

TRS operations continue during coronavirus



The operations of the Teachers' Retirement System continue as they normally would during this time despite the Frankfort office remaining closed to visitors and most staff working remotely. So, yes, Kentucky teachers can retire during the coronavirus outbreak. If you'd always planned to retire in November 2020, you still can.

TRS continues to issue retirees' annuity and medical insurance payments as usual, and staff are available to address any concerns. Practically any business with TRS can be conducted – or any question can be answered – remotely using the guidelines outlined below. These guidelines have new information based on questions being asked, as of Aug. 6, 2020.

Follow TRS's Twitter and Facebook accounts, in addition to the website, for further announcements, including when in-person visits will resume.

Questions and answers about contacting TRS and conducting business during this time

NEW: Can breaks in service be waived for retirees to help with COVID-related staffing issues?

No. These are Federal tax laws and TRS does not have the ability to waive Federal law. TRS retirees must have the required break in service before returning to work with a TRS employer.

NEW: With some government offices reopening, what about TRS's office and what about TRS's seminars?

TRS offices remain closed to visitors at this time for the safety of members and employees and retirees who may be in the age groups at greatest risk of the virus. Similarly, in-person seminars normally conducted throughout the state are being offered as webinars at this time. Information is available on the seminars and webinars page of the TRS website.

How do I ask general questions from home?

Call the Information Center at 800-618-1687 or email info@trs.ky.gov.

How do I meet with a counselor from home?

Remote counseling with a TRS counselor can be arranged by calling the Information Center at 800-618-1687. A counselor can speak with you over the phone, by videoconference or email.

How can I obtain information about my account without coming to Frankfort?

TRS member retirement account information is available 24-7 using Pathway (mss.trs.ky.gov).

Will unemployment insurance impact my TRS benefits, including counting against the daily wage threshold (DWT)?

No. In short, unemployment does not make a person go over the DWT since TRS contributions are not being withheld. The person is not at "work in a full-time or part-time position covered by" TRS, which is a threshold condition for the DWT to apply. They are receiving government assistance due to fact that they are no longer working in such a position. This is what makes unemployment insurance fundamentally different.

Do I need to obtain witness and notary signatures on forms?

Because of the state of emergency regarding the COVID-19 outbreak and social distancing limitations, TRS is suspending normally required witness and notary signatures on almost all forms. For details and a copy of the certification being required instead, see: <https://trs.ky.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Signatures-Notice-and-Certification.pdf>

Can I still retire if my employer is unable to complete its portion of the retirement application?

Yes. Most employers do have staff working, but if they aren't in the office, your retirement will be processed with the information reported by your employer to TRS. If the employer is unable to provide the information by the time needed, your retirement will be processed based on what has been reported. Once TRS receives the employer portion of the application, your benefit will be adjusted based on that information, retroactive to the retirement date.

Have retirement application deadlines changed?

No. Retirement application deadlines (the first of the month preceding the intended retirement) are set by regulation and are unchanged. For example, the application for an Aug. 1 retirement is due July 1, and the application for an Oct. 1 retirement is due Sept. 1. All TRS retirements are effective on the first day of the retirement month.

I am a substitute teacher seeking unemployment insurance. Do I file a claim with TRS?

No. Claims can be filed through: <https://kcc.ky.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

Will my TRS retiree insurance cover coronavirus testing, and will I have to pay the copay for it?

For people covered through TRS retiree health insurance on either the Kentucky Employees' Health Plan (KEHP) or the Medicare Eligible Health Plan (MEHP), all member cost sharing – including copays, coinsurance and deductibles – for approved diagnostic testing for COVID-19 has been waived. For more information, see the TRS website's coronavirus response page (<https://trs.ky.gov/news/coronavirus-response-updates/>).

How to use Pathway

Use your TRS ID and password to log in to Pathway. If you are a first-time user, click "Register" and follow the steps to complete registration. If you have forgotten your password, or your TRS ID, you may call the Information Center number above and staff will be able to assist you.

Will my TRS annuity and medical benefits payments continue?

Yes.

How does this impact TRS investing?

The spread of COVID-19 has impacted global markets over the short term. TRS is a long-term investor, focusing on returns in terms of decades — not days, weeks or months. The TRS investment portfolio is well diversified in order to respond to periods of market volatility like this. Retirement benefits of TRS members continue to be secure.