

# THE Mentor

News from the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System

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MARYLAND  
STATE RETIREMENT  
and PENSION SYSTEM

## Leaving employment?

*Before you withdraw, consider these questions*

**MEMBERS** of the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System who resign from a participating employer sometimes consider cashing out their accumulated member contributions. For persons who intend never to return to an employer who participates in SRPS, a withdrawal may sound attractive. However, because this is an irrevocable decision, there are some questions you should ask yourself first.

### Am I vested?

Being vested means you have worked enough years that you are guaranteed a lifetime retirement

*See withdraw, page 5*

Your notarized form is not valid without a proper “seal”

*See page 2 for notarization tips*



## A estimate of your future pension is just a click away

*The mySRPS secure website will tell you when you can retire and how much \$ you may expect*

**WHEN CAN I RETIRE?** How much money will I receive during retirement? If I am disabled, what will my monthly payments be? And who did I name as my beneficiary when I filled out all those forms my first day on the job?

The 2020 launch of **mySRPS**, the Maryland State Retirement Agency's secure website, put answers to these questions and more at members' fingertips. Yet, there are still some employees, teachers, police and correctional officers who have not accessed this valuable, free resource.

Are you ready to get a peek at your future retirement benefit *instantly*?

Signing up for mySRPS is easy. Visit [sra.maryland.gov](https://sra.maryland.gov) and, in the top right of the webpage, click on **mySRPS Login**. Click **Register** and follow the instructions to receive your registration code and packet by mail.

Once registered, you'll be able to obtain benefits estimates based on different retirement dates, beneficiary choices and salaries. You also can find out the soonest date you can retire and view/update your beneficiary designations.

[sra.maryland.gov](https://sra.maryland.gov)

# To avoid delays, notarize properly

**AN IMPROPER** notarization can stop a form in its tracks. Follow the handy tips on this page to avoid notarization errors and processing delays.

## Make a mistake?

If you or the notarial officer makes an error while completing the notarial certificate, obtain a new form and start again. No crossed out in-

formation, correction fluid (such as WITE-OUT® or Liquid Paper®), correction tape, or other alterations may appear on the notary certificate.

## Snowed in?

If you'd prefer not to visit a notarial officer in person, forms may be notarized remotely by electronic means. Ask your notarial officer if he or she offers this service.

## Stay current

Maryland State Retirement Agency forms are updated regularly to incorporate the latest changes to state law and agency procedures. That's why it's important to always use up-to-date forms. Current forms are available from the Retirement Agency website at [sra.maryland.gov/member-forms](https://sra.maryland.gov/member-forms).

## Elements of a successful notarization

**NOT ALL** Retirement Agency forms require notarization. For forms that do, the notary certificate will appear directly below the member's signature line.

For the security of your account, Retirement Agency employees closely review submitted forms for proper notarization. **Forms with notarization errors are rejected.** The member must then complete and submit a new form, potentially causing a delay in processing. Four of the most common problem areas are described below. When having a form notarized, be sure to pay particular attention to these four elements to help ensure your form will be processed promptly.

**1** Member's Signature Beverly Beaujolais Date Feb. 1, 2024

**2** State of Maryland, County of Carroll (or City of Baltimore)

**3** This form was acknowledged before me on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of February, 2024, By Beverly Beaujolais

**4** Name of individual whose signature is being acknowledged\* Clyde McNab

Signature of Notarial Officer Clyde McNab

Title of office (Notary Public, Clerk of the Court, etc.) notary public My commission expires 12/31/25

Check here if this notarial act involved a remotely located individual and the use of communication technology.

\* IMPORTANT: If the name of the individual whose signature is being notarized is not filled in, this form will be invalid and have no legal effect.

## Notarization checklist

**AFTER YOUR** notarial officer hands you your notarized document, use the following checklist to ensure that the notarization has been performed correctly.

**1** You have signed and dated the form.

**2** The notary seal has been applied to the form and is legible. When submitting a form via email,

take special care that the notary seal can be read by Retirement Agency staff. An embossed seal that does not use ink may not be legible when emailed. If both an embosser and ink seal are offered, you may wish to request the ink seal as it will be easier to copy.

**3** This line contains *your* printed name, not the name of the notar-

ial officer. The name on lines **1** and **3** must be the same: *your* name.

**4** The notarial officer has properly completed and signed the notary certificate. Even if you've submitted the same form in the past, each subsequent form must be notarized.



Learn about Maryland's harbor seals [here](#).

Does my plan provide disability benefits?

To whom should I submit Retirement Agency forms?

If I die before I retire, will my heirs receive any benefits from my pension system?

What is military credit?

# Pension FAQs

**DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS** about your retirement benefits? The Maryland State Retirement Agency is happy to provide the information you need. If your question is not listed below, chances are the answer can be found online at [sra.maryland.gov](http://sra.maryland.gov).

## **Q. Does my pension system provide disability benefits?**

**A.** If you are determined by the Maryland State Retirement Agency to be permanently disabled, you may receive a lifetime monthly benefit. This benefit is not automatic. You must *apply* for disability retirement, submit required paperwork and medical documentation, and sometimes undergo additional medical examinations. Because time limits apply, prompt filing is essential.

If you believe a disability prevents you from performing your job duties, contact the Retirement Agency immediately.

## **Q. How can I protect my pension during a leave of absence?**

**A.** Before beginning an unpaid leave of absence granted by your employer, be sure to first submit a *Qualified Leave of Absence Request OR Notification of Military Service Entry (Form 46)*.

Qualified leave of absence status preserves the rights of your beneficiaries to valuable active em-

ployee death benefits in the event of your demise. It also preserves any right you may have to obtain credit for the leave period.

By law, the Maryland State Retirement Agency recognizes leaves of absence *only* if taken for personal illness, birth or legal adoption, government sponsored and/or subsidized employment, or study.

## **Q. If I die before I retire, will my heirs receive any benefits from my pension system?**

**A.** The Retirement Agency provides a benefit if you die while employed. Depending on your years of membership, or if your death was job related, your designated beneficiaries or certain family members may receive either a one-time payment or a lifetime monthly benefit. Survivor protection remains in effect as long as you are on payroll or a Maryland State Retirement Agency-approved leave of absence.

Tell your designated beneficiary to contact the Retirement Agency upon your death and ask if any benefit is payable.

## **Q. Where can I obtain Retirement Agency forms?**

**A.** For members of the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System, many transactions are performed using paper forms. These forms are regularly updated to reflect the latest pension laws and Retirement Agency policies. Up-to-date forms are available at [sra.maryland.gov/member-forms](http://sra.maryland.gov/member-forms).

## **Q. To whom should I submit Retirement Agency forms?**

**A.** Retirement Agency forms such as *Designation of Beneficiary (Form 4)*, *Statement of Disability (Form 20)* and *Election to Transfer Service (Form 37)* are not effective until they are received in Retirement Agency offices in Baltimore.

A completed form received by your employer, *but not forwarded to the Retirement Agency*, is not valid.

Some Retirement Agency forms also require notarization, as indicated in the form's printed instructions. Forms submitted without

See FAQs, page 5



# New to the System?

Welcome pamphlets provide quick information for new and existing members



**WHETHER YOU'RE A TEACHER**, government employee, correctional officer or police officer, there is a handy brochure describing your survivor, disability and retirement benefits as a member of the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System. Pamphlets are available from your employer's personnel office or online by clicking [here](#).

Want to learn more? Read your benefits [handbook](#).

## Take these three steps to protect your loved ones during your career

**WHILE YOU MAY BE YEARS AWAY** from collecting your well-earned pension, if you die before retirement, the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System provides important protection for your surviving loved ones.

To help your beneficiaries quickly claim these valuable benefits in the unfortunate event of your death, take these three important steps.

**1** **Make sure that you keep your beneficiary information current with the Retirement Agency.**

Your originally designated your beneficiaries when you enrolled in the System. Life events like a marriage, divorce, birth, or death of a loved one can motivate you to change your beneficiary choices. To check who you named as your beneficiary, or to make changes, sign up for **mySRPS**, the Retirement Agency's secure website. You also may perform an update using *Designation of Beneficiary* (Form 4).

Please note that, upon your death during membership, the Retirement Agency will use the last beneficiary designation filed with the Agency on or before your date of death. A *Designation of Beneficiary* form submitted to the Agency after your death, even if it was signed before your death, will not be accepted. Likewise, a form stowed in your work locker or desk, but not submitted to the Retirement Agency, also is not valid.

**2**

**Talk to your loved ones now about survivor benefits from the Retirement Agency.**

Let your family or other loved ones know that they should contact the Maryland State Retirement Agency in the event of your death. Or, if you prefer, make sure to include a copy of your Personal Statement of Benefits with other important paperwork, such as life insurance information and your will, so that they will know to contact the Retirement Agency.

**3**

**Tell your loved ones how to apply for survivor benefits to make filing trouble free.**

The Retirement Agency will work cooperatively with your beneficiaries to pay the benefits due as quickly as possible. To authorize payment, the Agency will ask them to submit the following documents:

- A copy of their Social Security card
- A copy of their valid picture identification card
- A copy of the Marriage Certificate (in some cases)
- A certified, original death certificate

Beneficiaries also must complete and submit several forms, some signed in the presence of a notarial officer.

You can be assured that the Maryland State Retirement Agency will work step-by-step with your beneficiaries to ensure they receive the benefits they are due.

### FAQs, from page 3

proper notarization are not valid and will be returned for completion.

Mail completed forms to the Maryland State Retirement Agency, 120 East Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21202-6700.

#### **Q. Can I apply for retirement credit for my military service?**

**A.** Yes! Members may claim up to a maximum of five years of credit for active military duty preceding enroll-

ment in the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System. An applicant must have accrued at least 10 years of SRPS membership to apply. Retirement credit also is available for members who:

- served or performed active duty training in the U.S. National Guard or Armed Forces Reserves,
- are called to active military duty or active/inactive duty

training during SRPS membership or

- attended a United States Military Academy.

Military service credit is not automatically added to your account. You must apply. All the details are explained in the Retirement Agency's handy pamphlet *Guide to Military Service*.

### Withdraw, from page 1

benefit when you reach the age required by your plan. If you withdraw your contributions, you will forfeit your vested benefit.

#### **Am I eligible for full service, early service or disability retirement?**

If you withdraw, you cannot apply for these valuable, lifetime benefits.

#### **Is it possible I'll return to participating employment?**

The Maryland State Retirement and Pension System provides membership to state, county and municipal employees, teachers, correctional and police officers, and others at worksites across the state. If you take a job at any of these employers, you may be able to continue

earning toward your future pension, but if previously withdrawn, your account would be starting anew.

#### **Applying to withdraw**

To be eligible to request a refund of your member contributions, you must be separated from any and all employment, including temporary, emergency, contractual employment, with an employer that participates in the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System.

To request a refund of your member contributions, download the Agency's *Application for Withdrawal of Accumulated Contributions Package*. If you have been separated from employment for fewer than six months, your former employer must certify your separation date on the

appropriate form within the package. Your signature on the withdrawal form must be notarized. See page 2 for notarization tips.

You may request that your withdrawn funds be paid to you directly, or that all or any portion be paid as a rollover payable to you and another qualified retirement plan (e.g. 401(k), IRA).

The average processing time for a withdrawal is 45 days. Withdrawals are not processed in July.

#### **So, should I withdraw?**

Only you can answer this question. The withdrawal application provides pages of detailed information on the effects of a withdrawal and the application process.

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