



Tulare County Employees' Retirement Association

Pension Progress

Phone: (559) 713-2900

www.tcera.org

Keeping Members Informed

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TCERA Member Communications My TCERA, Facebook, Twitter

If you've taken a look at TCERA's website recently (www.tcera.org), you will have noticed some changes. TCERA is offering new ways for you to access information regarding your retirement account. Check out the following new features:

"My TCERA" – My TCERA is a secure web portal for TCERA members that provides real time access to certain retirement account information. The site is available to all active, deferred, and retired members of TCERA. To be granted access to My TCERA you must submit a signed paper enrollment form to our office and have a valid email account. [As an added security measure, the only way to obtain the form is to contact TCERA via phone \(559-713-2900\) or email \(info@tcera.org\), or stop by our office in person.](#)

My TCERA offers great features for both active and retired members:

Active and Deferred Members

- View your demographic and balance information – There is no need to send in written requests or come by the office to find out your current balance or beneficiary information. Your demographic data is available for you any time you log into My TCERA.
- Process your own TCERA retirement benefit estimates using real time data – You can avoid the trouble and wait time of submitting a written request for a benefit estimate. You can process your own benefit estimates using My TCERA. The benefit calculator will use your service and salary information of record to calculate estimates at your convenience. Remember that this will be an estimate only – your actual benefit will be calculated by TCERA staff at the time you retire after your records have been thoroughly reviewed for accuracy.
- Model various retirement scenarios – In order to facilitate your retirement planning, the portal provides a Retirement Modeler that allows you to create different retirement scenarios that include your projected TCERA benefit as well as information you enter regarding other sources of income you may have in retirement. This is a powerful tool and we look forward to showing you how to put it to use in reaching your retirement goals.


Retired Members


- View your demographic and beneficiary information – There is no need to wonder if your beneficiary is correct in our files. Just log in and take a look at your current beneficiary designation. If you need to update your beneficiary, there is a handy link to our forms. Just download, print, and send us your completed form and our staff will update your record.
(Continued on next page)

My TCERA, Facebook, Twitter *(Continued from 1st page)*

- Update your address, payment instructions, and tax withholdings – Avoid the wait time for mail or the extra time for a trip to the Retirement Office to change your pension instructions. You can update this information any time through My TCERA. Please remember, however, that you need to get those changes in by the 15th of the month to ensure they take effect for that month's pension payroll!
- Access your pension acknowledgments and 1099R's – Can't find your mailed copies? You can view and print historical information directly from My TCERA.

Watch for upcoming My TCERA training seminars designed to help you get the most out of the site. Remember, **you must enroll** in order to access My TCERA. We look forward to hearing from you!

Facebook – If you're a fan of Facebook, you're in luck. Our Facebook page will help you stay up to date on what's happening at TCERA. We'll post useful links to important documents like our CAFR (TCERA's Comprehensive Annual Financial Statement), actuarial information, and new TCERA policies. We'll also keep you informed regarding significant Board of Retirement actions. Like our page on Facebook and check out our News Feed today! Just go to our website (www.tcera.org) and click the icon like the one shown here 

Twitter – Twitter followers, don't feel left out. Follow us on Twitter for quick updates and links from TCERA. An easy way to find us is to access our website (www.tcera.org) and click the icon like the one shown here 

TCERA is pleased to provide these additional means of communication with our members. We're excited about these changes and hope that you will find them helpful in planning your retirement and staying up to date with TCERA. Happy Retirement!

Knowing Your Retirement Payment Options

TCERA members are sometimes surprised to learn that there are a number of benefit options for you to choose from when you make the decision to retire. Each of the different payment options will impact the basic retirement allowance that you receive, so you should consider them carefully. Here's a brief review of the retirement benefit options available to you:

Unmodified Option - (It's called the "Unmodified Option" because it is the one originally allowed for under the law that governs the retirement plan.) This option provides the maximum monthly allowance payable to you for your lifetime, and will also pay a 60% continuance to your qualified surviving spouse (or registered domestic partner) following your death. If you have no spouse (or registered domestic partner) eligible for a continuance at your death, your beneficiary will receive a lump sum payment of your accumulated contributions less the sum of the actual monthly retirement allowance payments received by you. Under specific circumstances, you may be able to name a post-retirement spouse (or registered domestic partner) who can then qualify for a pension continuance following your death. (Contact TCERA for the details of how this works.)

Option 1 - This benefit payment modification provides for a slightly reduced monthly retirement allowance, payable throughout your life, with the provision that your accumulated contributions, less the sum of the annuity portion of the payments received by you, will be paid upon your death to your beneficiary. Under this option, the retired member may change his/her designated beneficiary.

Option 2 - This option provides for a reduced monthly retirement allowance to you for your lifetime with 100% of the allowance continued after your death to your qualified beneficiary for their lifetime. If your named beneficiary dies before you, a new beneficiary may NOT be designated and the reduced allowance under this option will be continued only through your life. (Note: that the IRS Code restricts the amount that can be paid to your survivor depending on the age difference between you and your beneficiary.)

Retirement Payment Options *(Continued from 2nd page)*

Option 3 - This option provides for a reduced monthly retirement allowance paid to you for your lifetime with 50% of the allowance continued after your death to your qualified beneficiary for your beneficiary's lifetime. If your named beneficiary dies before you, a new beneficiary may NOT be designated and the reduced allowance under this option will be continued only through your life.

Option 4 - This option allows you to name MULTIPLE beneficiaries who will each receive a lifetime continuance following your death. Electing this option requires that an actuarial study be completed to determine how much of a reduction you must take on your allowance AND that the Retirement Board approves your election of Option 4 in advance of your retirement date. If one or more of the beneficiaries dies before you, a replacement beneficiary may NOT be designated and the reduction you received on your allowance will continue until you pass away.

Please note that the benefit payment option elected by you may also have significant tax implications. You are encouraged to speak with a qualified tax advisor prior to finalizing your decision. In addition, should you have questions regarding the benefit options available to you, please contact the Retirement Office at (559) 713-2900.

Unused Sick Leave Increases Your Retirement Allowance

In 1985 the Tulare County Board of Supervisors approved an ordinance which allows those employees who retire from TCERA to receive service credit for unused sick leave hours. When a TCERA member retires, he/she will have unused sick leave converted to additional years of retirement service credit, thereby increasing the level of pension benefits received from the pension plan. In converting accumulated hours to years or partial years of service, the TCERA staff uses the following methodology that has been approved by the Board of Retirement:

- the number of hours of accumulated sick leave, divided by 8, equals days of additional service;
- the total days divided by 22, equals the months of additional service;
- the total months, divided by 12 equals the additional years of retirement service credit.

In the years subsequent to the original County ordinance, Memorandums of Understanding between the employer and various bargaining units have provided for some modifications. Currently, many employees who retire have the option of converting all of their accumulated sick leave hours to additional retirement service credit **or** receive a portion of their sick leave in cash and have the remainder converted to additional retirement service. As you approach retirement, you should check with your department or bargaining unit to learn of your individual rights for sick leave cash-out/conversion. You should also be aware that sick leave received in cash **as part of your final pay check is NOT** included in the calculation of your final average salary for retirement.

Effective in 2013 the State Legislature enacted the California Public Employees' Pension Reform Act (or PEPRA). The PEPRA provisions **do not** have an impact on the ability of TCERA plan members in Tiers I, II and III to convert unused sick leave at retirement. However, for Tier IV members (typically those employees who became TCERA members on or after January 1, 2013), the ability at retirement to convert unused sick leave hours to pension service credit will be limited to **no more than six months** of additional retirement service.

While the conversion of accumulated sick leave hours can have a very positive impact on your pension allowance received from TCERA, the rules governing the use of sick leave can change. Should you have questions regarding how you might make the best use of your sick leave hours at retirement, feel free to contact TCERA at 713-2900.

**Tulare County Employees'
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Retirement Board Safety Member Election Results

Safety members recently participated in an election to select their representatives to the TCERA Board of Retirement. After all of the votes were tallied, **Sheriff's Captain Mike Watson** was re-elected to represent all Safety TCERA plan members for a term that will begin January 1, 2019 and end as of December 31, 2021. In addition, **Fire Battalion Chief, David Vasquez** was chosen to serve as the Alternate Safety Member to the Board of Retirement.

We congratulate all of the individuals who participated in the TCERA Board elections in 2018 and wish again to encourage all TCERA members to consider representing your fellow employees on the Board of Retirement. Active participation in the decisions and administration of the retirement plan is important, interesting, and is the best way to make sure that the Retirement Association remains secure and is able to meet the retirement needs of both current and future members.

TCERA Staff

David Kehler, *Retirement Administrator*

Rebecca Pendleton, *Secretary II*

Christene Brown, *Retirement Specialist II*

Darcy Nunes, *Retirement Specialist I*

Jeanette Burks, *Retirement Specialist I*

Shiela Abrego, *Retirement Specialist I*

Adriana Gonzalez-Chang, *Retirement Specialist I*

Leanne Malison, *Assistant Administrator*

Mary Warner, *Administrative Services Officer III*

Nulek Singkeovilay, *Accountant I*

Marisol Cardenas, *Accountant I*

Frank Martin, *Account Clerk II*

Susie Brown, *Office Assistant II*

Bridgette Mosley, *Office Assistant II*

We can be reached by phone at (559) 713-2900 or by our website at www.tcera.org.