

# PSERS Active Member Newsletter

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### Attention Active-Certified and Active Non-Certified Members:

The Public School Employees' Retirement System's (PSERS) Board of Trustees will conduct an election this fall for an active-certified member and an active non-certified member to serve three-year terms on the Board from January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2024.

If there is a contested election, candidate biographies will be included on PSERS website at [psers.pa.gov](https://psers.pa.gov) and in the ballot which you will receive by mail this fall. Check PSERS website at [psers.pa.gov](https://psers.pa.gov) for updates on the Board elections.

## Coming Soon: Your 2021 Statement of Account

In the next few months, you will receive your 2021 *Statement of Account*. If you have paperless delivery, you will receive an email when your statement is available for you to view in your Member Self-Service (MSS) account in lieu of a mailed copy.

Please review it 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 on the MSS Portal or by submitting the Nomination of Beneficiaries (PSRS-187) form.*
- Service credits 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.
- Estimates for various options if you are eligible and were to retire at the end of the school year for which the statement was generated.

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

**Email Address:**  
[ContactPSERS@pa.gov](mailto:ContactPSERS@pa.gov)

## **PSERS Board of Trustees Meeting Schedule**

**December 16-17, 2021**

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 call Tivia Danner, PSERS Executive Office at 717.710.6459.

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

**(Coming Soon: Your 2021 Statement of Account...Continued)**



### **Generate Your Own Retirement Estimates**

You can generate your own retirement estimates using the calculator in your MSS account or on the PSERS website. By using the estimate calculator in your MSS account, the most recent information reported by your employer is automatically entered in the relevant fields.

Last year, PSERS processed and mailed over 310,000 Statements of Account. You may not receive your statement at the same time as a coworker or friend because:

- Not all of your employers have reported your salary, contributions, and days and/or hours worked for the July 1 to June 30 school year.
- You have an incorrect address or email address on file with PSERS.
- The Statement of Account presentation offers a walkthrough of your statement. It is available on the PSERS website under "Presentations."

### **How to Check if you have Paperless Delivery**

**You are automatically enrolled in Paperless Delivery when you registered for your MSS account. To check your paperless status, sign into your MSS account and go to the "Paperless Delivery" tab.**



# PSERS Health Options Program

If you're a PSERS member about to turn age 65, we're eager to tell you about the benefits of joining the Health Options Program when you retire. We'll take a number of steps to make sure you understand how the program works.

First, we'll send you a package of information from four to nine months before your 65th birthday. We mail these twice a year—in the fall for people turning age 65 during the first six months of the following year and in the spring for people turning age 65 in the second half of the year. The package contains a description of the medical and prescription drug benefits available under the Health Options Program—plus a personalized statement that has information specific to you—including your monthly premiums for all your coverage options.

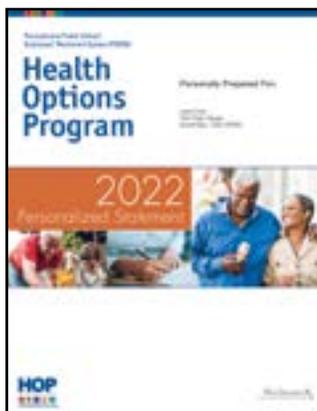
In addition, we conduct virtual group meetings multiple times a year where you can learn about the Health Options Program and ask questions. If you're unable to attend a live virtual group meeting, you can watch one of the recorded sessions. We've included a list of webinar dates below or visit [hopbenefits.com](http://hopbenefits.com).

## Live Webinars

- October 18: 2:00 p.m.
- October 21: 10:00 a.m.
- October 26: 12:00 noon
- November 4: 11:30 a.m.
- November 8: 2:00 p.m.
- November 10: 10:00 a.m.

**Premium Assistance—A Special Advantage.** Participating in the Health Options Program may entitle you to a special financial incentive that is not available with a commercial program such as AARP. If you are eligible for Premium Assistance and enroll in the Health Options Program or an approved health care plan, you may be eligible for up to \$100 per month toward your monthly premium. Over the course of your lifetime, on average, you could save up to \$24,000 or more.

If you have any questions, contact the HOP Administration Unit at 800.773.7725 or visit [hopbenefits.com](http://hopbenefits.com).



# PSERS In-Person Counseling Sessions Return

PSERS in-person counseling sessions are back! While our offices were open for limited assistance through the last school year, PSERS reduced its in-person activities. Beginning in September, PSERS will be returning to its in-person pre-COVID operations for small group counseling sessions only. Webinars will still be available for those who are interested in getting their information from PSERS remotely, but in-person counseling sessions near you will once again be available.

## Small Group Retirement Exit Counseling Sessions

If you are planning on completing your application for retirement within the next twelve months, PSERS provides retirement education to ensure you understand the details and impact of your PSERS retirement choices. During these Retirement Exit Counseling sessions, trained retirement representatives will provide an overview of your retirement options and answer all your questions. Our retirement representatives will also assist you in the completion of your retirement paperwork. 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 small group counseling session, you must have a current, PSERS staff-prepared retirement estimate. You can request one by completing a Request for Retirement Estimate (PSRS-151) or calling PSERS during normal business hours. 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 Retirement Exit Counseling session. You must contact PSERS to make your appointment for this small-group counseling session through Secure Messaging in your Member Self-Service (MSS) Portal or by calling 1.888.773.7748 (1.888.PSERS4U).

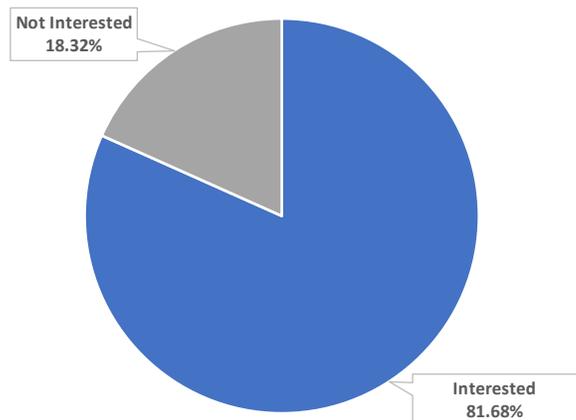
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## PSERS Expands Services to Offer Both In-Person and Web-based Resources

PSERS sent out a survey about webinars last year and we found that over 81% of more than 18,000 respondents were interested in reviewing recorded webinars.

We hear you! Although in-person counseling sessions are returning, we will continue to offer live and recorded webinars.

Would you review recorded webinars if they were available on the PSERS website?



## Changes Coming Soon to PSERS Member Self-Service Portal

We are pleased to share with you that the Member Self-Service (MSS) Portal will be getting a new look. There will be new improvements to user experience, a mobile-friendly design, a search function for documents and secure messages, and more!

**Stay tuned.** How-to guides and more information for the new MSS Portal will be available closer to the launch.

### Join Over 190,000 Members on PSERS MSS Portal!

Join more than 190,000 PSERS members who have registered for MSS and who can now access their pension account information online, anytime they need it. You can conduct many transactions in your retirement plan instantaneously online with the click of a button instead of filling out paper forms or contacting PSERS staff.

You can also manage your Paperless status. By signing up for MSS, you are automatically enrolled in Paperless Delivery which means you will receive most of your PSERS correspondence in your MSS account instead of through the mail. You can access your PSERS documents anytime, anywhere with MSS. To date, PSERS has saved more than \$1 million in printing and mailing costs!

You can opt out of Paperless Delivery at any time through the Paperless Delivery tab in MSS.

## Borrowing from Your Retirement Account

You may **NOT** borrow from your account. To protect your PSERS benefit until retirement, the Public School Employees' Retirement Code prohibits members from borrowing money from or against their Defined Benefit or Defined Contribution account.

Funds in your PSERS account cannot be used for collateral and, generally, cannot be attached or assigned. You will receive funds from your account only when you terminate service and apply for a retirement or a refund of your contributions and interest.

Additionally, you may not liquidate your monthly benefit into a lump-sum payment when you retire.

## Follow PSERS on Social Media

Follow PSERS on social media for retirement information, educational videos and fact sheets, PSERS investment highlights, and more! PSERS is on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube (PA Public School Employees' Retirement System)!



## Basic Requirements to Purchase Service Credit

You must be an active contributing member of PSERS at the time you apply to purchase service credit. If you stop working, are on an unpaid leave, or terminate your employment, you are not eligible to apply to purchase service even if you have not resigned from your position.

Multiple service members (former members of PSERS who have combined school and state employment) may also apply to purchase service credit through PSERS if they are in an active contributing status with the State Employees' Retirement System (SERS).

PSERS frequently receives requests from members who at one time had a leave without pay or did not work a full school year and are requesting to purchase service to "round out" their service credit. You cannot purchase service credit for service not actually rendered. Additionally, you may not receive more than one year of service credit within a school year. Class DC members are unable to purchase service.

For more information on eligibility for the service you would like to purchase, please refer to the appropriate forms on PSERS website:

- *Purchase of Former Full-Time Uncredited Service (PSRS-27)*
- *Purchase of Non-Intervening Military Service (PSRS-28)*
- *Purchase of Former Part-Time Uncredited Service (PSRS-100)*
- *Application to Purchase Credit for an Approved Leave of Absence (PSRS-112)*
- *Purchase of Out-of-State Service (PSRS 278)*
- *Purchase of United States Government Service (PSRS-600)*
- *Application to Return Withdrawn Contributions (PSRS-696)*
- *Purchase of Pennsylvania County Nurse Service (PSRS-708)*
- *Rollover Certification Form (PSRS-928)*

## PSERS Behind the Scenes

### Introduction to PSERS' Bureau of Communications and Counseling (BOCC)

When you have a question or need assistance, the PSERS Bureau of Communications and Counseling (BOCC) is there for you. Made up of four areas, BOCC serves as much of the face and voice of the organization.

### Employer Service Center (ESC)

Everything starts with reporting by employers. Employers are responsible for reporting the wages, contributions, and service time that reflect the benefits that have been earned by PSERS members. More than 3 million records are reported to PSERS by employers each year and it is ESC's job to train and assist employers with ensuring that this is done properly and accurately.

### Member Demographics Unit (MDU)

This area functions like a member intake and management area. When you nominate your beneficiaries, have any address issues, or changes not handled through employers or your Member Self-Service (MSS) account, need an income verification, designate a power of attorney, make a multiple service election, and much more, it is all handled here. This small but dedicated unit handles over 20,000 transactions a year.

### Member Service Center and Regional Offices

When you call, or email, or walk into a physical office, these are the staff who assist you. They also provide retirement estimates, conduct webinars for new member class elections and retirement exit counseling, and provide in-person retirement exit counseling and group educational sessions. Members who do not attend a counseling session provided by PSERS are much more likely to have errors in their retirement applications, causing what could be costly delays in the processing of their retirement benefit even if the member worked with a financial planner. Up until your retirement benefit is being processed, these are probably the most important PSERS staff persons for you. Questions about your account, PSERS health insurance eligibility, returning to service, your retirement estimates, counseling, etc. are answered here. These very knowledgeable staff persons answer more than 200,000 emails and phone calls per year. Throughout the pandemic, they adapted to provide all services remotely and quickly returned to being in the seven offices located across the state to ensure continued service to you.



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