

COVID-19: PERS remains committed to our members



KEVIN OLINECK
PERS Director

PERS members and staff have weathered many challenges these past few months, in the wake of COVID-19. While we have not yet put the pandemic behind us entirely, as PERS director, I wanted to take a moment to express the agency’s appreciation for you, our members, during these unprecedented times.

First, and most importantly, the focus of our service to you remains the same: making sure you continue to receive the income you rely on from PERS.

In March, based on guidance from the Oregon Health Authority and Governor Kate Brown, we closed our offices to visitors and enacted our agency’s Pandemic Plan. The majority of PERS staff are now working remotely, but we have continued to keep operations running so that we may continue to “pay the right person, the right benefit, at the right time.”

We do thank you for your patience, understanding, and flexibility with the temporary changes we have made to our operations in order to keep you and our staff safe. We continue to be fully available to serve you by phone, written correspondence, and email.

Lastly, thank you to everyone who took our 2020 member satisfaction survey (*see related story on this page*). Your feedback is important and helps us to understand your needs and how we might serve you better, now and in the years to come.

While these may be stressful and uncertain times due to COVID-19, you can still rely upon PERS and our commitment to you – our members.

COVID-19 updates

Keep up to date about PERS’ operations and any changes via [our website](#) and [GovDelivery email or texts](#).

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Member survey results are in

More than 7,000 members responded to our 2020 member satisfaction survey, the highest total responses we have received in recent years. Of the 7,000 responses we received, more than 4,000 were from you, our retired members.

Thank you for your feedback. It will help us to improve our services and how we assist you.

Here are a few interesting highlights:

- More than **93% of retirees agreed** with the statement “I feel confident my retirement is secure with PERS.”
- More than **94% of retirees agreed** with the statement “PERS sends communications that are relevant to my needs.”
- More than **94% of retirees rated PERS’ overall quality of service** as excellent or good.

Full analysis will be presented to the PERS Board in October and sent out via GovDelivery.

If you missed this year’s survey, don’t worry. You can give us your feedback at any time by writing to [PERS](#) or while speaking with PERS Member Services.

Your cost-of-living adjustment has arrived

Your [cost-of-living adjustment \(COLA\) for 2020](#) is now in effect, starting with your August 1 pension benefit payment.

These annual adjustments are based on a regional Consumer Price Index (CPI) set by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics for the prior year. Adjustments are limited to a maximum of 2% each year. PERS uses the West Region CPI, which was 2.69% for 2019.

If you retired **before** October 1, 2013, you will receive the maximum 2% COLA for 2020.

If you earned service credit **before and after** October 1, 2013, your COLA will be calculated like this:

- 2% on service credit earned up to October 1, 2013, **plus**
- 1.25% on service credit earned after that date. Also, if your annual benefit is more than \$60,000, the portion above \$60,000 receives a 0.15% COLA for service credit earned after October 1, 2013.

In addition, if you are an OPSRP member (hired after August 28, 2003) and your effective retirement date was on or after August 1, 2019, your COLA will be prorated based on the number of months for which you received a benefit before July 1, 2020.

Reminder: Make sure you understand the Work After Retirement rules

If you return to work with a PERS-participating employer, Senate Bill (SB) 1049 simplified some of the rules for working after you retire.

In general, to be eligible to work unlimited hours while continuing to receive your pension benefit and without accruing any new benefits, you must have retired at or after normal retirement age (*see table*) or with 30 years of service (25 years for most police and fire members).

Your employer may have other limitations on your work hours. Please consult with your employer’s HR office about any policies related to working after retirement. PERS is not involved in employment decisions between employers and retirees. Visit the [PERS website](#) for more information.

Special situations

- If you retired **before** PERS’ normal

retirement age, you must not have worked for any PERS-participating employer for **at least six full months** after your retirement date to be eligible for **unlimited** retiree hours. Otherwise, the existing rules and exceptions, including the Tier One/Tier Two and OPSRP limits of working less than **1,040** and **600** hours in a calendar year, respectively, apply.

- If you are receiving Social Security benefits and have not reached “full retirement age” (FRA) under Social Security, the Social Security Administration and PERS have additional limitations on your employment. If you have not reached FRA, you may need to limit your hours to stay within the income allowed under the annual Social Security income limits. Full information is on the [Social Security](#) website.

Normal Retirement Age

Classification	Tier One	Tier Two	OPSRP
General Service	58	60	65
Police and Fire	55	55	60

Tier One ‘tax remedy’ letters coming in fall

This information is only relevant to Tier One members hired before July 14, 1995, who are Oregon residents for the purpose of paying Oregon income taxes.

Tier One members who are Oregon residents and eligible to receive “[tax remedy](#)” relief will see letters arriving this fall, if you need to take any action. If you do not need to take any action, you will not receive a letter.

Oregon law requires that eligible Tier One members receive annual increases in their benefit payments to offset the state income taxes withheld from PERS benefits. Tax remedy relief is **not** available to Tier Two or Oregon Public Service Retirement Plan (OPSRP) retirees.

To be eligible, you must be a Tier One member and meet **all** of the following criteria:

- Oregon resident for the purpose of paying Oregon income taxes
- Were hired before July 14, 1995
- Have service time before October 1, 1991, **or** at least 10 years of creditable service

PERS will mail notices to affected Tier One members to let them know if they are either eligible for a tax remedy increase or will lose their remedy unless they verify Oregon residency.

If you are an eligible Tier One member, you may receive a letter if you changed your residency status from the previous tax year or filed your 2019 state income taxes late with the Oregon Department of Revenue.

Each fall, PERS works with Revenue to determine residency, based on income tax

returns for the previous year. **PERS will contact members who need to re-certify their residency in the fall.**

What you can do now

As a Tier One member, you can check and [update your residency status](#) by logging into your [Online Member Services](#) (OMS) account and using the “View/Update Residency” function. Consider doing so **now** to make sure your information is correct.

If you prefer to update by mail or fax, you can submit a [PERS Residency Status Certification](#) form any time before **December 15, 2020**, to ensure your tax remedy status is correct for the upcoming year. You separately can mail or fax a new [W-4P](#) form if you want to change your tax withholdings.

We recommend that you always keep your address up to date either through OMS or by mailing/faxing an [Information Change Request](#) form whenever you move. Note that updating your address **does not** change your residency status for tax remedy purposes nor your tax withholdings.

For more information about tax remedy and other topics, see the retired member section of the [PERS website](#).

If tax remedy could be applicable to you, consider signing up for [tax remedy notifications in GovDelivery](#), PERS’ email communication tool. We will send a notice this fall to everyone who has signed up after tax remedy letters are mailed. Note that GovDelivery is a mass communication tool and receipt of an email does not necessarily mean you are affected or will receive a tax remedy letter.

When will I receive my PERS benefits this year?

2020 pay date	Checks mailed from Salem	Direct deposit date
September 1	August 31 (Monday)	September 1 (Tuesday)
October 1	September 30 (Wednesday)	October 1 (Thursday)
November 1	October 29 (Thursday)	October 30 (Friday)
December 1	November 30 (Monday)	December 1 (Tuesday)

Contact us

Address correspondence to:

PERS
PO Box 23700
Tigard, OR 97281-3700

PERS headquarters is located at:

11410 SW 68th Parkway
Tigard, Oregon, 97223

Phone: 888-320-7377.
 Hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
 Monday through Friday,
 except holidays.

TTY: 503-603-7766

**Website and Online
 Member Services:**
<https://oregon.gov/PERS>

Email: PERS.Member.Services@state.or.us

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Perspectives is published by the Oregon Public Employees Retirement System for the benefit of members and employers.

Moving? Life changes?

Don't be a stranger! Keep your information with PERS up to date, and be sure to mail or fax (503-598-0561) your [forms](#) to us in a timely manner. You can find the forms you need online by clicking [Most Requested Forms](#) at the top of PERS' homepage. Look for the "Retired Members" section on the forms webpage.

MAIL INFORMATION TO:

PERS, PO Box 23700
 Tigard, OR 97281-3700

ADDRESS CHANGES: PERS Member Services cannot update addresses over the phone or via email for security reasons. You can update information in the [Online Member Services](#) portal or send in an [Information Change Request](#) form.

DIRECT DEPOSIT: [Direct deposit](#) forms received by the 15th of any month will typically be processed and effective for the following month's benefit payment.

TAX WITHHOLDING: Updating your address or providing residency status certification **does not** automatically change your withholdings. You must

submit a new [W-4P form](#). You may have withholdings on both your PERS pension and IAP payments. Submit W-4Ps by the beginning of the third week of any month.

ACCOUNT ACCESS: The [Authorization to Release Account Information](#) form allows you to authorize a third party to obtain information regarding your PERS account or benefits. The [Special Power of Attorney](#) form gives the person(s) you designate the power to make decisions for PERS-related matters on your behalf.

DIVORCE: [Contact](#) Member Services about [divorce](#) and PERS benefits.

DEATH NOTICES: After a PERS member dies, a representative should contact Member Services as soon as possible. Failure to [report a death](#) in a timely manner may result in having to pay back retirement payments. PERS will require the date of death, city and state where the death occurred, a photocopy of the death certificate, and a spouse's or personal representative's contact information.

Keep updated with the latest PERS info

[Sign up for GovDelivery email or text updates.](#)

You can get alerts on topics that include:

- Member news and *Perspectives*
- Tax remedy notifications
- Variable account information
- Senate Bill 1049
- PERS Health Insurance Program
- PERS Board meetings
- PERS administrative rulemaking