More features added to the certification and production "go-live" environment

Major changes are ahead with the launch of the updated Reporting Entity (RE) Portal certification environment.

As noted in the February/March 2017 *Update*, users will log into the RE Portal with a new two-step authentication process. At log in, an email with a security code will be sent to each user. The user must enter the code before accessing any further RE information. Choosing the "Remember Me" box will allow the user to log in and out of the same computer for a specified time frame. Since the February/March 2017 *Update* was published, TRS has decided to extend that time frame from eight to 16 hours.

Currently, the "View Employee Information" screen is functional in the updated RE Portal; however, a change has been made for additional security. Rather than entering only an employee's Social Security number (SSN), the user will now be required to enter the employee's SSN <u>and</u> either the employee's date of birth *or* last name.

Other enhancements will become available at the expected launch of the new RE Portal in September 2017.

One enhancement will be the ability to view lists of members who are employed at your RE who meet certain criteria:

- members who are within 85 percent of the 401(a) limit for the fiscal year,
- employees who have installment agreements to purchase service from TRS through payroll deductions, and
- employees who are enrolled in the Optional Retirement Program (ORP) (higher education entities only).

Additionally, REs will have the ability to submit and certify data through the RE Portal. In some cases, TRS will initiate the certification process by sending the Payroll Contact or Reporting Official an email advising that certifications are required. At other times, the user will initiate sending the information to TRS. Data that REs will have the ability to submit and certify includes:

- semester dates (in lieu of having a RE upload a school calendar),
- refund certifications for members requesting a refund of TRS contributions, formerly known as Termination Certifications, much like they are certified in TRAQS today,
- certification of Performance Pay prior to reporting this pay on the Regular Payroll report,
- salary verifications when TRS is requesting additional information on a member's salary for a particular school year, and
- ORP elections (higher education entities only).

Finally, REs will have the ability to transfer certain balances between contribution accounts as long as the transfer is an allowable transfer, per TRS policies. See Limits on Transfers and Refunds on the TRS website.

Reporting TRS retirees in the RE Portal

One of the biggest changes ahead, is the requirement that REs report all TRS retirees on the Detail file, regardless of retirement date.

The *April 2015 Update* stated the new data elements that would be required as part of the new file formats. All REs were advised that reporting actual days and actual hours worked by all TRS retirees, for each calendar month, would be a reporting requirement. Unlike reporting requirements for active employees, REs do not have the option of reporting scheduled time for TRS retirees. The requirement to *track* the actual time worked by a retiree who retired after Sept. 1, 2005 has been in place for a number of years and is not new; however, REs are not required to report the actual hours worked for these retirees. The information is used to support the application and amount of surcharges when employment exceeds one-half time. The requirement to *report* the actual hours or days worked is currently only applicable to retirees who retired after Jan. 1, 2011. Beginning in September 2017, the new report format requires that the actual hours or days worked must be reported for **ALL** retirees, even those who retired before Sept. 1, 2005.

This is a reminder that information regarding the number of hours and/or days worked by a retiree each calendar month is required reporting now and will also be required for all retirees in the RE Portal in the fall. With only a few months to go before we begin reporting in the RE Portal, it is in the best interest of all REs to establish procedures for collecting actual time worked for all TRS retirees. This will help ensure timely reporting. Failure to report information as required will mean the RE is not in compliance with *TRS Laws and Rules.*

REs cannot purchase service credit or compensation credit on behalf of a member

Eligible TRS members are allowed to purchase different types of service credit to increase the benefits payable at retirement. There are three different ways to purchase TRS service credit: a lump sum using after-tax dollars (such as from a savings or checking account), installment payments using after-tax dollars (not available for state sick and/or personal leave service credit or USERRA service credit), or a rollover using dollars from another eligible retirement plan or a direct trustee-to-trustee transfer using dollars from a governmental 403(b) plan or a governmental 457(b) deferred compensation plan. TRS cannot accept funds from a Roth account as a rollover from another eligible retirement plan or via a direct trustee transfer from a governmental 403(b) plan or a 457(b) deferred compensation plan.

The payment for service credit must be made by the TRS member. TRS cannot accept an employer payment from a RE for the purchase of service credit. There is no provision that allows a RE to directly purchase service credit on behalf of a member.

Health care for employees retiring in the future

Retirement season is here and you may have employees planning their big move to retirement. TRS wants you to know that the health plans currently available to retirees may be different by the time your employees retire. The 85th Texas Legislature is considering legislation that could make significant changes to TRS-Care, the retiree health program, to sustain the program for current and future retirees. TRS is closely monitoring legislative activity, and if any legislation passes that affects TRS health plans, TRS will communicate information to participants about their health plan options.

TRS-ActiveCare Annual Enrollment is July 1 – Aug. 22

TRS-ActiveCare Annual Enrollment is just around the corner. It's the one time of the year your employees can make changes to their health care benefits without experiencing a major life event. Please remind your employees about this enrollment opportunity before they leave for the summer break so that they have enough time to make a decision about their health care options. Visit trsactivecareaetna.com for more information.

TRS releases final videos in the financial awareness video series

This month, TRS will be releasing the final videos in the financial awareness video series. The videos are intended to help our current members learn even more about retirement self-sufficiency. The new videos cover saving in a tax-deferred plan, enrolling in a 403(b) plan and understanding 403(b) fees. For more information about the series and to view the videos, visit our website. You can also help us spread the word about the video series by downloading a poster from our website and displaying it at your school.