If you are an STRS Ohio Combined Plan participant who is approaching retirement, there is some important information STRS Ohio would like you to be aware of regarding your retirement benefits.
Before you retire, you will want to know details pertaining to: health care coverage, applying for service retirement, your retirement benefit payment, stipulations on employment after retirement and the purchasable death benefit. This presentation will tell you what you need to know about these topics in hopes of better preparing you for a smooth transition into retirement.
Let’s start by addressing health care coverage. You must have 15 or more years of qualifying service credit for access to medical, dental and vision coverage in retirement through the STRS Ohio Health Care Program. Members who retire Aug. 1, 2023, or later, will need 20 or more years of qualifying service.

All of the health care plans STRS Ohio offers include hospital, medical and prescription drug coverage. Coverage is also available to your eligible dependents, beneficiaries and survivors. Enrollment in a health care plan is not required to enroll in the dental or vision plans. Health care coverage is not guaranteed and is subject to change.
If you will be working in public or private employment after retirement, be aware of the potential impact on your health care coverage.

Employed enrollees are eligible for only secondary health care coverage through STRS Ohio if they: (1) are eligible for medical and prescription drug coverage through their employer, or (2) hold a position for which similarly situated employees are eligible for medical and prescription drug coverage at the same cost as full-time employees.

The rule applies to all employed enrollees who are not eligible for Medicare, regardless of hire date or type of employment.
STRS Ohio requires non-Medicare enrollees to verify their employment status and access to employer health care coverage. If you are employed and not eligible for Medicare, it is your responsibility to provide verification through your Online Personal Account. You may also submit a Verification of Employment and Employer Health Care Access form, which can be found in the Health Care section of the website.
Health care premiums are based on your health care plan, years of service credit and Medicare status. STRS Ohio subsidizes health care premiums for eligible service retirement and disability benefit recipients. Dependent coverage is not subsidized.

Separate premiums apply to the dental and vision plans. You will pay the full premium amount for yourself and other individuals you enroll in these plans. Premiums for medical, dental and vision coverage will be deducted from your monthly benefit payment.
You may enroll in medical, dental or vision coverage when monthly benefits begin by completing a Service Retirement Application.

If you do not enroll when monthly benefits begin, you may request enrollment upon loss of other coverage, enrollment in Medicare or during open enrollment.
If you’re enrolling in health care at retirement, the effective date of coverage is the latest of: your retirement date, the first of the month after STRS Ohio receives your application or the first of the month following the termination of employer coverage. Some members delay the effective date of STRS Ohio health care coverage if their employer coverage is not ending effective with their retirement.
Your STRS Ohio coverage is coordinated with Medicare. Medicare is a federal health insurance program for people age 65 and older, some people with disabilities under age 65, and people with end-stage renal disease or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, commonly referred to as ALS.

All U.S. citizens are eligible for Medicare Part B when turning age 65, even if they are not eligible for Social Security retirement benefits.
You must enroll in Medicare Part A (hospital insurance) if it is available at no cost from Medicare. Individuals eligible for Social Security through their own account or their spouse’s account receive Part A free.

STRS Ohio also requires you to sign up for Medicare Part B (medical insurance) and pay a monthly premium to Medicare.
If you enroll in an STRS Ohio medical plan, you do not need to enroll in Medicare Parts C and D.

Part C — Medicare Advantage plans — are approved by Medicare and administered by private companies. Enrollment in Parts A & B or Part B-only qualifies you for coverage under STRS Ohio’s Medicare Advantage plans.

Part D is prescription drug insurance. All of the medical plans STRS Ohio offers for Medicare enrollees include this coverage. If you enroll in an STRS Ohio plan, do not enroll in any other Part D plan. Enrollment in any other Part D plan will cancel your STRS Ohio plan enrollment.
Your Medicare enrollment impacts the plans you are eligible to enroll in. You will not be eligible for an STRS Ohio medical plan if you decline Medicare coverage.

STRS Ohio will send you Medicare enrollment information three months before your 65th birthday. STRS Ohio offers both a Medicare meeting and webinar with details about enrollment. To find out more or to register, visit our website.
Although access to health care is not guaranteed under Ohio law, STRS Ohio understands that quality health care in retirement is important to you. Each year, the State Teachers Retirement Board considers premium and program changes to help stretch members’ health care dollars, as well as improve the solvency of the Health Care Fund that supports the program.
Health Care Program information and premiums can be obtained on the STRS Ohio website, during your appointment with a benefits counselor or by calling STRS Ohio.

You can use your Online Personal Account on the website to review health care plan options and costs based on your retirement date, years of service and enrolling eligible dependents. You can also submit proof of Medicare enrollment through your online account.
We recommend that you file your *Service Retirement Application* at least three months, but no earlier than 12 months, before your retirement date.

You can obtain a *Service Retirement Application* from the STRS Ohio website or by calling STRS Ohio.
To receive a benefit payment on your retirement date, your application needs to be received by STRS Ohio at least 30 days before your retirement date.

If your benefit amount is not calculated by your retirement date, a partial payment may be issued. Most members receive three or more partial payments. Once your benefit is finalized, the difference between the amount paid to you as partial payments and your full regular benefit payment will be paid to you as a catch-up payment.
All payments to benefit recipients are made by direct deposit on the first banking day of the month.

Your monthly check memos will be available in your Online Personal Account. You will be mailed a paper check memo for your first regular benefit payment, every January and any other time there is a change in your monthly benefit amount.
STRS Ohio is required to withhold federal income tax from taxable monthly benefits. Filing an exemption form will exclude you from tax withholding, but does not remove tax obligations. If federal taxes are not withheld, you must file quarterly estimates.

Upon request, STRS Ohio withhold Ohio income tax for Ohio residents. Benefits are subject to Ohio income tax and potentially local school district income tax, but not local or municipal taxes.

The laws in the state where you reside govern your state tax liability. STRS Ohio cannot withhold tax for states other than Ohio.

Every January, STRS Ohio will provide a 1099-R form for monthly benefits showing your gross benefits and the taxable amount.
Employment in a public position in Ohio after retirement is restricted during the first two months following retirement. A Combined Plan participant is considered retired upon receiving a monthly benefit from either the defined benefit or defined contribution portion of the account.

You cannot work during the first two months of retirement in a position covered by any of the Ohio public retirement systems.

Violation of reemployment provisions will result in forfeiture of retirement benefits for the months worked.
An STRS Ohio death benefit may help defray expenses incurred when an STRS Ohio service retirement benefit recipient dies.

You may purchase a death benefit of either $1,000 or $2,000 when applying for retirement benefits. If you are under age 65 when you retire, you may purchase or increase your death benefit three months before your 65th birthday. If you are age 65 or older when you retire, this will be your only opportunity to purchase a death benefit.
The death benefit is paid to your beneficiary upon your death. The beneficiary is designated when applying for retirement benefits and may be changed at any time.

If you elect to purchase a death benefit, the premium is deducted from your monthly benefit payment.
In retirement, you can log in to your Online Personal Account on the STRS Ohio website to update contact information, view benefit payment details, change direct deposit information, register for seminars, change beneficiaries and much more.

These benefit recipient account features will be available to you in your online account after your Service Retirement Application is processed.
As you approach retirement, please contact STRS Ohio if you have any questions. We will continue to keep you informed about issues affecting STRS Ohio members via our newsletters, website, eUPDATE email news service and social media channels.
In commemoration of STRS Ohio’s 100th anniversary, we would like to share the stories of our members. Please consider sharing your input. If you are attending a benefits counseling appointment, you can obtain and complete a Share Your Story card at that time. To submit your input online, go to www.strsoh.org/anniversary and click on “Share Your Story.”

The information you provide may be used in STRS Ohio communication materials.

We would appreciate your input!