



Join CalSTRS? Join CalPERS?

Decide which retirement system is best for you



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This guide is based on the California Teachers' Retirement Law, the California Public Employees' Retirement Law and other sections of state law as of January 1, 2017. If there is a conflict between this information and the law, the law prevails.



As you begin your new position, use this booklet to help you decide which retirement system is the best choice for you to achieve your retirement goals.

Contact CalSTRS

Ask your employer for a copy of the *CalSTRS Member Handbook* or find it online at [CalSTRS.com/publications](https://www.calstrs.com/publications).

Go online to [CalSTRS.com](https://www.calstrs.com) for more information. Check to see if pending or new legislation may affect your decision at [CalSTRS.com/legislation](https://www.calstrs.com/legislation), or contact your union or legislative representative.

Email a secure message to CalSTRS from your *myCalSTRS* account or [CalSTRS.com/contactus](https://www.calstrs.com/contactus).

Call CalSTRS at 800-228-5453.

Contact CalPERS

Ask your employer for the booklet, *What You Need to Know About Your School Benefits*. You can also download or request a copy by mail at [calpers.ca.gov](https://www.calpers.ca.gov).

Go online to [calpers.ca.gov](https://www.calpers.ca.gov) for more information and any legislative changes under consideration.

Call CalPERS at 888-CalPERS (888-225-7377).

California Public Employees' Pension Reform Act of 2013

The California Public Employees' Pension Reform Act of 2013 made significant changes to the benefits for members first hired to perform service under CalSTRS and CalPERS on or after January 1, 2013.

CalSTRS

CalSTRS has two benefit structures:

Members under CalSTRS 2% at 60 include those who:

- Were first hired to perform service that could be credited to the Defined Benefit Program on or before December 31, 2012.
- Were CalSTRS members before 2013, terminated their membership and then returned to active membership on or after January 1, 2013.
- Performed service that could be credited to the Defined Benefit Program and were subject to coverage under a different retirement system, including Social Security, on or before December 31, 2012.
- Were members of a concurrent retirement system on or before December 31, 2012, and who performed service under that system within six months of becoming a CalSTRS member.

Members under CalSTRS 2% at 62 are those first hired on or after January 1, 2013, to perform service that could be credited to the Defined Benefit Program and who never before performed service under a different retirement system, including Social Security, that could be credited to the Defined Benefit Program.

➤ For more information, see the *CalSTRS Member Handbook*, available at CalSTRS.com/publications.

CalPERS

Benefits for CalPERS school members who first become members on or after January 1, 2013, also changed as a result of the California Public Employees' Pension Reform Act of 2013.

School members under the CalPERS 2% at age 55 benefit formula include those who:

- Became members of CalPERS on or before December 31, 2012, and have remained CalPERS members without a break in service of more than six months.
- Became members of CalPERS on or before December 31, 2012, and had a break in service of more than six months but returned to work for the same employer. A change in employment between state entities or from one school employer to another is considered service with the same employer.
- Were members of CalSTRS or any other reciprocal public retirement system on or before December 31, 2012, and become members of CalPERS within six months of performing service creditable to CalSTRS or terminating membership in a reciprocal system.

School members under the CalPERS 2% at age 62 benefit formula include those who:

- First became members of CalPERS on or after January 1, 2013.
- First became members of CalPERS on or before December 31, 2012, but had a break in service of more than six months and returned to work for a different employer. A change in employment between state entities or from one school employer to another is not considered service with a different employer.
- Were members of CalSTRS or another reciprocal public retirement system on or before December 31, 2012, but become a member of CalPERS after a break in service of six months or more.

➤ For more information, visit calpers.ca.gov.

Choosing Your Retirement System

This booklet outlines the differences between CalSTRS and CalPERS if you are changing from a job covered by one retirement system to a job covered by the other retirement system. For example, if you are in a classified position covered by CalPERS and accept a certificated position covered by CalSTRS, you may be eligible to choose to join CalSTRS or remain with CalPERS. Ask your employer or call your current retirement system for eligibility requirements. This important choice is yours.

Staying With Your Current Retirement System

To remain with your current system, submit the *Retirement System Election* form to your employer within 60 days of your hire date in your new position. CalSTRS must receive your form within 30 days of your signature date. Ask your new employer for the form or go to CalSTRS.com to download or request a copy.

Changing Your Retirement System

Do nothing for 60 days and you automatically become a member of the retirement system covering your new position.

If you decide to become a member of the retirement system covering your new position, here are some additional choices to consider:

- If eligible, you may retire from your former system and become an active member of the new system. If you're not eligible to retire, you may keep your account with the old retirement system and have dual membership in both systems. You can later retire from both systems at the same time. For more information, see page 19.

Note:

If you retire from CalSTRS, you cannot work in a classified position after retirement, except as a teacher's aide under certain circumstances, without affecting your retirement benefit. See page 8.

- You may take a refund of your contributions in the previous system. CalSTRS and CalPERS have different rules for taking a refund. If you take a refund, you lose all rights to benefits from that system unless you later redeposit your contributions plus interest.



You have 60 days from the hire date of your new position to complete and submit the paperwork to stay with your previous retirement system. If you do nothing, you will become a member of the new system.

🗨️ Your Questions Answered

1

How is my retirement benefit calculated?

CalSTRS & CalPERS

Both calculate your retirement benefit based on your years of service (service credit) in the retirement system, your retirement age (age factor) and your final compensation:

service credit X age factor X final compensation = basic retirement benefit

The Difference

Age factors are different. See Age Factor tables on page 13.

2

How is my final compensation determined?

CalSTRS

CalSTRS 2% at 60: Final compensation is based on the average of your highest 36 consecutive months of annual compensation earnable if you have fewer than 25 years of service credit, or the average of your highest 12 consecutive months of annual compensation earnable if you have 25 or more years of service credit. If you were hired on or after July 1, 1996, under Internal Revenue Code section 401(a)(17), the limit on compensation that can be counted toward your retirement for 2017–18 is \$270,000.

CalSTRS 2% at 62: Final compensation is based on the average of your highest 36 consecutive months of annual compensation earnable, regardless of years of service credit. For 2017–18, the cap on compensation that can be counted toward your retirement benefit is \$143,082. The compensation cap is adjusted annually based on the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers.

CalPERS

CalPERS 2% at 55 school members: Your final compensation is the monthly average of your highest 12 or 36 consecutive months of full-time equivalent pay rate and special compensation. If you were hired on or after July 1, 1996, under Internal Revenue Code section 401(a)(17), the cap on compensation that can be counted toward your retirement for 2017–18 is \$270,000.

CalPERS 2% at 62 school members: Your final compensation is the monthly average of your highest consecutive 36 months of full-time equivalent pay rate and special compensation. If your service is coordinated with Social Security, the compensation cap used to calculate your benefit is \$118,775 in 2017. If your service is not coordinated with Social Security, the compensation cap used to calculate your benefit is \$142,530 in 2017. The compensation cap is adjusted annually based on the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers.

The Difference

The period of time used for calculation of final compensation and the amount of the compensation cap may be different under each retirement system, depending on your membership structure.

3

When can I retire?

CalSTRS

CalSTRS 2% at 60: You can retire as early as age 50 with 30 years of service credit or at age 55 with five years of service credit—or fewer, if retiring concurrently from certain other California public retirement systems.

CalSTRS 2% at 62: You can retire at age 55 with five years of service credit—or fewer, if retiring concurrently from certain other California public retirement systems.

CalPERS

CalPERS 2% at 55 school members: You can retire at age 50 with five years of service credit.

CalPERS 2% at 62 school members: You can retire at age 52 with five years of service credit, if all service credit was earned on or after January 1, 2013.

The Difference

Minimum retirement ages and years of service are different for each system. Also see page 19.

4

What is my total retirement contribution?

CalSTRS

CalSTRS 2% at 60: You contribute 10.25 percent of your Defined Benefit creditable earnings.

CalSTRS 2% at 62: Your contribution rate is connected to the normal cost of your retirement plan. When changes in the normal cost meet certain thresholds defined by law, your contribution rate is adjusted. The normal cost is assessed each year based on the actuarial valuation, the snapshot of CalSTRS' financial status presented to the Teachers' Retirement Board each spring. For 2017–18, you contribute 9.205 percent of your Defined Benefit creditable earnings to help finance your retirement benefit. Based on initial projections, you'll likely see a rate increase of 1 percent, to 10.205 percent, on July 1, 2018.

CalPERS

Most members pay 6.2 percent for Social Security on earnings up to \$127,200 for 2017.

CalPERS 2% at 55 school members: You contribute 7 percent of your earnings toward retirement.

CalPERS 2% at 62 school members: The percentage of your contribution is intended to be an amount that will cover half of the normal cost of your benefit. For the 2017–18 fiscal year, your contribution rate is 6.5 percent.

The Difference

CalSTRS members earn no credits for Social Security benefits. CalPERS school employees contribute to and earn credits toward Social Security and will receive benefits based on those earnings. See the *Social Security, CalSTRS and You* fact sheet at CalSTRS.com/publications and visit ssa.gov to learn more.

5

How is the purchasing power of my retirement benefit maintained?

CalSTRS

Annual benefit adjustment: Your retirement benefit is increased by 2 percent of your initial benefit beginning September 1 after the first anniversary of your retirement date. The annual benefit adjustment is not compounded or tied to the cost of living.

Quarterly supplemental payments: If your benefit loses its original purchasing power, you'll receive quarterly supplemental payments. The level of purchasing power may be set between 80 and 85 percent. For current retirees, 85 percent of the original purchasing power of benefits is protected.

CalPERS

Beginning May 1 of your second calendar year of retirement, your initial benefit is increased up to 2 percent per year, compounded annually, unless the rate of inflation is lower. CalPERS pays monthly supplemental payments when the benefit falls below 75 percent of purchasing power.

The Difference

The CalSTRS annual benefit adjustment is not compounded; the CalPERS annual benefit adjustment is compounded annually to reflect inflation and does not have a fixed rate. CalSTRS purchasing power protection is 85 percent and paid quarterly; CalPERS purchasing power protection is 75 percent and paid monthly.

6

Can I work after I retire?

CalSTRS

You can continue to receive your full CalSTRS retirement benefit with no earnings limit if you take a job in a private school, private industry, public school outside of California, or for any other non-CalSTRS employer, including the University of California or California State University systems. If you return to work after retirement and perform retired member activities, including substitute teaching, in the California public school system as an employee, an independent contractor or an employee of a third party, there are restrictions under state and federal law:

- You cannot work in a classified position except, under certain circumstances, as a teacher's aide.
- Under the separation-from-service requirement, your CalSTRS retirement benefit will be reduced by the amount you earn in a CalSTRS-covered position during the first 180 calendar days following your most recent retirement date, up to your benefit amount payable during that period.
- After the first 180-day separation-from-service requirement, there is an annual limit to the amount of money you can earn without affecting your retirement benefit. For fiscal year 2017–18, the limit is \$43,755.

If you retire under the Retirement Incentive Program, you'll lose the ongoing increase in your benefit from the incentive if you return to work in any job with the employer that granted the incentive within five years of retirement.

There is a very narrow exemption from the separation-from-service requirement if you have reached normal retirement age and meet all the other exemption requirements. If approved by CalSTRS, this exemption applies only to the separation-from-service requirement—the postretirement earnings limit still applies.

See “After You Retire” in the *CalSTRS Member Handbook* for more information.

CalPERS

If you retire from CalPERS, you can work in a classified retired annuitant designated position for a CalPERS employer, including school employers, without reinstatement. The work must be of limited duration, or “extra help” work; for example, to eliminate a backlog, to perform work in excess of what regular staff can do or special project work, or to work in a vacant position while the employer is actively recruiting for a permanent hire or while a regular staff person is out on a temporary leave. Regardless of the number of work hours, you cannot be employed in any permanent, seasonal, limited-term or other regular staff position. In addition, you cannot be employed in any exempt or excluded CalPERS membership position. For a state agency CalPERS employer, you must also be civil service-eligible to work as a retired annuitant and you cannot work in any “exempt from civil service” position. Employment with a CalPERS employer in any position other than a retired annuitant position requires reinstatement from retirement.

If you're under normal retirement age (age 55 for 2% at 55 members; age 62 for 2% at 62 members) on your retirement date, you must have a bona fide separation in service before you begin work for any CalPERS employer. If you have more than one retirement formula, the oldest normal retirement age applies to you. You can find your benefit formula on your my|CalPERS account or your *CalPERS Annual Member Statement*. A bona fide separation is one in which there is no agreement, verbal or written, to return to work as a retired annuitant between you and any CalPERS employer before you retire, and there is a 60-day waiting period between your retirement date and the first date of employment.

Before you can be hired as a retired annuitant, a 180-day waiting period between your retirement date and the day you begin work is required unless a certain exception is approved by the school employer's county office of education. An exception approved by the school district alone is not a valid exception. The bona fide separation and 180-day waiting period may occur concurrently.

As a retired annuitant, you cannot receive more than the maximum hourly base pay rate paid to employees performing comparable duties or for the vacant position, as listed in the employer's publicly available pay schedule. You cannot receive any benefit, incentive, compensation in lieu of benefits or any other form of compensation in addition to that hourly pay rate. You may work in retired annuitant positions for up to 960 hours in a fiscal year, July 1–June 30, for all CalPERS employers combined.

There are additional postretirement work restrictions if you receive a disability or an industrial disability retirement from CalPERS. If you violate any of these restrictions, your CalPERS retirement will be canceled, and you must repay the retirement benefits you received during the period of unlawful employment.

CalPERS retirees can work in a CalSTRS-certificated position, in positions with employers of any other public pension system or for private industry employers not associated with any CalPERS employer without affecting their CalPERS retirement. The bona fide separation and 180-day wait period requirements don't apply to CalPERS retirees working in these positions. For employment with a CalPERS employer as an independent contractor, consultant, contract employee or employee of a third party employer, contact CalPERS.

See the *Employment After Retirement* publication at calpers.ca.gov before you retire or discuss working after retirement with a CalPERS employer.

The Difference

Retirement benefits from both systems can be affected by postretirement work. For CalSTRS, you cannot return to work and perform retired member activities in the California public school system without affecting your benefit, and you cannot work in a classified position except under certain circumstances. For CalPERS, the work restrictions affect classified positions. If you violate any of the restrictions, your retirement will be canceled and you must repay all of the retirement benefits you received during the period of unlawful employment.

7

Do I have disability benefits?

CalSTRS

You have disability benefits under one of the CalSTRS disability benefit programs: Coverage A or Coverage B. **Coverage A:** hired on or before October 15, 1992, unless you elected Coverage B before April 1993; **Coverage B:** hired after October 15, 1992.

You may be eligible for a disability benefit if you meet all the eligibility requirements, including age, service credit, timelines for application and medical documentation, and meet the definition of disabled as established for CalSTRS in the California Education Code. See the *Your Disability Guide* at CalSTRS.com/publications for all the eligibility requirements.

You can apply for service retirement and disability at the same time if you're otherwise eligible to service retire. This will enable you to receive a monthly retirement income while your disability application is being evaluated.

Coverage A: The Coverage A disability benefit is generally 50 percent of final compensation and may be reduced for periods of part-time employment. If you have eligible dependent children, you'll receive an additional 10 percent of final compensation for each child, up to an additional 40 percent. At age 60, your disability benefit ends and you may apply for service retirement. You'll receive an ongoing benefit equal to the lesser of your disability benefit or your retirement benefit.

If you are over age 45 with fewer than 10 years of service credit, your disability benefit is 5 percent of your final compensation X your years of service credit. For example, with seven years of service credit, your benefit would be 35 percent of your final compensation.

Coverage B: The Coverage B disability benefit is 50 percent of your final compensation. You will receive a disability benefit for your lifetime as long as you continue to qualify. If you return to active service as a CalSTRS Defined Benefit member and later service retire, your eventual service retirement benefit will be calculated differently than if you had not received a disability benefit. This may provide for a lower service retirement benefit than if you had not received a disability benefit.

CalPERS

If you have between five and 10 years of service credit—or 18.5 years or more of service credit—your disability formula is 1.8 percent X years of service credit X final compensation. If you have between 10 and 18.5 years of service credit, your disability retirement benefit may be improved up to 33.333 percent of final compensation. If you qualify for service retirement, you'll receive your service retirement benefit if the amount is greater than the disability retirement. You also may be eligible for disability benefits under Social Security, subject to the review and approval of the Social Security Administration.

The Difference

Disability benefits paid by CalSTRS are generally higher than those paid by CalPERS, but CalPERS members also may be eligible for disability benefits under Social Security. In addition, CalSTRS benefits increase if there are dependent children; CalPERS provides no coverage for dependent children.

8

What is my employer's contribution?

CalSTRS

For 2017–18, your employer contributes an amount equal to 14.43 percent of your Defined Benefit creditable earnings. Under the 2014 CalSTRS funding plan, employer contributions will continue to increase every year, up to 19.1 percent in 2020–21. Employer contributions are not credited to your Defined Benefit account but are deposited in the Teachers' Retirement Fund to help pay benefits for all members and their beneficiaries. They are not refundable to you.

Your employer also contributes 1.45 percent for Medicare if you were hired after April 1986, or if you elected to participate in Medicare under your employer's Medicare division election.

CalPERS

The rate of your employer's contribution varies year to year. These contributions are paid into your employer's account. For 2017–18, CalPERS school employers contribute 15.53 percent of compensation. Employer contributions are not refundable to you.

Your employer also contributes 1.45 percent for Medicare if you were hired after April 1986, in addition to 6.2 percent for Social Security.

The Difference

CalSTRS employer contributions are set by law through 2020–21, after which, CalSTRS has limited authority to set rates as recommended by its actuary. CalPERS adjusts employer contributions periodically following its actuarial valuation.

9

Do I participate in Social Security?

CalSTRS

No, and any Social Security benefits you earn from other employment or receive as a spouse may be reduced when you start receiving your CalSTRS retirement benefit.

As a California public school educator, you don't contribute to Social Security, so you will not receive a Social Security benefit for your CalSTRS-covered employment when you retire. If you're counting on Social Security through your spouse or other employment, two federal rules, the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset, may leave you with a smaller Social Security benefit or possibly no benefit at all. These rules affect only your Social Security benefit. Your CalSTRS retirement benefit will not change. For more information, see the *Social Security, CalSTRS and You* fact sheet at CalSTRS.com/publications.

CalPERS

In most cases, yes, if you were hired after 1959. In general, you need at least 40 credits—about 10 years of work—to be eligible for Social Security and Medicare benefits.

The Difference

CalSTRS members neither contribute to nor earn Social Security benefits. Also, CalSTRS-covered service may reduce previously earned Social Security benefits from other employment. Contact the Social Security Administration at **800-772-1213** or visit ssa.gov to learn more. Most CalPERS members contribute to Social Security credit. Social Security includes retirement, disability and survivor benefits.

10

Will I have health coverage in retirement?

CalSTRS and CalPERS

If you are covered by the Public Employees' Medical and Hospital Care Act, you're eligible for health benefits if you are enrolled upon separation and retire within 120 days of your separation date. If you get health care from other sources, coverage depends on your bargaining agreement. Contact your employer to learn more.

The Difference

There is no difference.

11

Do I earn an extra monthly benefit for a long career?

CalSTRS

CalSTRS 2% at 60: With 25 years of service credit or more, your benefit is based on the average of your highest 12 consecutive months of average annual compensation earnable. With fewer than 25 years of service credit, it is based on your highest 36 consecutive months of average annual compensation earnable.

With 30 or more years of service credit, your age factor is increased by 0.2 percent. This is called a career factor. The maximum combined age factor and career factor is 2.4 percent.

With at least 30 years of service credit earned on or before December 31, 2010, your benefit is increased by a longevity bonus:

Service Credit at Retirement	Longevity Bonus
30 years	\$200/month
31 years	\$300/month
32 years	\$400/month

CalSTRS 2% at 62: The career factor, 12-month final compensation and longevity bonus benefit enhancements are not available.

CalPERS

CalPERS does not offer any special benefit enhancements as a reward for career longevity.

The Difference

CalSTRS offers a career factor and longevity bonus for members under the CalSTRS 2% at 60 benefit structure. CalPERS does not offer any longevity benefits.

12

What are the age factors?

Age Factor Comparison for Members First Hired Before January 1, 2013

Age	CalSTRS*	CalPERS	Age	CalSTRS*	CalPERS
50	1.10 †	1.10	57	1.64	2.126
51	1.16 †	1.28	58	1.76	2.188
52	1.22 †	1.46	59	1.88	2.250
53	1.28 †	1.64	60	2.00	2.314
54	1.34 †	1.82	61	2.133	2.376
55	1.40	2.00	62	2.267	2.438
56	1.52	2.064	63+	2.40	2.50

*Career factor: Add 0.2 percent to the age factor for 30 years of service credit, up to 2.4 percent.

†Must have 30 or more years of service credit to retire.

Age Factor Comparison for Members First Hired On or After January 1, 2013

Age	CalSTRS	CalPERS
52	**	1.00
53	**	1.10
54	**	1.20
55	1.16	1.30
56	1.28	1.40
57	1.40	1.50
58	1.52	1.60
59	1.64	1.70
60	1.76	1.80
61	1.88	1.90
62	2.00	2.00
63	2.133	2.10
64	2.267	2.20
65	2.40	2.30
66	2.40	2.40
67	2.40	2.50

**CalSTRS members under the 2% at 62 benefit structure cannot retire earlier than age 55.

The Difference

CalSTRS and CalPERS have different age factors. The age factor is the percent of final compensation you're entitled to receive for each year of service credit.

13

Can I buy additional service credit?

CalSTRS

Yes. You must complete your purchase before your retirement date. Service credit you may be eligible to purchase:

- Redeposit of withdrawn funds.
- Certain active U.S. military service.
- Job Corps or Peace Corps service (certain restrictions apply).
- Teaching in a publicly supported and administered California university not already credited.
- Maternity or paternity leave approved by your employer.
- Sabbatical leave approved by your employer.
- Family medical leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act or the California Family Rights Act approved by your employer.
- Service prior to membership in part-time or substitute work.
- Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program leave.
- Out-of-state or foreign school service.
- Certificated teaching in a child care center, school for the blind or deaf, or Native American school in California.
- Prior service covered under the CalSTRS Cash Balance Benefit Program.

CalPERS

Yes. You must elect to purchase service credit before retirement; you can make payments into retirement. You cannot have a retirement date before the date of your election to purchase service credit. Service credit you may be eligible to purchase:

- Redeposit of withdrawn funds.
- Military service.
- Peace Corps, AmeriCorps or AmeriCorps VISTA service.
- Educational or sabbatical leave.
- Temporary job-related injury or illness.
- Maternity or paternity leave.
- Service prior to membership while serving a qualification period or while employed on a temporary, seasonal or less than half-time basis.
- Comprehensive Employment and Training Act service after July 1, 1979.
- Employment as an elected or appointed official.
- Leave to work in a local, state or foreign governmental agency or nonprofit organization.
- Lay-off periods from public agency employment.
- Service for time spent working for an employer before it began contracting with CalPERS.
- Alternate Retirement Program, if applicable.
- Serious illness.

The Difference

Both allow you to buy service credit for certain activities. In some cases, an activity may be covered by one system and not the other. You must complete your purchase of CalSTRS service credit before retirement. You can continue making payments for CalPERS service credit after retirement.

14

Do I have a supplemental account?

CalSTRS

If you made retirement contributions to CalSTRS on or after January 1, 2001, as a Defined Benefit member, you have a Defined Benefit Supplement account. This account provides an additional benefit upon retirement, disability, death or termination.

Since you can't earn more than one year of service credit in a school year, 16 percent of your earnings in excess of one year of service—8 percent from you and 8 percent from your employer, up to the compensation cap—is credited to this account. Your account balance earns a guaranteed interest rate.

If you make contributions on earnings in excess of one year of service, you're eligible for a return of your contributions that exceed the 8 percent contribution rate for Defined Benefit Supplement

compensation. See the *CalSTRS Member Handbook* to learn more.

CalSTRS 2% at 60: From January 1, 2001, to December 31, 2010, one-fourth of your 8 percent contribution for service creditable to the Defined Benefit Program was redirected to your Defined Benefit Supplement account. This redirection did not affect your CalSTRS retirement benefit. Your entire member contribution for service creditable to the Defined Benefit Program is now credited to your Defined Benefit member account.

Special limited-term payments or one-time retirement incentive payments also go into this account.

CalPERS

CalPERS does not have a supplemental account.

The Difference

CalSTRS members have a supplemental account for retirement; CalPERS members do not.

15

Can I redeposit a previous refund?

You can only redeposit a refund from the system that issued it—you cannot redeposit a CalPERS refund into CalSTRS or vice versa.

CalSTRS

If you terminate CalSTRS membership, receive a refund of contributions and interest, and later return to CalSTRS membership or a retirement system that offers concurrent retirement with CalSTRS—such as CalPERS—you can purchase all or some of the CalSTRS service credit. The cost will include the interest your refund would have earned. If you received more than one refund, multiple refund costs are combined for a total cost. You can purchase all or a portion of the refunded contributions.

CalPERS

If you terminate CalPERS membership, receive a refund of contributions and interest, and later return to CalPERS membership or become a member of a reciprocal retirement system—such as CalSTRS—you can purchase all or some of the CalPERS service credit represented by the refund. The cost will include the interest your refund would have earned. If you received more than one refund, you may repurchase the service credit represented by the refund in reverse chronological order; that is, you can purchase your most recent refund first.

The Difference

CalSTRS combines multiple refunds; CalPERS allows you to repurchase multiple refunds in reverse chronological order.

16

What benefits do my survivors receive if I die before I'm eligible to retire?

CalSTRS

Coverage A

If you have Coverage A—you were a member on or before October 15, 1992, and you did not elect Coverage B—and have at least one year of service credit, your designated one-time death benefit recipient may receive a lump-sum payment, currently \$6,163. In addition, for a surviving spouse or registered domestic partner with dependent children, the monthly survivor benefit equals 40 percent of your final compensation plus 10 percent of your final compensation for each eligible dependent child under age 22, for a benefit up to 90 percent of your final compensation.

Your surviving spouse or partner with no eligible dependent children receives either a lump-sum payment of your accumulated Defined Benefit member contributions and interest, or a monthly lifetime benefit. The calculation is based on the projected service credit and final compensation you would have accrued had you retired at normal retirement age. If the monthly benefit is paid before normal retirement age, the amount is actuarially reduced.

CalSTRS

Coverage B

If you have Coverage B—you became a member after October 15, 1992—and have at least one year of service credit, your designated recipient may receive a lump-sum death benefit, currently \$24,652. If a monthly survivor benefit is not payable, a lump-sum refund of your contributions and interest is paid to your one-time death benefit recipient. Your surviving spouse or partner can choose between the lump-sum refund of your contributions and interest, or a monthly survivor benefit based on your age and your spouse's or partner's age as of the date you would have reached normal retirement age. This monthly benefit would be one-half of the modified survivor benefit.

If your spouse or partner elects the lump-sum refund, no benefits are payable to dependent children. If you have dependent children and your surviving spouse or partner receives a monthly benefit, an additional benefit, equal to 10 percent of your final compensation, is paid for each child under age 21, up to 50 percent for five or more children.

Defined Benefit Supplement Distribution

In addition to the benefits under the Defined Benefit Program, your one-time death benefit recipient can choose from a period-certain annuity or lump-sum payment equal to the balance in your Defined Benefit Supplement account.

CalPERS

Your survivors receive the Basic Death Benefit equal to a return of your contributions and interest, plus a month of average monthly earnings for each year of service up to six months' salary, if you die within 120 days (four months) of separating from CalPERS.

If you're not covered by Social Security, you may be eligible for the 1959 survivor benefit, which is an additional benefit of up to \$2,280 per month.

The benefit is paid either to:

- A surviving spouse or registered domestic partner to whom you've been married or registered for at least one year before your death or before the date of injury or onset of the illness that resulted in your death and who has care of unmarried children under age 22, or unmarried disabled children who became disabled prior to age 22.
- A surviving spouse or registered domestic partner who is over age 60 to whom you've been married or registered for at least one year before your death or before the date of injury or onset of the illness that resulted in your death.
- Dependent parents, if none of the above.

The Difference

Under CalSTRS, your surviving spouse or registered domestic partner may choose a lump-sum payment or a monthly benefit, with additional provisions for dependent children. CalPERS pays a Basic Death Benefit or, if eligible, a monthly benefit to your surviving spouse, partner or unmarried children only if certain requirements are met. Social Security may also provide survivor benefits to survivors of CalPERS members covered by Social Security.

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What benefits do my survivors receive if I'm eligible to retire, but die before I retire?

CalSTRS

If you didn't elect a preretirement option beneficiary, your survivors may receive the same coverage as in Question 16. If you elected a preretirement option, your option beneficiary receives benefits based on the option you elected plus the one-time death benefit. In addition, your option beneficiary will receive a benefit equal to the balance in your Defined Benefit Supplement account.

To elect a preretirement option beneficiary—one or more persons or a special needs trust—you must be eligible for retirement or at least age 55 and eligible to service retire concurrently from CalPERS or certain other California public retirement systems. If you're a concurrent member, age 55 or older with less than five years of CalSTRS service credit, we will verify your retirement eligibility as of the date of your death. If you were ineligible for concurrent retirement when you made your preretirement election, your election will be void.

CalPERS

Your survivors receive the Basic Death Benefit equal to a return of your contributions and interest, plus up to six months' pay. Alternatively, your spouse or registered domestic partner—to whom you have been married or in partnership for at least one year before your death or before the occurrence of the injury or the onset of the illness that resulted in your death—or your children under 18, can receive a monthly benefit equal to 50 percent of what your highest service retirement benefit would have been had you retired on the date of death. Your survivors can receive only one, not both, of these benefits.

Members not covered by Social Security may be eligible for the 1959 survivor benefit, which is an additional benefit of up to \$2,280 per month payable to an eligible surviving spouse or registered domestic partner who has care of unmarried children under age 22, to unmarried children under age 22, to an eligible surviving spouse or registered domestic partner over age 60, or to dependent parents. To be eligible, you must have been paying a fee, generally \$2 per month.

If you're an employee of a state agency or California State University rather than a school employee, check with CalPERS because these benefits may vary.

The Difference

CalSTRS allows you to make a preretirement election of an option and name someone to receive a lifetime monthly benefit upon your death when you are eligible to retire. Under CalPERS, you cannot make a preretirement election. In the absence of a preretirement election, both systems provide survivor benefits to specific family members. The amounts paid to survivors vary.

18

What benefits do my survivors receive if I die after I retire?

CalSTRS

Your designated one-time death benefit recipient will receive the current lump-sum death benefit of \$6,163. If you elect one of the four CalSTRS retirement options, your option beneficiary's benefit will be based on the option you elected. If you didn't elect a retirement option, CalSTRS will refund your remaining eligible contributions and interest to your one-time death benefit recipient or to your estate, if you didn't name a recipient.

If you elect a joint and survivor annuity, your annuity beneficiary's benefit will be based on the annuity you elected.

CalPERS

Your beneficiary's lump-sum death benefit is generally \$2,000. (School employers can contract for a \$2,000, \$3,000, \$4,000 or \$5,000 lump-sum benefit.) If you elected the option specifically providing a return of unused contributions, your beneficiary will be refunded any remaining contributions and interest. In addition, a survivor's continuance allowance, equal to 25 percent of your unmodified retirement benefit if service is coordinated with Social Security, or 50 percent of the unmodified benefit if service is not coordinated with Social Security, will be paid to your eligible surviving spouse or registered domestic partner, unmarried minor children, eligible disabled adult children, or dependent parents. If you elected a modified benefit, your beneficiary's benefit is based on the option you elected.

In addition, Social Security will pay a one-time \$255 benefit to your survivors if you had earned enough Social Security credits and your survivors are eligible.

The Difference

CalSTRS has a higher lump-sum death benefit than CalPERS. CalPERS pays an additional survivor continuance benefit, regardless of whether you elect a reduced or basic benefit. Both systems generally have the same options for beneficiary benefits.

Dual Membership

If you decide to have your new position covered by a different retirement system than your previous service, you have the additional decision of whether to keep your account in your previous retirement system or take a refund. You cannot combine service into one system. If you keep service credit in both systems, you can retire concurrently. If you take a refund, you'll lose all benefits under that retirement system. Before taking a refund, carefully consider the consequences.

Here is an overview of the rights and benefits of CalSTRS and CalPERS members to help you with your decision.

CalSTRS

CalPERS

	CalSTRS	CalPERS
Concurrent Retirement Date	<p>You may service retire from a position covered by another retirement system in which you have concurrent membership on the same day you retire for service from your CalSTRS-covered position—or on different dates as long as there is no creditable service performed with either system between the two retirement dates. Your final compensation will be calculated using the highest compensation earnable under either system.</p> <p>Concurrent retirement is not available for a CalSTRS disability retirement.</p>	<p>Your final compensation will be calculated using the highest final compensation under either system as long as you retire from both systems concurrently. Also see Reciprocity.</p>
Changing Retirement Systems	<p>You may leave service credit and contributions with CalSTRS and become a member of CalPERS, UCRS, LRS, SFCCRS or a 1937 Act county retirement system.</p>	<p>You may leave service credit and contributions with CalPERS and become a member of CalSTRS, UCRS, LRS, JRSI, JRSII or a 1937 Act county or local reciprocal public retirement system.</p>
Redeposit Rights	<p>If you were a CalSTRS member and took a refund, you're eligible to redeposit all or a portion of your refunded contributions and interest with CalSTRS if you are a member of CalSTRS, CalPERS, UCRS, LRS, SFCCRS or a 1937 Act county retirement system.</p> <p>If you're a former CalSTRS member, you don't have to be employed by a CalSTRS employer while paying for the redeposit.</p>	<p>If you left CalPERS, took a refund of your contributions, and subsequently return to CalPERS-covered employment or are a member of CalSTRS, UCRS, LRS, JRSI, JRSII or a 1937 Act county or local reciprocal public retirement system, you may redeposit the refund and accumulated interest to CalPERS to reestablish service credit and membership.</p> <p>If you're a former CalPERS member, you don't have to be employed by a CalPERS employer while paying for the redeposit.</p>
Reciprocity	<p>CalSTRS does not have reciprocity with any other public retirement systems. However, the provisions of concurrent membership and concurrent retirement provide some limited benefits similar to reciprocity.</p>	<p>CalPERS has an agreement with many California public retirement systems that allows you to move from one system to the other without loss of benefits. However, your retirement contributions and service credit do not transfer.</p>

CalSTRS

CalPERS

Refund Restriction	<p>You're eligible to refund your CalSTRS contributions and interest upon terminating CalSTRS-covered employment. Contact the other retirement system to determine the effect of a refund on your status with that system.</p>	<p>Your contributions and interest may be withdrawn before starting employment with CalSTRS. If your CalPERS contributions are not withdrawn before joining CalSTRS, you cannot receive a refund until you are permanently separated and you have refunded your contributions or retired from CalSTRS.</p> <p>You may not withdraw CalPERS contributions and interest while a CalSTRS member.</p>
Minimum Age for Retirement	<p>CalSTRS 2% at 60: Age 50 with at least 30 years of service credit or as early as age 55 with at least five years of service credit—or fewer, if retiring concurrently from certain other California public retirement systems.</p> <p>CalSTRS 2% at 62: Age 55 with at least five years of service credit—or fewer, if retiring concurrently from certain other California public retirement systems.</p>	<p>Age 50 with five years of service credit. If you became a new member on or after January 1, 2013, you must be at least age 52 to retire.</p>
Minimum Service Credit Requirement for Retirement	<p>You must have at least five years of service credit to retire under CalSTRS.</p> <p>If you're eligible to receive a benefit from another retirement system, you may retire for service after reaching age 55 regardless of your years of service credit, provided service retirement is concurrent with service retirement from at least one of the other systems.</p> <p>Only CalSTRS service credit is used in calculating your CalSTRS benefit.</p>	<p>You may retire without meeting the minimum service credit requirements when membership is established with CalSTRS. Only CalPERS service credit is used in calculating your CalPERS benefit.</p>
Final Compensation	<p>CalSTRS may use the salaries for your service performed under the other retirement system to calculate your CalSTRS retirement benefit if you retire for service concurrently and do not perform creditable service with both retirement systems during the same pay period.</p> <p>CalSTRS 2% at 60: Final compensation is based on your highest 36 consecutive months of average annual compensation earnable if you have fewer than 25 years of service credit, or your highest 12 consecutive months of average annual compensation earnable if you have 25 or more years.</p> <p>CalSTRS 2% at 62: Final compensation is based on your highest average annual compensation earnable for 36 consecutive months, regardless of years of service credit.</p>	<p>CalPERS uses the highest annual average compensation for 12 or 36 consecutive months of employment and may include special compensation. CalPERS uses your full-time pay rate, not your earnings. See page 6 for more information.</p> <p>If you retire from both systems concurrently, your retirement benefit will be calculated using the highest final compensation under either system.</p>

CalSTRS

CalPERS

<p>Concurrent Employment and Final Compensation</p>	<p>When you're employed concurrently in a CalSTRS-covered position and a position covered by another retirement system during your final compensation period, compensation earnable under CalSTRS is used to determine final compensation even if you retire concurrently with another system.</p>	<p>When concurrent employment occurs during the final compensation period, the highest compensation earned under either system is used in determining final compensation if you retire from both systems concurrently.</p>
<p>Employment After Service Retirement</p>	<p>You can continue to receive your full CalSTRS retirement benefit with no earnings limitation if you take a job outside of CalSTRS-covered employment, including work in a private school, private industry, public school outside of California, or the University of California or California State University systems.</p> <p>If you return to work and perform retired member activities, including substitute teaching, in the California public school system as an employee, an independent contractor or an employee of a third party, there are restrictions under state and federal law:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You cannot work in a classified position except, under certain circumstances, as a teacher's aide. • Under the separation-from-service requirement, your CalSTRS retirement benefit will be reduced by the amount you earn during the first 180 calendar days following your most recent retirement date, up to your benefit amount payable during that period. • There's an annual limit to the amount of money you can earn without affecting your retirement benefit. For 2017–18, the limit is \$43,755. <p>There is a very narrow exemption from the separation-from-service requirement.</p> <p>If you retire under the Retirement Incentive Program, you'll lose the ongoing increase in your benefit from the incentive if you return to work in any job with the employer that granted the incentive within five years of retirement.</p> <p>See "After You Retire" in the <i>CalSTRS Member Handbook</i>.</p>	<p>You may retire from CalPERS and accept employment in another public retirement system without affecting your benefit, including CalSTRS-covered positions.</p> <p>You may retire from CalPERS and begin work for a CalPERS-covered employer in a classified retired annuitant designated position after you have met the bona fide separation in service requirement, if applicable, and the 180-day wait period. Retired annuitant designated positions are "extra help" positions. The hourly pay rate cannot exceed the maximum for the position, you cannot work more than 960 hours for all employers combined in a fiscal year (July 1–June 30), and you cannot receive any other compensation or employee benefits. A violation of any one of these retired annuitant restrictions will require CalPERS to terminate your retirement.</p> <p>You cannot work in any position for a CalPERS-covered employer other than a retired annuitant designated position without reinstatement from retirement. This includes any permanent part-time, seasonal, intermittent, limited-term, exempt, contract employee, hourly employee or any other type of part-time or regular staff position.</p> <p>Also, if interested in working for a CalPERS-covered employer as an independent contractor, consultant or an employee of a third-party employer, please send CalPERS the proposed contract for an independent contractor determination before you begin working. If CalPERS determines the position is that of an employee—that is, there is common law employer-employee relationship with the CalPERS-covered employer despite its characterization—the position will be subject to the retired annuitant restrictions.</p> <p>See the <i>Employment After Retirement</i> booklet at calpers.ca.gov.</p>

CalSTRS

CalPERS

Reinstatement From Retirement	<p>You may terminate your service retirement and reinstate to active member status. If you reinstate, you may not be eligible for concurrent retirement for a subsequent retirement unless you retire again from another eligible retirement system.</p>	<p>Service retirees accepting a permanent position under CalPERS must submit an application to reinstate from retirement.</p> <p>Disability or industrial retirement retirees must be approved to work in a permanent position under CalPERS and must submit medical documentation with the application to reinstate from retirement.</p>
Disability Benefit	<p>If you're entitled to a CalSTRS disability benefit, you must retire from service with CalPERS on the same date for the provisions of final compensation to apply. If you're receiving a CalSTRS Coverage A disability benefit, you can retire from service with CalPERS either at the time you start receiving the disability benefit (if at normal retirement age) or at age 60 when your CalSTRS Coverage A disability benefit ends. CalPERS will compute your final compensation based on your highest rate of pay under either system.</p> <p>If you're not actively employed with CalPERS, there is no provision for a CalPERS disability retirement.</p> <p>See the <i>Your Disability Guide</i> at CalSTRS.com/publications.</p>	<p>If you'll be receiving a CalSTRS Coverage A disability benefit, you can take a service retirement from CalPERS at the same time if you meet the minimum service retirement age (age 50 or 52) or at age 60, when your CalSTRS Coverage A disability benefit is changed to a service retirement. Either way, you're considered to have retired on the same date under both systems, and CalPERS will calculate your final compensation based on your highest rate of pay under either system.</p> <p>If you're not actively employed with CalPERS, there is no provision for a CalPERS disability retirement.</p> <p>See the <i>Employment After Retirement</i> booklet at calpers.ca.gov.</p>

CalSTRS

CalPERS

<p>Employment While Receiving a Disability Benefit</p>	<p>Your disability benefit will end if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You return to your usual and customary job duties. • You return to any work earning comparable salary. • Your medical status no longer qualifies you for a CalSTRS disability benefit. • You do not provide evidence of your continued qualification upon request. <p>Additionally, your benefit will be reduced and you may become ineligible if you exceed your earnings limit.</p> <p>Coverage A Earnings Limits: You can earn income while you're receiving a Coverage A disability benefit. You can teach under certain employer conditions, but you cannot earn CalSTRS service credit or contribute to CalSTRS while receiving a disability benefit. Two earnings limits apply: the single-month earnings limit and the six-month earnings limit.</p> <p>Coverage B Earnings Limit: You can earn income after you begin receiving a Coverage B disability retirement benefit. You can teach under certain employer conditions, but you cannot earn CalSTRS service credit or contribute to CalSTRS while receiving a disability retirement benefit. Your earnings from all employment, including self-employment, are subject to an earnings limit unless you're participating in an approved CalSTRS rehabilitation plan. Your retirement benefit will be reduced dollar-for-dollar by the total amount you earn in excess of the 12-month calendar year limit. For 2017, the earnings limit is \$29,550.</p> <p>See the <i>Your Disability Benefits Guide</i> at CalSTRS.com/publications for more information.</p>	<p>You may retire from CalPERS and work for a non-CalPERS employer without affecting your disability retirement benefit, with certain restrictions. An earnings limit may apply.</p> <p>You may retire for disability or industrial disability and be approved by CalPERS to work in a permanent full-time or part-time CalPERS-covered (classified) position if the duties are significantly different from the duties of the position in which you were found to be disabled.</p> <p>You may retire for disability or industrial disability and accept a retired annuitant designated position as listed on page 21 with the additional restriction that the duties of the position are significantly different from the duties of the position in which you were found disabled.</p> <p>See the <i>Employment After Retirement</i> booklet at calpers.ca.gov.</p>
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