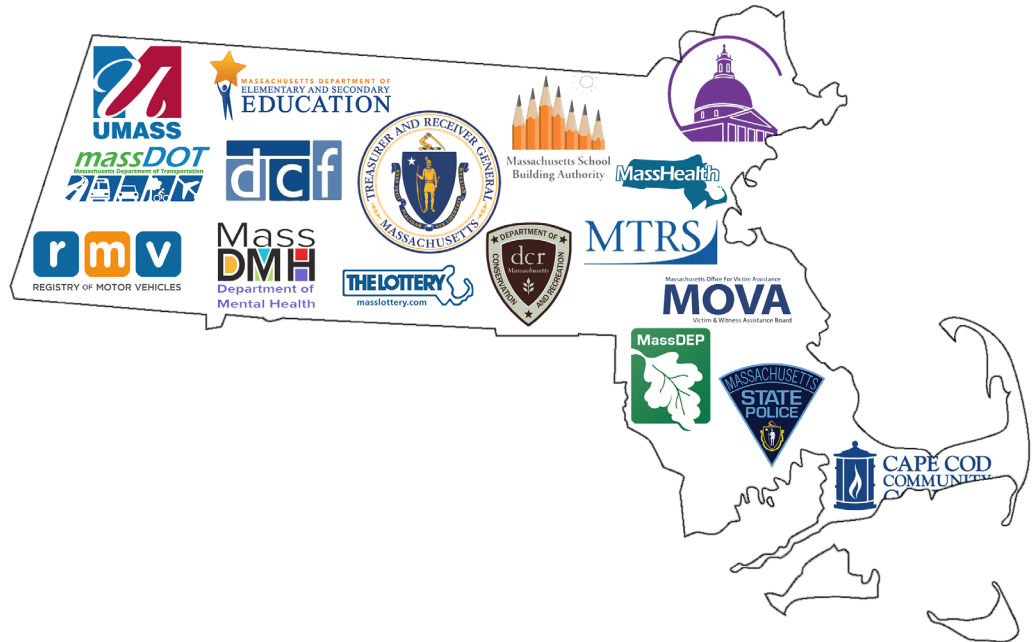
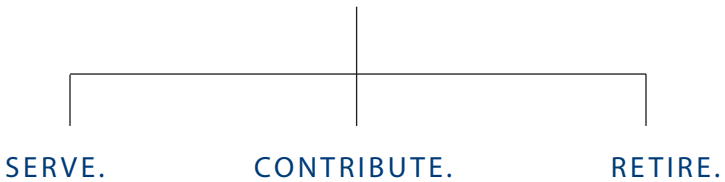


# MASSACHUSETTS STATE EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM



YOU SERVE THE COMMONWEALTH. WE SERVE YOU.



Retirement Benefit Guide

## A LETTER FROM STATE TREASURER DEBORAH B. GOLDBERG

Retirement is a big step in our lives, and we want to help you make sound and responsible decisions. Long-term planning for your future is important to put yourself on a path to be financially secure and stable. It is time now to start focusing on opportunities that will put you in a comfortable position once you retire, and we are here to support you.

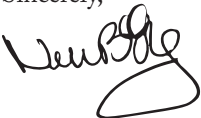
As your career in public service evolves, you will be presented with a range of post-employment options to consider and decisions to make. This guide is designed to help you understand your eligibility for retirement benefits available from the State Employees' Retirement System. Please review this material carefully, particularly the section on the benefit options.

Please view my office as a resource for you and your families on the many issues surrounding your retirement. Experienced counselors are available for confidential, one-on-one sessions.

For specific questions, please contact the State Retirement Board. Our Boston office is open Monday through Friday from 7:45 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and our Springfield office is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The offices can be reached by telephone at (617) 367-7770 or (800) 392-6014 (Massachusetts only). Information on your retirement benefits is also available online at [mass.gov/retirement](http://mass.gov/retirement).

Thank you for your dedication to our state and to its people. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions, concerns, or feedback you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah B. Goldberg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Deborah B. Goldberg  
Treasurer and Receiver General

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### Introduction

The State Retirement Board administers the Massachusetts State Employees' Retirement System ("MSERS") for state employees and certain employees of other public entities. The Board also administers the former Massachusetts Turnpike Authority Employees' Retirement System and benefits for members of the Judiciary. The MSERS is a contributory defined benefit retirement system governed by Massachusetts General Law Chapter 32. The system provides retirement, disability, survivor, and death benefits to members and their beneficiaries.

The State Retirement Board is composed of five members and is chaired by State Treasurer Deborah B. Goldberg. The Treasurer appoints the second member. The members elect the third and fourth members. The fifth member cannot be an employee, a retiree, or an official of the Commonwealth. The Board processes and approves retirement applications, ordinary and accidental disability retirements, refunds, service purchases, and survivor benefits. Additionally, the Board is a resource for state employees seeking information on retirement.

As pension benefits grow more complex, retirement planning becomes more crucial. By learning about the State's pension plan, you will be on your way to securing a retirement that meets the needs of you and your family. You should become familiar with your eligibility for benefits and understand how it affects you and your family as you plan for the years ahead.

This booklet is intended to provide you with a general outline of retirement benefits offered by the MSERS. It explains eligibility, service, and contribution requirements. Often there are special circumstances concerning retirement, and it would be impossible to outline all of the possibilities in this guide. You are encouraged to contact us at (617) 367-7770, toll-free (800) 392-6014 (Massachusetts only), for individual counseling to learn more at our Boston or Springfield locations. You may also participate in one of our frequently offered retirement webinars. Visit [mass.gov/retirement](http://mass.gov/retirement) for more details.

***Early planning is the key to a successful retirement and a secure financial future!***

## Membership

Membership in the system is mandatory for nearly all state employees and eligible employees of certain other entities who are regularly employed on a part-time (minimum of half-time) or full-time permanent basis. If you are regularly employed in the performance of duties, you are considered a member-in-service. You remain a member-in-service until you separate from service by reason of retirement, failure of re-election or re-appointment, resignation, or removal or discharge from your position or office that you hold.

## Contributions by Members-in-Service

All members-in-service make mandatory pre-tax contributions through payroll deductions. Members contribute a percentage of their regular compensation based upon when they joined a public retirement system in Massachusetts. State law mandates the contribution rate:

<u>If you joined a system (and remained a member):</u>	<u>Your contribution rate*:</u>
Prior to January 1, 1975	5%
January 1, 1975 to December 31, 1983	7%
January 1, 1984 to June 30, 1996	8%
July 1, 1996 or later	9%

\*See next page for a list of exceptions to contribution rates listed above.

## Exceptions to Contribution Rate Include:

- Employees appointed to the State Police on or after July 1, 1996 contribute 12%.
- If your membership began on or after April 2, 2012, and you are in group 1, if you attain more than 30 years of creditable service, your base contribution rate will be 6% prospectively, that is from and after the date on which you attain the required amount of creditable service. However, the 2% withholding discussed below would also apply.
- If your membership began on or after January 1, 1979, and your annual rate of regular compensation is \$30,000.00 or more, an additional 2% will be withheld from that portion of your salary that is in excess of \$30,000.00. This 2% withholding is in addition to the 6%, 7%, 8%, 9%, or 12% already being deducted from your regular compensation.

### Example:

You became a member-in-service in 1995 and your regular rate of compensation is \$40,000.00. Deductions in the amount of 8% of \$40,000.00 will be taken (totaling \$3,200.00) and deductions in the amount of 2% of \$10,000.00 (\$40,000.00 minus \$30,000.00) will also be taken (totaling \$200.00). Your annual contributions will be \$3,400.00, which will be taken from your rate of regular compensation on a weekly, biweekly, or monthly basis (as determined by your pay period schedule.)

## Creditable Service

As a member-in-service you earn creditable service toward a retirement allowance for the time during which you contributed a percentage of your salary to the retirement system.

If you are a full-time employee, you will earn one year of creditable service for each year completed. For those employed on a less than full-time basis, you will

earn an amount of service equal to a percentage of the full-time service rate. For example, if you are employed on a half-time basis you will receive 50% or 6 months of service for each year completed.

Please note, as of August, 1973, M.G.L. c.32, §1 excluded from the definition of “employee” any person whose compensation for service rendered to the Commonwealth was derived from the subsidiary account 03 of the appropriation of any department. If you provided contract service prior to August 1973, you may do a regular buyback of this service. If you provided contract service to the Commonwealth after August, 1973 and currently remain an active employee and a member in-service of the MSERS, please refer to the section on *Contract Service Purchase*.

If you have service while in elected office, service in a position where you were compensated less than \$5,000.00 annually, or service as a dual member, i.e., a member in more than one retirement system at the same time, please contact the Board. Pension law changes have affected whether, and how much, these types of service can be considered creditable service for retirement purposes.

## Retirement Benefits for Dual Members

In 2010 the method changed for determining benefits for individuals who are employed by two different governmental units and are members in two different retirement systems at the same time. Under the changes a person would be paid an allowance that is calculated as if their employment was solely in each position within each retirement system so that each retirement system separately calculates each benefit.

The changes do not apply to persons who, as of January 1, 2010, were vested and who received regular compensation from two or more units in more than one retirement system. It also does not apply to any member who did not receive regular compensation from each of two or more units concurrently on or after January 1, 2010.

If you have questions about dual membership, please contact the Retirement Board.

## Service After Age 70

### **Important Notice: Chapter 32, Section 90G3/4 Repealed (Affects Active Employees Approaching Age 70)**

A change to Chapter 32, repealing section 90G<sup>3/4</sup>, was enacted as part of the fiscal year 2018 state budget and was effective as of July 1, 2017. That section previously required an active member of a public retirement system who reached the age of 70 and who wished to continue to accrue creditable service after that age, had to affirmatively elect to continue making contributions.

As a result of this repeal, the MSRB will no longer issue a letter to active members approaching age 70 advising them of this requirement. All otherwise eligible members will continue to contribute to the retirement system. All choices made regarding 90G<sup>3/4</sup> before July 1, 2017, will remain in effect.

## Mandatory Distributions

If you leave state service but remain a member of the MSERS, federal and state laws require you take an annual mandatory minimum distribution of your retirement account if you are not collecting a retirement benefit and are not employed under the MSERS.

If a member reaches the age of 70 1/2 in January 2020 or later (born after June 30, 1949), they must take their first required minimum distribution by April 1 of the year after they reach age 72.

The previous rule continues for members who have already reached age 70 1/2 prior to January 1, 2020. They must begin taking a distribution from the System by April 1 of the year following the year they attain age 70 1/2. Your options are to 1) start collecting your pension, if eligible; 2) withdraw your contributions; or 3) roll your funds over to a qualified retirement



account and have the account administrator handle your minimum distributions going forward. If you choose a rollover, a portion of your funds are considered a required minimum distribution and must be paid directly to you.

You may be liable for a federal tax penalty of up to 50% of the amount of your required distribution if you fail to take your distribution. We recommend you contact the Board if you have any questions regarding this law.

## Service Purchases (Buybacks)

In some instances, you may be eligible to add to your creditable service with a buyback of prior public service. Potential public service that may qualify for a buyback includes service to the Commonwealth that was previously refunded, public service to the Commonwealth for which retirement contributions were not withheld, or other employment service provided to another public entity. If you took a refund of your retirement contributions, you must buy back service prior to your actual retirement date to have the time credited toward a state retirement.

In order to purchase creditable service, you must currently be an active member-in-service at the time of your application. The service purchase must be paid in full prior to you receiving a retirement benefit. We strongly recommend you apply to purchase service early as it often takes time to process service purchase requests, and interest costs increase over time.

Two interest rates are used to calculate service purchases: Actuarial Assumed interest and Buyback interest. Actuarial Assumed interest is determined by the system's actuarial assumed rate of return on investments. Buyback interest is set at one-half of the actuarial assumed interest. For the most current information, visit [www.mass.gov/service-details/buyback-rate-msrb](http://www.mass.gov/service-details/buyback-rate-msrb).

If you entered state service prior to April 2, 2012, and you wish to purchase

## About Your Retirement Benefits

prior refunded service and other certain types of service, you had until April 2, 2013, to enter into a buyback agreement in order to be assessed with half of the actuarial assumed interest on your buyback.

If you re-entered service on or after April 2, 2012, and you wish to purchase prior refunded service and other certain types of service, you have one year from your re-entry date to enter into a buyback agreement to qualify for the buyback interest rate. After the one-year limit has passed, members entering into a buyback agreement will pay the full actuarial assumed interest.

## Contract Service Purchase (M.G.L. c.32, §4(1)(s))

Members of the MSERS may purchase creditable service for service provided to the Commonwealth as a contract employee. You must meet the eligibility requirements including but not limited to:

- You must currently be a member in service of MSERS with at least ten years of creditable service.
- The contract service being purchased must have immediately preceded membership or re-entry into MSERS. If the contract service preceded any refunded service, it is not eligible.
- The job description of the contract service position must have been substantially similar to the job description you held upon becoming an employee and a member of the MSERS.
- The maximum amount of contract service eligible to be purchased is four years. (Eligible part-time contract service shall be credited on a proportional basis.)
- The cost to purchase contract service is the amount equal to that which would have been withheld as regular retirement deductions for the contract service as if the service had been rendered as a state employee, had you been a member of the MSERS, plus buyback interest.
- Once found eligible, you must take action within 180 days to purchase the service via a lump sum payment or enter into an installment payment arrangement, otherwise the contract service will no longer be eligible for purchase.

## Service Purchases / Veterans

You may also be eligible to purchase up to four years of military service if you qualify as a veteran as defined in M.G.L. c. 32, Section 1. If you were honorably discharged from active duty and have either 180 days of regular active duty service and a last discharge or release under honorable conditions, or 90 days of active duty service, one day of which is during “wartime” per the chart below, and a last discharge or release under honorable conditions, you may be eligible to purchase service.

- World War II  
Sept. 16, 1940 – July 25, 1947 (with WWII Victory Medal)
- Korea June 25, 1950 – Jan. 31, 1955
- Korean Defense Service Medal July 6, 1954  
(date to be determined)
- Korea-Vietnam (Interim) Feb. 1, 1955 – Aug. 4, 1964  
(180 days)
- Vietnam Aug. 5, 1964 – May 7, 1975
- Lebanon Aug. 25, 1982 – (date to be determined)
- Grenada Oct. 25, 1983 – Dec. 15, 1983
- Panama Dec. 20, 1989 – Jan. 31, 1990
- Persian Gulf Aug. 2, 1990 – (date to be determined)

In addition, Veterans’ status includes those who, instead of performing “wartime service,” have been awarded one of the following campaign badges: *Second Nicaraguan Campaign, Navy Occupation Service, Medal of Humane Action, Yangtze Service, or Army of Occupation*. If you served in wartime and were awarded a Purple Heart or service-connected disability, regardless of whether you completed the minimum length of active duty service required in the chart under the paragraph above, you qualify for veteran’s status.

Veterans who also have Active Reserve or Massachusetts National Guard Service may receive creditable service for such Guard/Reserve service on a ratio of five years of such service to equal one year of creditable service.

**Exception:** You should be aware that six months of active duty training in the Active Reserves or the National Guard does not qualify as active service toward the minimum period listed. Additionally, if your only active duty was active duty training, you are not eligible to purchase credit for your military service. The Board will provide the final determination for you.

## Two Year Rule

If you are purchasing creditable service you previously withdrew and re-funded, or you rolled over the funds to another retirement plan, you may be required to satisfy certain service requirements before you can be eligible for particular retirement benefits. If the above applies to you, and unless you meet one of the applicable exceptions, you would not be eligible to receive a retirement allowance until you have been in active membership service for at least two consecutive years following the start of your new employment with the Commonwealth. We recommend you contact the Board to determine if this applies to you and to review the applicable exceptions.

## Vesting & Eligibility

Being vested means you are eligible to receive a retirement allowance. You are vested in the State system if you have at least ten years of full-time service. To be eligible to retire, you need to meet one of the following conditions:

- You entered state service prior to April 2, 2012, and you have 20 years of full-time creditable service at any age, or

## About Your Retirement Benefits

- You entered state service prior to April 2, 2012, and you attain the age of 55 with ten years of creditable service, or
- You entered state service on or after April 2, 2012, and you attain the age of 60 if retiring from Group 1, with ten years of creditable service.

If you leave state service after you are vested, you may leave your retirement contributions in the system and receive a state pension once you meet the minimum age requirement.

### Separation from Service

#### Refund / Rollover of Retirement Contributions

If you leave state service before you are vested, there are options available to you. You may opt to receive a refund of your accumulated retirement contributions, with 20% deducted for federal taxes. If you take a refund, you lose all rights associated with membership. Please note there may also be a substantial federal early withdrawal penalty if you take a direct refund of your contributions.

You may wish to consult with the IRS or a tax advisor for specific information. Alternatively, you can have your accumulated retirement contributions “rolled over” or transferred directly into a tax-qualified IRA or other qualified retirement vehicles. Under certain circumstances, there may be a penalty for early withdrawal. If you are eligible for benefits under Social Security and withdraw your MSERS contributions after you are vested, you may be subject to an offset due to the Windfall Elimination Provision. See the Social Security website, [ssa.gov/gpo-wep](http://ssa.gov/gpo-wep), for more information.

### Interest on Your Refund/Rollover

If you entered service after January 1, 1984, you are eligible for a refund of the interest credited to your account according to the following schedule:

- If you have less than ten years of creditable service and you VOLUNTARILY terminated service, you will be credited with 3% interest on your total deductions.
- If you have more than ten years of creditable service or you INVOLUNTARILY withdraw from state service, your total deductions will be credited with regular interest. Also, if you have ten or more years of creditable service, call the State Retirement Board – you may be vested and eligible for retirement at age 55.
- If you leave your account in the system, no interest will accrue after two years from the date of your separation from employment if you later apply for a lump sum refund or rollover of your account.

State law does not permit you to borrow money from your retirement account with the MSERS.

### Important Notice to Refund Applicants who entered service prior to April 2, 2012

Many of the provisions of the pension reform legislation signed into law in November 2011 (Chapter 176 of the Acts of 2011 as amended) will affect new members entering service on or after April 2, 2012. If you entered service prior to April 2, 2012, and you take a refund or a rollover of your contributions, you are terminating your membership. If you later return to state service, your membership date will be the date you re-enter service, even if you buy back any refunded contributions. You will also be subject to the retirement law changes which went into effect on April 2, 2012.

# About Your Retirement Benefits

These changes include, but are not limited to:

- New age factor table for your retirement benefit calculation (see page 23)
- An increase in the salary average period used to calculate most benefits from 3 years to 5 years
- An increase in the minimum retirement age

You have the option of leaving your funds in the system to retain your current level of benefits.

## Deferral of Accrued Sick & Vacation Pay

Many retiring state employees may defer amounts issued by their employing agency for accumulated vacation and/or back pay (up to the federal limits) and up to 20% of sick pay into their Massachusetts 457 Deferred Compensation SMART Plan account. The SMART Plan is an optional retirement plan available to state employees. Employees separating from service may only defer accumulated vacation and/or back pay.

Applicable amounts may be deferred for any calendar month only if:

- The amount would have been available for use or would have been paid to the employee if employment had not terminated,
- The amount is paid within 2½ months following separation from service, and
- An agreement providing for the deferral is entered into before the beginning of the month in which the amounts would otherwise be paid or made available.



For more information, contact the SMART Plan Customer Service Center, telephone (877) 457-1900, or visit their website, [mass-smart.com](https://mass-smart.com).

### Retirement Allowance

Your retirement allowance is made up of two parts: an annuity and a pension. The annuity portion is made up of the contributions deducted during the course of your employment and deposited for you in an annuity savings fund. The interest that accrues on these contributions is credited to your individual account. The Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission (PERAC) pursuant to state law establishes the interest rate, which is applied to your account. The rate by law is the average interest paid on individual savings accounts, which is obtained from a representative sample of financial institutions in Massachusetts.

The pension is the difference between the retirement allowance specified by law and the amount of your contributions, and the retirement systems investment earnings.

The amount of your retirement allowance depends upon the following:

- your age, as of your last birthday
- your length of creditable service,
- your group classification, and
- your highest 36 consecutive months of regular compensation if you became a member before April 2, 2012, or
- your highest 60 consecutive months of regular compensation if you became a member on or after April 2, 2012.

## Group Classifications

Your position, occupation, and the duties you perform determine your group classification. The group classification applicable to your specific position at the time of retirement may be reviewed by the State Retirement Board for determination pursuant to its Group Classification Policy. **A Group Classification Application must be submitted to the Board for each position for which a member is seeking either a Group Two, Group Four, or 20/50 (Corrections Officers Only) classification. It is important to understand that your agency does not determine in what group your position(s) may be classified for retirement purposes.**

**State positions fall within the following groups:**

**Group One** – Members are officials and general employees, including clerical, administrative and technical workers, laborers, mechanics, and all others not otherwise classified.

**Group Two** – Members in this group include probation officers, court officers, certain correctional positions whose major duties require them to have the care, custody, instruction or supervision of prisoners, and certain positions who provide direct care, custody, instruction or supervision of persons with mental illness or developmental disabilities.

**Group Three** – Members are exclusively State Police officers.

**Group Four** – Members include certain public safety officers and officials, correction officers and certain other correction positions, and parole officers or parole supervisors.

Generally, in order for the current position held by a member of the State Retirement System to be classified by the Board, the member: (1) must be actively employed by the Commonwealth, or by an agency or governmental entity subject to the State Retirement System; (2) must actively hold the position for which they seek classification; and, (3) must be actively performing the duties of the position for which he/she seeks classification for not

less than twelve consecutive months immediately preceding retirement at the time of classification.

Members who entered state service on or after April 2, 2012, will have their group classifications service pro-rated at the time of retirement depending on how long they served in a particular group.

Members hired prior to April 2, 2012, may elect to have their service pro-rated at the time of retirement. **Member must have been in active service on April 2, 2012.** Please consult the Board's Group Classification policy available on our website or upon request, for additional details and information.

## State Police - Group 3

Any member of the State Police who has at least 20 years of creditable service with the State Police may elect to retire at any age prior to age 55. State Police officers should contact the State Retirement Board for more information with regard to their retirement benefits.

## Judicial Retirement Benefits

Retirement benefits for Commonwealth judges are set forth specifically under G.L. c.32, §§65A-65J and are separately administered from the general retirement provisions of G.L. c.32 that apply to other members of the Massachusetts State Employees' Retirement System. Please consult the State Retirement Board's website ([mass.gov/retirement](http://mass.gov/retirement)) for specific details and information.

## Superannuation - Regular Retirement

Superannuation is the term that is used to describe the process of being retired upon reaching a certain age and/or earning a certain amount of creditable service. The superannuation retirement allowance of any member may not exceed 80% of his or her average annual rate of regular compensation. You will be eligible to receive a superannuation retirement allowance once you have earned 20 years of full-time creditable service (at any age) if you entered service prior to April 2, 2012; once you are age 55 and have at least ten years of full-time creditable service, if your membership date is prior to

April 2, 2012; or once you are age 60 and have at least 10 years of full-time creditable service if your membership date is on or after April 2, 2012.

## Disability Retirement

There are two types of disability retirements available.

1. **Ordinary Disability** - an illness or injury which is not job-related. You must be vested with ten years of full-time creditable service. If you are a veteran, you would receive 50% of your last year's salary average. Non-veterans younger than their minimum retirement age (either 55 or 60 depending on when you enter service) will have their regular retirement calculated as if you had reached the minimum retirement age.
2. **Accidental Disability** - a job-related illness or injury. Members approved for accidental disability will receive 72% of their last 12 months' salary average. You do not need to be vested.

If you think you may be eligible for a disability retirement, please contact the Disability Unit located in our Boston office. The disability process takes an average of 12 months to complete. Disability retirees must report their earnings annually to PERAC and must not exceed annual limits on earnings.

## Retirement Allowance Options

At retirement, you must choose one of three options, A, B, or C, which will determine how your retirement benefits will be paid. Review these options carefully and determine which is best for you and your family. **You cannot change your option after your retirement date.** If, upon retirement, you do not select an option, the law provides that you will be retired with Option B.

Your retirement allowance must be paid to you in lifetime monthly payments. The amount of the payments will depend upon your option selection. The option you choose will also determine what benefits, if any, will be paid to your survivors after your death.

# Your Retirement Allowance

There are no restrictions on an election of an option for most members. If you are married, your spouse is required to sign the option form consenting to your choice and verifying that he/she understands the option selected.

Members of the Judiciary should consult with Board staff regarding the availability of options A, B, or C for your retirement benefits.

## Option A - No Survivor Benefit

Option A will provide you with your full retirement allowance in monthly payments as long as you live. However, all allowance payments stop when you die, and no benefits are provided to your survivors.

## Option B - Protects Your Retirement Deductions

Option B provides a lifetime allowance to you that is approximately 1% to 5% less per month than Option A.\* The annuity portion of your allowance (the amount of your retirement deductions accumulated while you were working that make up part of your eventual retirement benefit) is reduced to allow a benefit for your beneficiary. Upon your death, your surviving beneficiary of record, or if there is no beneficiary living, the person or persons appearing in the judgment of the State Retirement Board to be entitled will be paid the remaining balance of your accumulated total deductions from your annuity reserve account.

*Approximate Reduction	1%	3%	5%
Age of Member	50	60	70

During your retirement, the balance in your annuity savings account decreases by an amount equal to the annuity portion of your pension. In most cases, your annuity savings account will be depleted after 15 years. Upon your death, the balance remaining in your account will be paid in a lump sum to your beneficiary(ies) or your estate. If your annuity savings account is depleted while you are receiving your allowance, you will continue to receive

your full Option B pension for life, but your beneficiary(ies) will not receive any payment upon your death. You may choose more than one person as your Option B beneficiary, and these beneficiaries do not need to be related to you. You may change your Option B beneficiary at any time, even after you retire.

### **Option C - Joint Survivor Allowance**

Option C, also known as the joint and last survivor allowance, provides you with a lifetime allowance in most instances of approximately 7-15% less than that which you would receive under Option A. However, this reduction could be greater depending on the age difference between you and your beneficiary. Upon your death, your designated beneficiary will be paid a monthly allowance for the remainder of his or her lifetime. The survivor benefit will be equal to two-thirds of the allowance that was being paid to you at the time of your death.

Your monthly allowance received under Option C depends upon life expectancy factors for you and your designated beneficiary. Eligible beneficiaries under Option C include: spouse, parent, unmarried former spouse, sibling, or child.

The Option C factor used for calculating your retirement benefit is based on the nearest birthday of the retiree and the beneficiary. For example: for a retiring member who is 58 years and 8 months old, and a beneficiary who is 57 years and 2 months old, the factor used would be age 59 for the retiring member and age 57 for the beneficiary.

**Special circumstances concerning Option C:** If you choose Option C and your beneficiary predeceases you, you cannot name a different Option C beneficiary. However, your monthly benefit will “pop up” to the Option A benefit amount that you would have received on the date of your retirement, plus any cost-of-living adjustments. This higher Option A benefit will be paid to you from the date of your beneficiary’s death and will continue until your death.

### **Final Benefit Payment After Retiree/Survivor Death**

Upon the death of a retiree/survivor, a prorated payment may be issued to their estate. The prorated payment would be for the number of days the retiree/survivor lived in the month of his/her death. However, in some instances, there may be an amount owed to the MSERS.

# Your Retirement Allowance

## Option C Estimate of Benefit

Age of Member	55	65	65	70	70
Age of Beneficiary	55	55	65	65	70
Approximate % of Option A Option A Benefit	94%	84%	89%	83%	86%

## Age Factor Charts:

Members entering service prior to April 2, 2012

Group 1	Group 2*	Group 4*	Age Factor
65 or older	60 or older	55 or older	2.5
64	59	54	2.4
63	58	53	2.3
62	57	52	2.2
61	56	51	2.1
60	55	50	2.0
59	N/A	49	1.9
58	N/A	48	1.8
57	N/A	47	1.7
56	N/A	46	1.6
55	N/A	45	1.5

To determine your age factor, select your group, then your age and then the corresponding number in the far right column is your age factor.

For example, the age factor for a **Group 2** member **aged 57** would be **2.2**.



Members entering service on or after April 2, 2012

<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2*</b>	<b>Group 4*</b>	<b>Age Factor</b>
67 or older	62 or older	57 or older	2.5
66	61	56	2.35
65	60	55	2.20
64	59	54	2.05
63	58	53	1.90
62	57	52	1.75
61	56	51	1.60
60	55	50	1.45

Members entering service on or after April 2, 2012 **and** who have 30 years or more of creditable service at the time of retirement

<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2*</b>	<b>Group 4*</b>	<b>Age Factor</b>
67 or older	62 or older	57 or older	2.5
66	61	56	2.375
65	60	55	2.250
64	59	54	2.125
63	58	53	2.0
62	57	52	1.875
61	56	51	1.750
60	55	50	1.625

\*Please review eligibility requirements available on our website or upon request.

## Calculating Your Retirement Benefit

Your benefit rate is determined by your age as of your last birthday, your years of creditable service, and your group classification. The benefit rate is a specific percentage of the amount of your average annual rate of compensation. If you entered state service prior to April 2, 2012, the average is based on your highest consecutive 36-month salary average. If you entered state service on or after April 2, 2012, the average is based on your highest consecutive 60-month salary average. Your age factor multiplied by the number of years of service determines this percentage. The maximum pension is 80% of the salary average.

You can use our online Retirement Pension Estimator to calculate an estimated pension based on your group classification and beneficiary details here: [mass.gov/service-details/retirement-pension-estimator](http://mass.gov/service-details/retirement-pension-estimator).

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### Example One

A **Group One** member, entered service **prior to April 2, 2012**, superannuation retirement with the following conditions:

Age / (Age Factor): 55 / (.015)

Years of creditable service: 15 years, 6 months (all within Group 1)

Status: Non-Veteran

High 36 consecutive month average of an annual rate of regular compensation: \$50,000

#### Calculation:

(Age Factor)(Years of Creditable Service)(Salary Average)=Total Option A Annual Allowance

$$(.015)(15.5)(\$50,000) = \$11,625, \text{ Monthly Benefit } \$968.75$$

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### Example Two

A **Group One** member, entered service **on or after April 2, 2012**, superannuation retirement with the following conditions:

Age / (Age Factor): 60 / (.0145)

Years of creditable service: 15 years, 6 months (all within Group 1)

Status: Non-Veteran

Average 5 year annual rate of regular compensation: \$50,000

**Calculation:**

(Age Factor)(Years of Creditable Service)(Salary Average)=Total Option A Annual Allowance

$$(.0145)(15.5)(\$50,000) = \$11,237.50, \text{ Monthly Benefit } \$936.46$$

**Example Three**

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A member who **served in both Group 2 and Group 1**, entered service **prior to April 2, 2012**, superannuation retirement with the following conditions:

Age: 60

Status: Veteran

Years of creditable service in Group 2: 10

Years of creditable service in Group 1: 20

High 36 consecutive month average of an annual rate of regular compensation: \$50,000

**Calculation:**

(Age Factor)(Years of Creditable Service)(Salary Average)=Total Option A Annual Allowance

$$\text{Group 2: } (.025)(10)(\$50,000) = \$12,500, (1,041.67 \text{ per month})$$

$$\text{Group 1: } (.020)(20)(\$50,000) = \$20,000, (\$1,666.67 \text{ per month})$$

Both calculations are added together, not to exceed the maximum of 80% = 32,500 annual benefit.

Veteran's Premium: \$300.00

# Your Retirement Allowance

Total Annual Option A Allowance: \$32,800 (\$2733.33 per month)

(As a veteran, this individual is entitled to receive a premium equal to \$15.00 per year for each of his/her years of state service. Partial years are given full credit. The maximum credit for a veteran is \$300 ( $\$15.00 \times 20 \text{ yrs.}$ ) per year.

## Estimate Your Retirement Benefit

To calculate your benefits just complete the following steps in this worksheet:

### 1. Age

Use your age on your last birthday and consult the applicable Benefit Rate Percentage Chart

Remember you must meet the minimum age requirements to be classified in Groups 2 and 4.

### 2. Years of Creditable Service

Enter the number of years you contributed a percentage of your salary to the retirement system.

### 3. Multiply Line 1 and Line 2

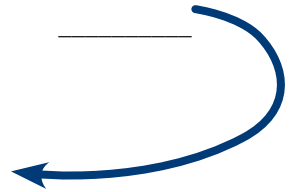
### 4. Salary Average

To figure out your average annual rate of regular compensation, depending on your date of membership, add together your highest 36 consecutive months (at any time during your public career) and divide by three or your highest consecutive five years annual rate and divide by five. Remember you may also get retirement estimates online by using the pension calculator on our website, [mass.gov/retirement](http://mass.gov/retirement).

### To Calculate Your Pension\*

1. Enter your age factor from Benefit Rate Percentage Chart: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Enter your years of service: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Multiply line 1 and line 2 and enter percent (%): \_\_\_\_\_
4. Enter your salary average: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Enter the percentage from line 3: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Multiply line 4 by line 5 and enter amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount in line 6 is your estimated Option A pension.



To calculate an approximate **Option B pension**, reduce your Option A pension by 1-5%.

To calculate an approximate **Option C pension**, reduce your Option A pension by 7-15%.

\* These worksheets are designed solely for estimates.

Actual pension amounts can only be calculated at time of retirement.

### Your Beneficiaries & Survivors

Once you begin to receive retirement benefits, you should advise your beneficiaries and survivors as to the procedures to follow upon your death. They should be instructed to notify the State Retirement Board of your death and furnish us with a death certificate. Upon receipt of all relevant information, the instructions that you made when you chose a retirement option will be carried out. If you were still employed or were a deferred retiree, the In-Service Member Death procedure will be followed. The MSRB will seek to recover overpayment of benefits in appropriate cases.

## Option D (In-Service Member Death)

In order for a retirement system to provide for a payment of a lifetime allowance to a surviving family member if the member dies before retiring, the member would have to choose an Option D beneficiary upon becoming a member of the retirement system or at any time before passing away. The designated beneficiary is entitled to receive the Option C allowance the member would have been entitled to receive if the member had retired on the date he/she died. Option D provides a designated beneficiary with an allowance for life.

If the member died before turning age 55 (or age 60 for members who entered service on or after April 2, 2012) the Board will calculate their benefit as if they had attained their full retirement age.

If the member does not designate an Option D beneficiary, and if his/her spouse (provided he/she has an eligible spouse) does not elect to receive a lifetime allowance, the member's accumulated deductions will be paid in a lump sum to his/her surviving beneficiaries of record and no lifetime allowance can be paid. (The Option D form may not be required if a member wants an eligible spouse to receive a lifetime benefit.) An eligible spouse is someone that has been married to a member for a year or more. However, in order for a spouse to elect this benefit, the member must have accrued at least two years of creditable service.

The Option D beneficiary selection is no longer valid when you retire. You must complete a new beneficiary option at retirement by choosing either option A, B, or C.

## Anti-Spiking Provisions of Chapter 32

Due to Pension Reform legislation, Chapter 176 of the Acts of 2011, two anti-spiking provisions have been added to Chapter 32. Anyone who retires

on or after April 2, 2012 and who has a benefit calculated under Section 5, 6, 10(1) or 12(2)(d) is affected by these provisions.

**The two anti-spiking provisions are summarized as follows:**

1. If in the last 5 years of creditable service your rate of regular compensation increased by more than 100% between two consecutive years, then a violation results. In such a situation the Board must use the average of your last 5 years of compensation in calculating your retirement benefit rather than a 36 month average.
2. In determining the 36 month salary average of regular compensation used to calculate your retirement allowance (or 60 month salary average if you became a member on or after April 2, 2012), if that rate of regular compensation in any year exceeds the average of the regular compensation of the two previous years by more than 10%, then retirement boards are not permitted to use any regular compensation in excess of 10% of the average of your two previous years.

If a member is found to have violated these provisions, a retirement board is required to return any retirement payroll deductions related to the excess compensation.

If your salary increase was attributable to one of the following statutorily specified exceptions, then a retirement board may utilize the higher rate of compensation in your benefit calculation:

- Increase in the number of hours worked
- Overtime wages (not regular compensation, but included in #2)
- Bona fide change in position
- Modification in salary attributable to a collective bargaining agreement

### **Submitting A Superannuation Application**

If you are actively employed or on a leave of absence you may file your application to retire within 120 days before the date you plan to retire. You may also file your application within sixty (60) days of your separation to use your separation date as a retirement date. If we receive your application more than 60 days after your last day on the payroll, your effective retirement date will be 15 days from the date we receive your application.

Your application can be changed or withdrawn up until 5:00 pm on the day of retirement (if the retirement date is on the weekend, any changes or requests to withdraw must be submitted by 5:00 pm on the Friday before). Please note: You cannot retire while on a suspension. Your retirement date will be the day your suspension ends. For more information on filing for retirement please check [mass.gov/retirement](https://mass.gov/retirement) or contact the Board directly.

### **Direct Deposit**

Retirement benefits are issued monthly and on the last business day of each month. Direct deposit is mandatory for all retirees. To avoid delay in the processing of your retirement application, you must include the direct deposit form and a voided check (if your direct deposit will be to a checking account) when you file your application to retire.

With Retiree PayInfo, you are able to view up to 18 months or your retirement benefit statements online at [mass.gov/payinfo](https://mass.gov/payinfo).

### **Domestic Relations Orders**

As pension benefits are considered a marital asset they frequently become subject to division, most often in the cases of divorce, through a Domestic Relations Order (“DRO”). If a DRO is considered that would divide your benefits available through the State Employees’ Retirement System, we request you forward it to the Board for review prior to submission to a court. After the Board finds a DRO acceptable and a court approves it, we request a final copy be submitted to the Board to be made part of your retirement file.



## Taxes

The superannuation retirement allowance that you receive from the MSERS is not subject to Massachusetts state income taxes. However, the allowance is subject to federal taxes. We recommend you consult with an appropriate tax authority for guidance.

When you retire, you will be required to complete a W-4P Form to begin a monthly federal tax withholding. Your tax liability will be determined by using the Internal Revenue Guidelines. You may contact the Board at any time to change your tax withholding status.

There are 15 other states where Massachusetts has reciprocal agreements with or there are no state taxes. MSERS benefit recipients would not have to pay state taxes on their retirement benefits if you live in the following states:

Alabama	Alaska	Florida	Hawaii
Illinois	Michigan	Mississippi	Nevada
New Hampshire	Pennsylvania	South Dakota	Tennessee
Texas	Washington	Wyoming	

Since January 12, 1988, all contributions to the retirement system have been made on a pre-tax basis. Consequently, only contributions made prior to January 12, 1988 will be tax-free. Pre-tax contributions and all of the interest which your account has earned will be taxable.

The balance in your annuity savings account (the total of your contributions and interest), may be treated differently, according to the nontaxable and taxable portions.

**Nontaxable portion:** The nontaxable portion of your balance is equal to your contributions, if any, made prior to January 12, 1988, plus any payments you made to purchase previous creditable service. This is also known as your

## Important Details

“after-tax” portion because these contributions were deducted from your paycheck after taxes had already been taken out of the entire amount of your paycheck. Because you have already paid taxes on this portion (as well as any payments you made to purchase creditable service), you will not have to pay taxes on this amount again.

**Taxable portion:** The taxable portion of your balance is equal to your contributions made on or after January 12, 1988, plus any interest you receive on your account.

After January 12, 1988 all contributions were deducted from your paycheck before taxes were taken out. Since you have not yet paid taxes on this portion, it is taxable when you receive it in the form of a lump-sum payment or, if you rollover this portion to an IRA or another qualified employer retirement plan, when you eventually receive these funds.

Each year you receive a benefit from the Board we will send you a 1099-R form containing the following information:

- Gross Amount Received
- Taxable Amount
- Federal Tax Withheld (if any)
- Health Insurance Deduction

### **Section 10-Termination Allowance**

If you entered state service prior to April 2, 2012 and your position is either eliminated, abolished or if you are laid off or terminated you may qualify for a termination allowance provided you have at least 20 years of creditable service and meet other requirements. Please contact the State Retirement Board for more information and for other requirements which may need to be met.

## Social Security

Anyone retiring from state service and receiving a governmental pension, who also is eligible for Social Security benefits, may have his Social Security benefits offset in a variety of circumstances. Social Security may contact the Board and request the date the individual was first eligible to retire. A person eligible to retire prior to January 1, 1986, will not have their Social Security benefit reduced. Retirees attempting to collect Social Security on a spouse's earnings can do so if they were eligible to retire prior to December 1, 1982.

In addition, there are other factors involved regarding your Social Security benefit when you receive a state pension. Benefits vary according to these factors. It is recommended that you contact your local Social Security office or visit their website, [ssa.gov/gpo-wep](https://ssa.gov/gpo-wep), for detailed information on the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset.

## Health Insurance

Retirees are eligible upon retirement to retain their health insurance coverage per calendar year at a group rate. For more information, please contact the Group Insurance Commission at 617-727-2310 Option 2.

## Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA)

You will be eligible for a COLA beginning on July 1st of the second fiscal year following the year in which your retirement benefit first took effect, and each year thereafter, if a COLA is approved annually by the Legislature. Currently state law limits a COLA to an increase of up to 3% of the first \$13,000 of your annual benefit paid in monthly installments. This equates to a maximum increase of \$390/year or \$32.50/month.

## Biennial Benefit Verification

As mandated, at least every two years all benefit recipients must demonstrate that they remain eligible to continue receiving benefits. The State Retirement Board conducts a benefit verification process. Benefit Verification forms are mailed to our benefit recipients and retirees. These forms must be returned to the Board signed and notarized by the date indicated to avoid any interruption or cancellation of benefits.

## Limitations on Post-Retirement Employment in a Governmental Job

There are limitations that apply to retirees who work in positions in state or local public sector positions in Massachusetts. Employees classified as “consultants” or “independent contractors” are also subject to these limitations if they are receiving pension benefits & working in a governmental position. Limitations include:

- Employment may not exceed 1,200 hours per calendar year; and/or
- Total earnings per calendar year cannot exceed the difference between the retirement allowance and the current salary of the position from which you retired. As a retiree, you must cease employment whenever either one of the above two conditions are met. If you wish to continue working, then you must waive your retirement allowance. (See M.G.L. c.32, §91)
- After you have been retired one full calendar year, you may earn an additional \$15,000 per year beyond the limitations listed above; however you are still limited to the maximum 1,200 hours per year.

Retirees being employed by a public entity should consult with their employer to ensure that both parties are aware of any applicable earnings limits.

## **Reinstatement to Service**

In certain circumstances individuals retired under superannuation may be reinstated to active service per M.G.L. c.32, §105. Members must fulfill certain conditions including the repayment of retirement benefits received and must work for five years after reinstatement. For additional information, please contact the Board.

## **Forfeiture of Benefits**

There may be instances where you may be required to forfeit some or all of your retirement allowance and/or accumulated deductions. For example, forfeiture may occur if it is found that you have misappropriated governmental funds or property, if you have violated certain provisions of the Massachusetts conflict of interest law (Chapter 268A), or if you have violated laws applicable to your office or position.

## **Change of Address**

After you retire, please be sure to notify the Board in writing regarding any change of address. Active members must notify their Human Resources department of any changes of address.

## Frequently Asked Questions

# Frequently Asked Questions

- ? Can I borrow money from my retirement account while I'm active employed now and pay it back later?

No, state law does not allow you to withdraw or borrow from your annuity savings account under any circumstance, including mortgage down payment or college education.

- ? Each time I receive my paycheck, I notice it shows a deduction for retirement. What happens to these deductions?

Active state employees contribute a percentage of their gross salary toward retirement (the percentage depends on their date of entry into service). The Board establishes and maintains a retirement account which represents both:

- contributions deducted from your paycheck by your payroll, and
- regular interest earned on your prior year's ending balance. The interest rate is set by PERAC, in consultation with the Division of Banks.

- ? Why do I pay a higher percentage toward my retirement than some other employees?

Contribution to the state retirement system is determined by your most recent entry into the system (see contribution rate). Members who re-enter the system with funds on deposit or who transfer from another contributory retirement system maintain their former contribution level.

## ? Who invests my money?

Your contributions are pooled with those of other active members and are invested in the Pension Reserves Investment Trust (PRIT). PRIT is a pooled investment fund that invests the pension reserve assets of the State Employees' Retirement System and State Teachers' Retirement Systems.

The nine-member Pension Reserves Investment Management (PRIM) Board, chaired by the State Treasurer manages the PRIT Fund.

## ? When can I file for retirement?

No sooner than 120 days before you plan to retire. If you file more than sixty days after your last day on the payroll, your benefits will not be retroactive to your retirement date. The Board strongly recommends that you plan your retirement and that you file at least 30 days in advance of leaving your job. Certain retirement options will not be available to you once you stop working. You should therefore obtain counseling from the Board before you stop working.

## ? Where do I get a retirement application?

Most State Retirement Board forms can be found on our website, [mass.gov/retirement](https://mass.gov/retirement), and at our Boston and Springfield offices.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## ? What does “vested” mean?

Being vested means you are eligible to receive a retirement allowance. You are vested in the State system if you have at least ten years of full-time service. To be eligible to retire, you need to meet one of the following conditions:

- 20 years of full-time creditable service at any age, or
- attain the age of 55 with ten years of creditable service if you entered service prior to April 2, 2012, or
- attain the age of 60 with ten years of creditable service if you entered service on or after April 2, 2012.

## ? What if I leave state service after I am vested but before I am old enough to retire?

If you leave state service after you are vested, you may leave your retirement contributions in the system and receive a state pension once you reach the age requirement.

## ? What if I disagree with a Board decision or action? Can I appeal?

You have the right to file an appeal **within 15 days** of a Board decision by contacting the Division of Administrative Law Appeals (DALA), 14 Summer Street, 4th Floor, Malden MA, 02148, telephone: (781) 397-4700, fax: (781) 397-4720.



**Notes**

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## Glossary of Terms

**Annuity** – The contributions that are deducted during the course of your creditable service are deposited for you in an annuity savings fund by the State Retirement Board. The interest that accrues on the contributions is credited to your individual account. The part of our retirement allowance that is based on the total amount in your annuity saving account on the date of your retirement is the annuity.

**Annuity Savings Account** – The State Retirement Board establishes an annuity savings account for each member of the system. Your account consists of two parts – your contributions and interest. Your contributions are deducted from your paycheck. The interest is earned on the prior year's ending balance.

The interest rate is determined by PERAC.

**Buyback / Service Purchase** – When you re-establish creditable service for certain refunded service or establish creditable service for other eligible employment by paying into the annuity savings fund. The amount is determined by the type of service you are buying back and when you enter into a buyback agreement.

**Creditable Service** – You earn creditable service while you are working for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and contributing a percentage of your salary to the retirement system.

**Member-in-Service** – Anyone who is regularly employed by the Commonwealth or other eligible public agencies and is making contributions to the system. You are a member-in-service until you separate from the Commonwealth by reason of retirement, failure of re-election or reappointment, resignation or removal or discharge from your position or office that you hold.

**Pension** – A pension is the difference between the retirement allowance specified by law and the amount provided by employee contributions and retirement systems investment earnings.

**PERAC** – The Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission regulates Massachusetts public employee retirement systems and provides final approval of certain retirement benefits, including disability retirements.

**PRIM** – The Pension Reserves Investment Management Board serves as a complete information resource for the Massachusetts Pension Reserves Investment Trust (PRIT).

**Refund / Withdrawal of Accumulated Deductions** – If you leave state service you may request to withdraw the contributions you have made into your annuity savings account. Once you take a refund, you are no longer a member of the system. You may request a direct refund or a rollover of your funds to an eligible retirement account.

**Retirement Allowance** – A retirement allowance is the lifetime benefit that you receive, the amount depending upon the Option you choose, that is paid by the state. Your retirement allowance is made up of two parts: an annuity and a pension.

**Superannuation** – This term is used for a regular retirement allowance. You will be eligible to receive a regular retirement allowance once you have earned 20 years of creditable service (at any age),\* or once you reach retirement age and have at least 10 years of creditable service. Chapter 32 of the Massachusetts General Laws regulates your retirement allowance and allows you to choose one of three benefit options. These options differ with regard to the amount paid and whether any benefits will be paid to someone else after your death.

\*Only for eligible members who entered into service before 4/2/2012.

### **Massachusetts State Retirement Board (MSRB)**

One Winter Street, 8th Floor

Boston, MA 02108

Telephone: (617) 367-7770


436 Dwight Street, Room 109A

Springfield, MA 01103

Telephone: (413) 730-6135

Toll Free: (800) 392-6014 (In Massachusetts Only)

 [mass.gov/retirement](http://mass.gov/retirement)

 [facebook.com/mass.state.retirement](https://facebook.com/mass.state.retirement)

 [@MassStateRet](https://twitter.com/MassStateRet)

### **Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement System (MTRS)**

500 Rutherford Avenue, Suite 210

Charlestown, MA 02129

Telephone: (617) 679-MTRS (6877)

One Monarch Place, Suite 510

Springfield, MA 01144

Telephone: (413) 784-1711

 [mass.gov/mtrs](http://mass.gov/mtrs)

### **Executive Office of Elder Affairs**

One Ashburton Place, 5th Floor

Boston, MA 02108

Telephone: (617) 727-7750

Toll-free: (800) AGE-INFO (243-4636) (MA only), or

TDD/TTY (800) 872-0166

Elder Abuse Hotline: (800) 922-2275 (V/TDD)

 [mass.gov/elders](http://mass.gov/elders)

 [massoptions.org](http://massoptions.org)

## **Group Insurance Commission**

John W. McCormack Building  
One Ashburton Place, Suite 1619  
Boston, MA 02108


Telephone: (617) 727-2310

 [mass.gov/gic](https://mass.gov/gic)

 [mass.gov/forms/contact-the-gic](https://mass.gov/forms/contact-the-gic)


## **Internal Revenue Service Tax Payer Assistance**

Telephone: (800) 829-1040

 [irs.gov](https://irs.gov)

## **Massachusetts Deferred Compensation SMART Plan**

Customer Service Center Telephone: (877) 457-1900

 [mass-smart.com](https://mass-smart.com)

## **Massachusetts Pension Reserves Investment Management Board (PRIM)**

84 State Street, Suite 250

Boston, MA 02109

Telephone: (617) 946-8401

 [mapension.com](https://mapension.com)

## **Massachusetts Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission (PERAC)**

5 Middlesex Avenue, Suite 304

Somerville, MA 02145

Telephone: (617) 666-4446

 [mass.gov/perac](https://mass.gov/perac)

## **Social Security Administration**

Telephone: (800) 772-1213

 [ssa.gov /gpo-wep](https://ssa.gov/gpo-wep)

**Benefit Guide for the  
Massachusetts State Employees' Retirement System  
05/2022**