different requirements than other government run disability programs, such as Social Security or Veterans Affairs programs. It is also different than private insurance that may be purchased to provide some income during a short-term or long-term illness that prevents someone from working.

Who is Eligible

If you are a MainePERS member, and meet the eligibility requirements, disability retirement is one of your employment benefits. Members are public sector employees, who make contributions to MainePERS through their employment, including: State of Maine employees, public school teachers and administrators, and many local government employees, known as Participating Local Districts (PLD). Note that some PLD employees have optional membership or may be in employment positions that are not eligible for membership.

When to Apply

If you reach the point where you are unable to perform the essential functions of your job due to a medical condition, the timing may be right to consider applying for disability retirement.

How to Apply

To pursue disability retirement, there are two steps: participating in an intake interview and then submitting certain forms. To begin the intake process, contact a MainePERS representative at 1-800-451-9800 or 512-3100.

Note: *You may not have a service retirement application and a disability retirement application pending at the same time. You also can not apply for disability retirement after you have started receiving your service retirement benefit payments or have taken a refund of your contributions.*

Member Resources

Member Handbooks

These are available in the Publications section on our website --they provide a more detailed description of benefits available under your plan (State, Teacher, Participating Local District, Legislative or Judicial).

Annual Member Account Statements

Active members receive an Annual Member Account Statement in the month of their birth. These statements contain key information about their account, including named beneficiary, service credit, vesting status, and contributions paid. This statement also provides members an opportunity to review the contact information MainePERS has on file. Updating your contact information is easy to do through the Member Portal and ensures that you receive important updates and timely information.

MainePERS Member Portal

MainePERS encourages members to register for the online Member Portal to obtain secure and convenient access to your MainePERS account information including copies of member statements, tax documentation, and beneficiary and group life insurance selections. You may also update your contact information through the portal. Registration instructions, a list of portal features, and helpful frequently asked questions can be found at www.mainebers.org/memberportal.

Participation in the portal is optional and contact with MainePERS is available via telephone, email, or in person if you prefer.

Introductory Educational Sessions

Want to find out more about your MainePERS benefits? Introductory educational sessions are tailored to new and mid-career members and offered via Zoom. These sessions are open to anyone wanting to learn more about their pension plan and how it can fit into long-term retirement planning. The topics in these 60 minute presentations include how your retirement benefit is calculated, how service credit accrues, eligibility/vesting, and common MainePERS terms.

Session dates and an online registration are available for each plan as follows:

Teachers: www.mainebers.org/teachersessions

State Employees: www.mainebers.org/statesessions

PLD Employees: www.mainebers.org/pldsessions

MainePERS Web Site



www.maineopers.org

Our website is designed to provide members, retirees, participating employers, and other interested parties information about membership in the Retirement System and a general understanding of the functions of MainePERS. The site is particularly helpful for new members!

Also included are a number of links to websites maintained by other entities that we think may be of interest for retirement planning purposes.

Additional Information

Q & A

Q: How do I notify MainePERS when my address changes?

A: The quickest way to update your contact information is through the online Member Portal. Other options include calling us and after successfully verifying your identity your account will be updated, or mailing a signed change request directly to MainePERS. You will find a form for this purpose (#MM-0002 *Member/Benefit Recipient Data Update*) in the Forms section of our website.

Q: Can I find out how much money I have put into the Retirement System and/or how much creditable service time I have on record?

A: Yes. Annually, in the month of your birth, MainePERS will send you an Annual Member Account Statement. These statements contain information about your account, including named beneficiary, service credit, vesting status, and contributions paid.

Q: Can I buy time toward my retirement and receive additional service credit?

- A. There are categories of service that you may be eligible to purchase, including, but not limited to:
- Active duty military service before becoming a MainePERS member
 - Out-of-state Service
 - Private/parochial teaching service

Additional Information (cont.)

- Refunded service from previous membership
- Service as a full-time law enforcement officer with a federal, state, county or local law enforcement agency

A more complete list of categories is included in your plan specific handbook. There are certain eligibility and verification requirements to make service purchases. Contact MainePERS' Retirement Services Unit for more information.

MainePERS and Social Security



If you are eligible to receive Social Security retirement benefits either because you worked in a Social Security covered job or because your deceased spouse did, the amount of your Social Security benefit may be affected if you receive a MainePERS benefit.

The Social Security provisions that could affect you are the windfall elimination provision (Social Security benefits from your own work) and the government pension offset (Social Security benefits as the beneficiary of your spouse).

For information about how receiving a MainePERS benefit could affect your Social Security benefits, contact SSA directly at www.ssa.gov. You can locate the SSA office nearest you via their website at www.ssa.gov/locator. Though we recommend that you work with a Claims Representative from your local SSA office, you can contact SSA via their national toll-free number at 1-800-772-1213.

Additional Information (cont.)

Health & Dental Insurance

MainePERS does not handle any health or dental insurance programs. You can direct your questions on these topics to the administrators of the various programs under which members are covered. The most common of these are listed below for your convenience.

Health Insurance:

State Employees: Office of Employee Health & Wellness
Phone: 624-7380 or 1-800-422-4503 • Website: www.maine.gov/deh

Teacher Members with Anthem/Blue Cross:
Phone: 1-888-399-8706 • Website: www.anthem.com

Teacher Members without Anthem/Blue Cross should request assistance from their school administrative unit employer. PLD employees: Check with your personnel office.

Dental insurance:

State Employees: Northeast Delta Dental
Phone: 1-800-832-5700 • Website: www.nedelta.com

PLD employees only: Maine Municipal Association
Phone: 1-800-452-8786 • Website: www.memun.org

Maine School Management Association
Phone: 622-3473 or 1-800-660-8484 • Website: www.msmaweb.com

Contact information listed was current as of 6/2024.

Contact MainePERS

Please provide your full name on all communication.

Phone

Local: 207-512-3100

Toll-Free: 1-800-451-9800

Fax: 207-512-3101

Maine Relay: 711

Website

www.maineopers.org

Location (Driving directions available on our website.)

139 Capitol Street

Augusta, Maine

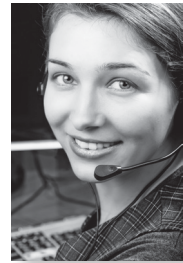
Mailing Address

P.O. Box 349

Augusta, ME 04332-0349

When sending confidential or sensitive information,
use our secure email application available at:

www.maineopers.org/contact



Address your e-mail to:

retirement.services@maineopers.org

survivor.services@maineopers.org

disability@maineopers.org

dcadmin@maineopers.org

For information about:

Retirement plans and benefits, contributions or service credit totals and purchasing service credit.

Life insurance, death benefits, pre-retirement death or life insurance beneficiary designation.

Disability retirement

MaineSTART Defined Contribution and Deferred Compensation Program

About MainePERS

Since 1942, MainePERS has helped public employees prepare for retirement. The System's contributing members include teachers, state, county, and municipal employees, legislators, judges, and those who work for other public entities. Upon retirement, our public sector retirees and their beneficiaries receive monthly benefits from retirement plans offered by MainePERS. Eligible members may also participate in other programs administered by MainePERS, such as Disability Retirement; Group Life Insurance; and MaineSTART, a tax-deferred retirement savings program.

The MainePERS Board of Trustees is responsible for the operation of the System. The eight member board includes the State Treasurer, member and retiree representatives, and experts in retirement, investment, and finance. The Board contracts with national actuarial and investment professionals who assist the Board to manage the System's financial assets.



MainePERS

PUBLIC EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM

Contact Us



Reach us by phone or fax

Main Line: 207-512-3100

Toll-free: 800-451-9800

Fax: 207-512-3101

Maine Relay: 711



On the web

mainepers.org



Mailing Address

PO Box 349, Augusta, Maine 04332-0349

***Important information about the Social Security section in this handbook**

MainePERS pension benefits and the enactment of the Social Security Fairness Act of 2023

On January 5, 2025 President Biden signed the **Social Security Fairness Act of 2023** (H.R. 82), which was passed in the closing days of the 118th Congress. The Act repeals the Social Security **Windfall Elimination Provision** (WEP) and **Government Pension Offset** (GPO). Further guidance regarding the implementation of this Act is expected from the Social Security Administration, including the continued use of Social Security Form SSA-1945, *Statement Concerning Your Employment in a Job Not Covered by Social Security*.

This repeal of the WEP and GPO has raised questions about what this means regarding MainePERS pension benefits. This repeal does not affect MainePERS pension benefits. MainePERS retirees will continue to receive their same pension benefit amount.

The WEP and GPO were offsets to any social security benefits someone might be eligible to receive. Please consult with the Social Security Administration (www.ssa.gov) for information about the effect these changes may have on your Social Security benefits.

For additional information about the Social Security Fairness Act of 2023, visit www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/82.