

TOP ARTICLES: 2024 RESS Survey • How to Calculate a Year of Service • Midyear Retirement Reminders • Life Event Toolkit • Member Videos

Legend

Articles are marked by topic!
Find icons as they relate to:

	Reporting and Training for REs		Health Benefits
	Information Security		General Communications

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK!

2024 Reporting Employer Satisfaction Survey (RESS)



TRS has partnered with Elite Research to conduct the annual Reporting Employer Satisfaction Survey. The survey is designed to provide TRS with valuable feedback so we can continue to improve the services we provide.

What You Need to Know:

- The survey should be completed by the individual who submits reports to TRS. As such, all RE Payroll Contacts should expect to receive an email from Elite Research with the survey invitation in February.
- If you receive an invitation to participate in the survey and are not the person who submits reports to TRS, please contact Ashley Simmons with Elite Research at TRSSurvey@eliteresearch.com or (682) 294-0797 to provide information on the person who does submit reports.

continued on page 2

How to Calculate a Year of TRS Service



When an employee is questioning their year of service with TRS, there are a few reminders that employers should consider. All TRS members receive service credit based on a standardized school year that begins **Sept. 1 and ends Aug. 31**. The standardized school year may not be the same as some employees' instructional year or their contract or work agreement year.

Earning a year of service

Standard Work Week (Monday-Friday): Must work in a TRS-eligible position or receive paid leave from a TRS-eligible position at least **90 days** during the school year.

Nonstandard Work Week: Members who are regularly scheduled to work **less than** five days per week may earn a year of service credit by working four and one-half months; however, the member must serve at least **four full calendar months** – working or receiving paid leave for at least eight days each month, and the member must also work or receive paid leave for an additional five days that cannot be included in the four full calendar months. See example in [July 2021 Update Newsletter](#).

December Retirees: A TRS member may not receive a year of service credit before Dec. 31, **except** in the final year of retirement. At retirement, a member may earn a year of service credit by working or receiving paid leave for each day of the full fall semester, even if that semester is less than 90 days. When completing the retirement certification, please make sure to indicate if the employee has worked the full **fall semester** with no unpaid days.

If you have an employee that is questioning their years of service with TRS, please reach out to your coach for assistance and we can review the information reported by your employer within the last five fiscal years, as corrections are limited past this time frame. If an employee is questioning their total years of service with TRS, please have them reach out to benefit counseling (1-800-223-8778) or they can review this information on their [MyTRS](#) account.

We Want Your Feedback

continued from page 1



- If you think you should receive a survey invitation but do not receive one by mid-February, please contact Ashley Simmons with Elite Research at TRSsurvey@eliteresearch.com or (682) 294-0797 so we can ensure you receive the invitation. You may also want to check your email spam folders.
- Survey responses are confidential and will only be used to help improve the information, resources, training, and services TRS provides to Reporting Employers.

You told us, and we listened. Below, are improvements TRS implemented based on your feedback from the previous survey:

- ✓ Improved Reporting Employer Coach's response time from two business days to one.
- ✓ Implemented RE Portal Chat and Co-Browse.
- ✓ Created Service Level expectations so we're consistent in serving you.
- ✓ Proactively identify new RE Portal contacts to ensure training schedules and resources are provided to the appropriate audience.
- ✓ Developed enhanced, modular, topic-based trainings to give you shortcuts to what you need to know most.

If you have questions about the survey, please contact TRS' Satisfaction Survey team at SatisfactionSurveys@trs.texas.gov or Ashley Simmons at TRSsurvey@eliteresearch.com or (682) 294-0797.

Thank you for providing your candid and honest feedback. We look forward to working to improve our customer service.



Active Contracts Submitted After Termination For Retirement



Recently, TRS noticed an increase in the number of contracts submitted after a member had a reported termination with a Reporting Employer (RE). This additional contract required TRS to reach out to the RE to finalize the member's retirement.

As a reminder, before an employee can retire through TRS, the employee must do the following:

1. terminate all TRS-covered employment (including ineligible employment such as substitute)
2. have one full calendar month where they do not work after the retirement date, and
3. have no active contracts or open employment after the termination date and retirement date

When an active contract (ED40) is submitted after the retirement/termination date, a TRS employee will reach out to the RE to determine if the member has truly returned to work for a TRS-covered employer or if the contract (ED40) was submitted in error. A retirement cannot be finalized with an active contract after the retirement/termination date.

Sometimes these contracts are created in error due to software issues or a misunderstanding of the TRS Reporting requirements. Below are some considerations.

Is the pay being reported as accrued pay for time prior to terminating?

The employee can still have accrued pay past the termination date, but the pay must be accrued from a contract prior to the termination date. The accrued pay should align with the final report month provided to TRS by the RE.

Has the employee worked under the new contract?

If the new contract was created in error and the employee has not returned to work at your RE, the contract will need to be deleted via ED45. If any accrued pay was attached to the new contract, you may need to delete the pay and then add it back once the new contract is deleted.

If the employee worked under the new contract, did they observe the one calendar month break in service?

You may need to contact your RE coach to see if the employee observed the one calendar month break in service. This is especially true if the employee did not work as an active employee at your RE directly prior to the retirement/termination. If they observed the one calendar month break in service, then the contract may need to be deleted via ED45 and added back as an ER (retiree) record.

TRS will continue to reach out to REs for these corrections. These corrections are considered a high priority. Contract errors can delay when TRS is able to finalize a retirement and ultimately delay the member's retirement benefits. If you have any questions about these corrections, please do not hesitate to reach out to your RE coach for assistance.

Midyear Retirement Reminders



As the calendar year draws to a close, you may have some individuals who are retiring midyear. Here are some items to keep in mind as you close out these employees and prepare to submit their retirement certification. Also included are some reminders for employees who are planning to return to work after retirement.

The [RE Portal Certification User Guide](#) contains a full description of each field on the Retirement Certification. Please also review the FAQs about [Retirement Certification](#).

Reporting Final Active Employment/Termination

- Ensure that your system does not create an incorrect contract for the final month. This will impede the posting of the final pay and may cause additional corrections during final retirement processing.
- Please be sure that the correct number of days and hours have been reported for the final month.
- If an employee has no days and hours worked in the month of their final paycheck, please be sure that you include the correct Zero Day Reason Code as **F-Final Pay**.
- Please ensure that your system creates an ED 90 to terminate employment in the month that the final pay is received. Review the Final Report month for accuracy.
- Any vacation/leave payout that is paid AFTER the employee's final pay is not considered TRS eligible and does not need to be reported.

Retirement Certification

- Will be sent after the retirement date has passed AND the retirement application from the member has been processed. The very earliest that you will see the retirement certification will be the first of the month after the member selected retirement date.
- The retirement certification can only be filled out once the payroll data, including all pay, has been issued.
- Please review the accuracy of all Salary Information and Final report month provided to TRS. Incorrect information may result in a delay or incorrect benefit payments for your employee.

- If you receive communication from a member of the TRS Retirements team, please respond as promptly as possible.
- It may take 30-60 days to fully process an employee's retirement once all the documents are received. Please refer any questions about retirement processing to a TRS Benefits Counselor at 1-800-223-8778. TRS Benefits Counselors are available Monday-Friday from 7 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Returning to Work

- All retirees must complete a one full calendar month break in service prior to returning to work as a retiree. Failure to observe this required break in service will revoke their retirement and require the repayment of any erroneous annuity payments.
- Please refer all retiree-specific Employment After Retirement questions to a TRS Benefits Counselor at 1-800-223-8778. TRS Benefits Counselors are available Monday-Friday from 7 a.m. – 6 p.m. Retirees are responsible for understanding their return to work restrictions and each retiree may have a different scenario.

Please feel free to provide the retiree with links to the Employment After Retirement information:

- [Employment After Retirement](#)
- [Employment After Retirement \(en Español\)](#)
- [EAR Limits Trifold Brochure](#)
- [Employment After Retirement Limits](#)



Weak Passwords for Streaming Services are Riskier Than You Think



Using a simple password for Disney+, Hulu, Netflix, or any other service, can leave your personal information exposed to hackers.

Entering your password directly on your TV screen for a streaming service is a tedious process. It's understandable that you would choose a short and basic password because it's frustrating to hunt and peck each character using a remote control. But that isn't the best move.

A common cybersecurity best practice is to use unique passwords across all accounts. But we all know that's not always the case. In fact, many people use the same password for all their accounts like Gmail, Facebook, financial apps, and streaming services. By sharing your streaming subscription with your family or friends, you may inadvertently hand over sensitive details from your other accounts.

Unfortunately, we can't control how our loved ones use account details. Cybercriminals not only search across PCs, mobile devices, and webpages for weak or vulnerable passwords, they also scan streaming services.

The most popular password for four of the last five years has been "123456," indicating that people still trust and rely on this simple string of characters. Most other passwords are just variations of this one, and unfortunately, a hacker could break into this type of password in less than a second.

According to Tomas Smalakys, Chief Technical Officer of NordPass, "We've noticed that streaming passwords are, on average, weaker. I could only assume that it's because people tend to share them, therefore create easier ones to remember, as well as the reason that they have to type it on a TV."

So, how can you protect your streaming accounts and other services from being compromised?

Information Security recommends creating complex passwords. The extra time spent typing in the password is worth staying secure.

In addition to creating strong passwords, Information Security also recommends setting up multi-factor authentication (MFA) across all your accounts (if your providers allow it). There are also alternative methods to logging in. Streaming services provide several options allowing users to log in including scanning a QR code with your phone or by visiting a specific URL and typing in a code seen on your TV.

Reporting Contracts for Adjuncts



TRS reporting requires employers to report eligible and ineligible employee contracts to align with the work period in which the employee will perform the work, not based on dates paid. The following are common but sometimes tricky situations which employers encounter.

TRS defines adjunct instructors as employees hired to work on a semester-by-semester basis; compensated on a per class basis; and duties include only those directly related to instruction of students.

Eligibility of all employees must be evaluated upon hire, beginning with each new contract/work agreement and anytime the expectation of position changes. Adjuncts working 20 clock hours or more, and whose employment is expected to or does continue for more than one semester, are TRS eligible and should be reported as eligible on the ED40 contract record.

An adjunct instructor's contract dates should follow the dates the adjunct is expected to perform duties for that semester's classes. This often aligns with the employer's semester dates.

Here are some considerations:

- If hired to work in the fall, the ED40 dates should include **only** the fall semester and appropriate eligibility related to the specific semester. If their position continues into the spring semester with the **same TRS eligibility**, an ED45 to extend the contract end date to the spring semester end date may be submitted.
- If the fall semester ends and the employee will continue working in the spring with a different eligibility, a new ED40 should be submitted to include only the dates of the spring semester.
- If working into the summer with the same eligibility as spring, an ED45 may be submitted or an ED40 if the eligibility is not the same as spring.
- Contracts for adjuncts should not be submitted to cover the entire school year (Sept. 1 – Aug. 31) unless the adjunct is expected to work each semester within the year. Eligibility will still need to be evaluated at the start of each semester and an ED45 submitted if the eligibility status changes.

Reporting Contracts for Adjuncts

continued from page 4



Commonly occurring examples:

Fall Semester	Spring Semester	TRS Eligibility
Less than half time (less than 20 hours per week)	Half time or more (20 or more hours per week)	Adjunct becomes TRS-eligible in the spring semester since the total employment continued for more than one semester. Rule 25.1(g)
Half time or more	Not expected to return	If employment is expected to terminate at the end of the fall semester, this is a type of temporary employment and not eligible for TRS.
Half time or more	Expect the employee to return *course load can be unknown	TRS eligible employment begins with the fall semester since the employment is expected to continue for more than one semester. Rule 25.1(g)
Half time or more - “classes don’t make”/classes dropped		In any semester, if the classes dropped changes the TRS eligibility status, then the change is retroactive. Review other eligibility scenarios to determine if a change is needed.
Half time or more	Less than half time	Adjunct is TRS eligible in the fall due to the expectation of continuing employment. Adjunct is not TRS eligible in the spring since hours drop to less than half time. If the adjunct resumes half time or more in the summer semester, they would return to TRS eligible.

continued on page 6

Reporting Contracts for Adjuncts

continued from page 5



Reevaluation of Eligibility is Vital

Accurately reporting TRS eligibility is important due to concurrent employment rules which impact multiple employers. If an RE continues to report an individual to hold an eligible position because they have not reevaluated eligibility, this may cause a trickle-down effect of adjustments for multiple employers as they continue to report based on incorrect information or made assumptions from previous reported information.

For example, reporting an adjunct instructor who concludes all their work for the fall semester in December, but with contract end date was reported into January or the spring semester may result in validation errors for other employers showing the individual earned a year of service with TRS. The participant actually worked less than 90 days in an eligible position and whose new position is no longer eligible. Other employers continue to report employment as TRS eligible when that is not the case. Once the error is discovered, all employers may need to submit adjustments and refund contributions. This is made more cumbersome if the individual has terminated employment and/or taken a refund and their TRS account is closed.

If you have any questions about reporting adjunct instructors or whether an individual holds eligible concurrent employment, please contact your TRS coach.

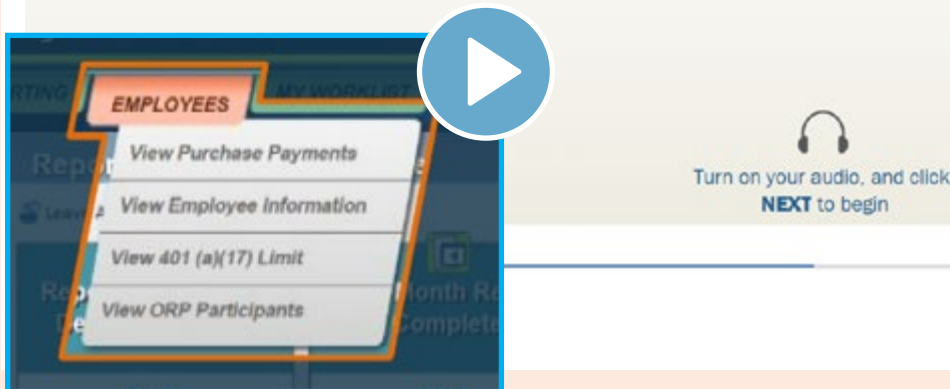


RE Portal Training: *Employees Tab*



RE PORTAL TRAINING

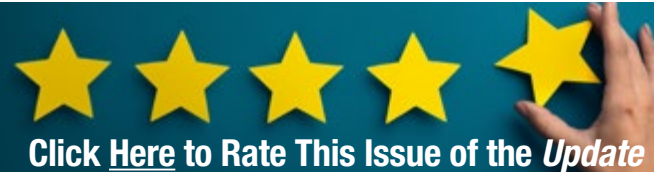
Employees Tab



Many people find that a video explanation is the best way to learn.

Take advantage of more than a dozen informative videos in the [TRS Video Library](#) to understand TRS processes and reports for reporting employers.

Follow TRS on Social Media



Life Event Resource Kit



Many career changes require TRS members to update their account information or take other action. That's why we've created our Life Event Resource Kit/Employer Toolkit – to guide TRS members on their next steps and provide them with the information and resources they need for their life and career changes.

New TRS members will find the “[Ready to Retire](#)” section of our Career Events Resource Toolkit helpful when searching for answers to questions like:

- I'm thinking about retiring, what should I do first?
- How much will my annuity be?
- Will I receive social security?

Explore the [Life Event Resource Kit](#) today to see what steps you need to take and when. The impact of these events can be significant, and we want to ensure you're making the most of your benefits – in all ways possible – with each step forward.

TRS Member Education Videos



Learn all about your TRS pension benefits by watching our [Member Education Videos](#)!

Help us spread the word about the series by downloading a [poster](#) from our website and displaying it at your school.

