



## **Teacher's Retirement System of Georgia (TRS)**

### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

#### **What is the benefit calculation for TRS?**

TRS is a defined benefit plan based on 2% X highest consecutive 24 months of pay x years of creditable service.

#### **What percentage of my pay am I contributing to TRS and how much is HCBE contributing?**

TRS employees contribute 6% of their gross earnings monthly to TRS. HCBE contributes 13.15%.

#### **How do I purchase years of service for the years I taught in another state?**

Contact TRS at 1-800-352-0650 to request a cost estimate for purchasing out-of-state teaching credit.

#### **What is the cost-of-living allowance (COLA) for TRS retirees?**

COLA adjustments for retirees, and eligible beneficiaries of deceased retirees, are based on increases/decreases in the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Currently the adjustment is 1 ½ % each January and July of each year.

#### **What happens if I retire with 25 years of service and before I'm 60 years old?**

An early retirement penalty will apply to your retirement benefit. The reduction is the lesser of one-twelfth of 7% for each month you are below age 60, or 7% for each year or fraction of a year you have less than 30 years of service.

#### **How do I apply for retirement?**

Apply for retirement online at [www.trsga.com](http://www.trsga.com). Log into your active member account and select "apply for retirement." You may schedule a pre-retirement meeting with the Employee Benefits Office to discuss your benefit estimate and review the retirement application process.

#### **Can I withdraw my TRS contributions while I'm still working?**

You cannot make withdrawals or borrow funds from your TRS retirement account while you are actively employed in a TRS covered position. If you discontinue working in a TRS position, then you may refund your contributions or roll them into another qualified plan.

#### **How do I buy back years of service if I previously worked in TRS position, but refunded my contributions?**

Contact TRS at 1-800-352-0650 to receive an estimate for purchasing service credit previously earned and refunded.

#### **Will my beneficiaries receive benefits from my retirement?**

TRS offers two plans of retirement: Plan A (Max Plan) and Plan B. Plan A provides you with the maximum monthly benefit payable to you. Plan B offers benefits to your beneficiary(ies) at your death.

**What is the maximum years of service credit I can earn?**

You may earn up to a maximum of 40 years of service credit.

**How would my retirement be affected if I took a few years off from teaching?**

If you take a few years off and then later return to a TRS covered position, you will begin earning additional service credit once you return to work (provided you did not refund your service credit.) Note, your retirement benefit is based on your highest consecutive 24 months of pay multiplied by 2%. Each additional year of service credit adds to your retirement benefit.

**What happens to my contributions if I move out of state?**

If you have at least 10 years of creditable service, then you are vested in TRS. You will be eligible to receive a retirement benefit from TRS the first of the month following your 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. If you're not vested in TRS, then you may leave your contributions with TRS as you will continue earning interest for 4 years. You may also request a lump sum distribution or roll your funds to a qualified retirement plan.

**How much service credit do I earn for each month worked?**

You earn .111 years of service credit for each month you work at least half the days of the month or are on paid leave during the month. A retirement contribution must be made to earn an additional month of service credit.

**Can I contribute more than 6% each month?**

You may only contribute the required 6% monthly contribution to TRS. If you would like to contribute more towards your retirement, then you may want to establish a Supplemental Retirement Account through VALIC. Contact our VALIC Advisor, John Lamberth, to set up a supplemental retirement account at 478-319-4832.

**Can I use my sick leave towards retirement?**

You must have at least 60 days of accumulated unused sick leave in order to establish service credit for unused sick leave. You will establish service credit at the time of retirement.

**How do I get sick leave certified from the other Georgia systems I worked with prior to coming to Houston County?**

Download the sick leave certification form on the TRS website at [www.trsga.com](http://www.trsga.com). Complete the top portion of the form and submit to each of your previous TRS employers. They will certify your leave and submit your final sick leave balance to TRS. At retirement, TRS will add your unused sick leave days from each system to determine the amount of sick leave credit you will receive.

**What happens to my state health insurance when I retire?**

As long as you have health insurance during the open enrollment prior to your retirement, then you will be able to continue your health insurance coverage indefinitely in retirement. You will pay the same rate as active employees for your health benefits. Your health insurance premium will be deducted from your TRS benefit once you retire.

**What happens to my life insurance when I retire?**

The life insurance provided by HCBE and any supplemental life coverage you have at the time of retirement will be terminated when you retire. HCBE offers retiree life insurance in the amounts of \$10,000, \$25,000, and 1x your salary up to \$50,000. You may elect retiree life insurance when you process your retirement with the Employee Benefits Office. Premiums are paid annually to the Board of Education.

**What happens to my dental insurance when I retire?**

You may keep dental benefits in retirement if you have dental benefits during the open enrollment prior to your retirement. Your premium is an additional \$10 monthly from your active employee premium. You will be billed directly for dental benefits after you retire.