



RETIREE FOCUS



School Employees Retirement System of Ohio
Serving the People Who Serve Our Schools®

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Payment Schedule

Your SERS payment is deposited into your bank account on the first business day of each month. If the first day of the month falls on a weekend or holiday, it will be deposited on the previous business day.

Due to tax laws, your January payment will be deposited on January 2, 2025, the first business day of the new year.

PAYMENT SCHEDULE	
January	January 2
February	January 31
March	February 28
April	April 1
May	May 1
June	May 30
July	July 1

Payment Stubs

You receive a payment stub twice-a-year with your *Retiree Focus* newsletter. Your payment stub details your gross monthly allowance and deductions, and these amounts for year-to-date. You also receive a payment stub whenever there is a change in your benefit, including a change in your COLA, tax withholdings, or health care premiums.

You will receive your next payment stub with the July 2025 issue of the *Retiree Focus*. ■

Keeping in Touch: SERS Sends Four Newsletters a Year

You receive quarterly newsletters from SERS. There are two issues of the *Retiree Focus* and two issues of the *Retiree eFocus*, for a total of four newsletters. The *Retiree Focus* is delivered through postal mail twice-a-year in January and July. The *Retiree eFocus* is delivered electronically by email twice-a-year in April and October.

If we have both your address as well as your email, you will receive all four newsletters, unless you have requested otherwise. If we only have your postal address, you will only receive the *Retiree Focus*.

Past issues of all newsletters are available on our website at www.ohsers.org/retirees/forms-and-publications/. ■



SERS' Health Care Coverage Changes for 2025

In September, SERS sent Open Enrollment mailings to non-Medicare participants with another SERS plan option.

Aetna Medicare Plan (PPO) participants did not receive a SERS mailing. Instead, plan participants received their Annual Notice of Change documents from Aetna and Express Scripts.

You can access plan documents by opening your internet browser and typing www.ohsers.org/retirees/health-care-in-retirement/plans-and-premiums/ in the address bar. You can also visit www.ohsers.org and in the search bar type “plans and premiums.”

In September 2025, all participants will receive Open Enrollment mailings, including an opportunity to add or cancel SERS' dental and vision enrollment for 2026.

SERS' 2025 plan changes are highlighted below:

Aetna Medicare Plan (PPO)

- Monthly premiums remain the same.
- The Primary Care Office Visit co-pay is now a \$0 co-pay.
- Prescription co-pays stay the same.

2025 Over-the-Counter Health Solutions (OTCHS) product catalogs were mailed by Aetna in December. The telephone number to place a mail order has changed to 1-844-428-8147. Frequently asked questions are found on Page 33.

Aetna Choice POS II and AultCare PPO

- There was a premium increase for both plans. Plan participants were notified of their 2025 monthly premiums by mail.

- The ambulance benefit is now a \$150 co-pay.
- Prescription co-pays stay the same.

Marketplace Wraparound HRA

The HRA reimbursement limit increased to \$2,150 per family per calendar year.

Enrolled in a Non-Medicare SERS Plan?

You Will Receive a 1095-B Tax Form

Each year, SERS reports to the IRS that our plan provided non-Medicare plan enrollees with the minimum essential coverage as required by the Affordable Care Act.

Health care plans must send enrollees a tax form to confirm coverage. The forms are mailed after the end of the year. Where the form comes from and which tax form you receive will vary.

For SERS' enrollees:

- SERS mails the 1095-B to Aetna Choice POS II plan enrollees.
- AultCare mails the 1095-B to AultCare PPO plan enrollees.
- Marketplace Wraparound Plan enrollees will receive a 1095-A form from their Marketplace plan.

Taxpayers DO NOT have to send the 1095-B form to the IRS when filing their tax returns. However, you should keep it with your tax records.

Medicare enrollees DO NOT receive this form because Medicare coverage already provides minimum coverage requirements. ■

You May Need to Call SERS about Medicare Part B



Benefit recipients **whose SERS' benefit began before February 1, 2013**, and who are not enrolled in SERS' health care coverage, must contact SERS if:

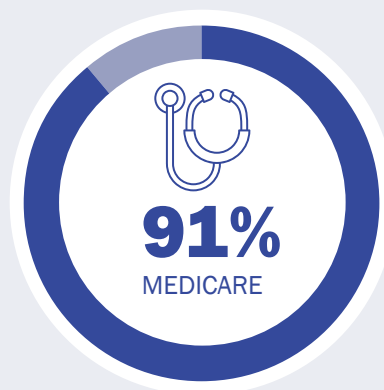
- Your Medicare Part B enrollment has been cancelled by the Social Security Administration
- You are receiving help paying your Medicare Part B premium, usually from Medicaid or a Medicare Savings plan

If one of the above situations is true, you must report this to SERS by calling 1-800-878-5853 or emailing healthcare@ohsers.org. When emailing, please include a daytime telephone number. ■

Population of Health Care Benefit Recipients



- Age/Service Retirement
- Disability
- Others



Data from 2023 SERS Annual Health Care Report



Candidate Chosen for Open Employee-Member Seat

In accordance with the rules of a Vacancy Board Election, Jeanine Alexander was chosen to fill the open employee-member seat on the SERS Retirement Board.

Alexander is the treasury services assistant at Rossford Exempted Village Schools, where she has worked since 2015.

The term for this seat runs through June 30, 2025.

The SERS Retirement Board

The Board is responsible for the administration and management of the System.

It consists of nine members: four elected employee members, two elected retiree members, and three appointed investment expert members.

On average, a Board member can expect to spend about 30 working days each year involved in attending and preparing for regular, special, committee, or seminar meetings for Board business, education, planning, or training.

Ohio law requires that, with few exceptions, all Board business be conducted in an open forum. ■



1099-R Tax Forms in Mail, Online



We are required by federal law to mail your 1099-R tax form by the end of January. The form provides the pension amounts you received for the year, the amount of taxes withheld, and other tax information. With the form, you also receive an informational handout explaining how federal and Ohio income tax laws apply to your SERS pension payments. Additionally, 1099-R tax forms are available online through your Account Login.

Federal Tax Changes



Every year, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) updates the tax tables used to calculate the amount of federal tax withheld from your pension. Review your payment stub for a breakdown of your gross amount and deductions. The IRS also updates the Form W-4P that retirees use to elect the amount of federal tax withholding. You need to use a new form anytime you want to change the amount of federal tax withheld from your payment. You can download a W-4P from the SERS website at www.ohsers.org. ■

Q: Do I need to report my SERS pension to Social Security?

A: Yes. Report your SERS pension or disability benefit information to Social Security:

- At the time you start to receive a pension or disability income.
- As soon as possible if you are already receiving a pension or disability allowance and did not report it when you started receiving it.
- If you received a partial lump-sum option payment (PLOP) at the time of retirement, report your unreduced pension amount to Social Security.
- Anytime you receive a letter from Social Security asking for information.

Reporting COLAs

You must report a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for your SERS pension or disability allowance to Social Security the month you receive the COLA if you receive a Social Security benefit based on the work record of a spouse, ex-spouse, or deceased spouse. Failure to report your pension or COLA to Social Security may result in your Social Security benefit being suspended, which also could result in your Medicare Part B coverage being terminated.

If you only receive a Social Security benefit based on your work record, you do not need to report COLAs. ■

Tax Questions



For advice on specific tax questions, consult your own tax advisor, the IRS, or state or local tax departments. SERS cannot provide individual tax advice. For more information, visit the IRS website at www.irs.gov. ■

We Are Different

There are five state retirement systems in Ohio, but SERS stands apart from the other systems.

Membership includes public school employees in positions that do not require a teaching or administrator's license or registration; employees of private employers who provide services common to the normal daily operation of a school under a contract; and, non-teaching employees of certain public institutions of higher education.

Our membership is not the only aspect that makes us different.

Unlike our counterparts, SERS is 76.61% funded for pensions over a 21-year period. It has \$18.5 billion in assets, is the 58th largest public pensions fund in the nation, and uses a three-year highest Final Average Salary to calculate pension benefits.

Our most important role during the year is advocating for you.

We do this in a number of ways: individual meetings with legislators, attending legislative Ohio Retirement Study Council monthly meetings, and in our interactions with media and representatives from other organizations. As retirees, your work has been invaluable to the successful operation of schools across the state, and we want everyone else to know that too.

We deliver the message that SERS is transparent, accountable, engaged, and most of all sustainable.

Over the last 10 years, our investment returns are in the top 2% of all pension systems in the Wilshire pension fund universe, and over the last four years, we have the highest returns with the lowest risk of all the plans. This year, our private equity returns have been recognized by the American Investment Council as having the 7th best returns over the last 10 years compared to all other public pension plans.

SERS is financially sound, and we continue to make progress on our funding while delivering your benefits.

Finally, the Board voted to approve a 2.5% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) increase for eligible benefit recipients in 2024. This was greater than the CPI of 2.3%. At its September 2024 meeting, the Board approved another 2.5% COLA increase for eligible benefit recipients in 2025.

We are undeniably different. We try to prove that every day – not just to legislators and advocacy groups – but to you, our membership. ■



from the desk of

Richard Stensrud
Executive Director

As you might have seen, Ohio's public pension systems have been in the news for a variety of reasons. Hopefully you've also noticed, SERS is not the focus.

By any metric, SERS is performing at high levels. Our investment program is ranked in the top decile in the country. Our customer service ratings are at the top of the scale. Our financial condition is solid. We have reduced liabilities and improved our funded status. And we have not requested, and do not need, additional employer contributions. There is nothing broken that needs to be fixed.

We regularly share these messages with Ohio legislators.

You have performed important duties that have contributed to the success of school districts across the state. We recognize you have different needs than retirees of other Ohio public pension systems.

We believe that you are best served by a Board and staff dedicated to your unique retirement needs and will continue to deliver that message.

Thank you for all you do. ■



RETIREE PROFILE

Celebrity Lunch Lady Caters Fun

Get going Gordon Ramsay. Careful Cameron Mitchell. Joyce Graham is back in town.

After serving 25 years with the Berea City School District, Graham retired as Cafeteria Manager at Berea Midpark High School in 2021.

You may have seen the legendary lunch lady driving around Brook Park.

How will you know her?

Just look at her license plate.

When she retired, “I was going to retire my license plate at that time but when I went to the drivers’ bureau, they told me I shouldn’t because – once a ‘Lunch Lady’ – always a ‘Lunch Lady.’ ”

Graham said, “I loved being a lunch lady and interacting with the staff and students. ... Every day was a fun time in the cafeteria.”

She remembered when the cafeteria staff started serving cupcakes to students who wanted to celebrate a friend’s birthday.

“We, The Lunch Ladies, would bring a cupcake to their lunch table, and we would sing Happy Birthday,” she said.

Her famous turkey dinners, walking tacos, fiestadas, and peanut butter squares were always a big hit with students.



She knew everyone’s favorites.

“Fiestada was always a big lunch serving day in the high school. The middle school students loved the pizza. The elementary students loved the chicken nuggets,” she said. “I enjoyed cooking everything.”

She herself also was a favorite.

Graham won a school contest “where a student submitted an essay about their favorite staff member.” As one of the winners, she went to lunch with the student and the other star staff members who had won.

Her best memories of being a lunch lady were when she was recognized outside of school.

She would be asked, “Aren’t you the lunch lady?”

Today you can find her vacationing with her daughters, cruising the high seas, and hosting pool parties.

What’s on the poolside menu?

Walking tacos, of course. ■

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