

**UPDATE**

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## UPCOMING TRS TRAININGS

### Fall 2023 Virtual Sessions

TRS is offering the following virtual training sessions. Each attendee must register individually on the [RE Portal Virtual Training](#) page. This will ensure that you receive the link to access the web session as well as a copy of the materials being covered.

#### Fall 2023 Virtual Training Schedule

Oct. 10	View Employee Information	9 a.m.- 10:30 a.m.
Oct. 17	TRS Membership Eligibility	9 a.m.- 10:30 a.m.
Oct. 24	TRS Reporting Requirements	9 a.m.- 10:30 a.m.
Oct. 31	Reporting Substitutes to TRS	9 a.m.- 10:30 a.m.
Nov. 7	Employment After Retirement Reporting	9 a.m.- 10:30 a.m.
Nov. 9	Creditable Compensation	9 a.m.- 10:30 a.m.
Nov. 14	Higher Education Employer Contributions	9 a.m.- 10:30 a.m.
Nov. 16	Employer Contributions-ISD, ESC, Charter Schools	9 a.m.- 10:30 a.m.
Nov. 28	RE Ledger Training	9 a.m.- 10:30 a.m.
Nov. 30	Penalty Interest, Fees and Reconciling the RE Ledger	9 a.m.- 10:30 a.m.
Dec. 7	RE Certifications	9 a.m.- 10:30 a.m.
Dec. 12	ORP-Eligibility, Elections and the TRS 28	9 a.m.- 10:30 a.m.
Dec. 14	ORP-Reporting to TRS	9 a.m.- 10:30 a.m.

## KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR ANNUAL MEMBER STATEMENTS

TRS members will soon receive their TRS annual statements. These statements contain the total reported member contributions for the 2022-23 fiscal year. This includes all reported TRS-eligible compensation and member contributions paid Sept. 1, 2022 through Aug. 31, 2023 by all employers. The statement also includes the total accumulated contributions in the member's account and the amount of service credit TRS recognizes.

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## KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR ANNUAL MEMBER STATEMENTS *continued from page 1*

As a reminder, the annual salaries recorded on the statements include amounts paid to the employee and reported for the TRS Fiscal Year, September 2022 - August 2023. These months may differ from the months in the employee's annual or school year contract. If a TRS member encounters a salary discrepancy and notifies you as the Reporting Employer (RE), review the data reported to TRS via monthly Regular Payroll (RP) report. REs can access information reported by your employer only in the RE Portal by navigating to View Employee Information > View RP Payroll Info. Contact your TRS coach for assistance related to salary discrepancies only if the salaries were not reported correctly after reviewing the data in the TRS RE Portal.

If your employer did not complete all FY 2023 reports (September 2022 - August 2023) by the Sept. 29, 2023 deadline, the member's statement may be inaccurate. Please inform the TRS-eligible employees which report months were not included on the statement. The missing months would be any reports not completed by Sept. 29, 2023. TRS does not reprint or create new annual statements, however, the account balances will be reflected on the member's *MyTRS* account once the RE reports all months not included on the statement.

TRS encourages all members to review their annual statements carefully. If members have any questions related to their statement, first refer them to the 2023 Annual Statement page on the TRS website.

[2023 Annual Statement Information Page](#)

Years of Service Credit:	28		
Service Credit based on school year (Sept. 1 through Aug. 31), not calendar year.			
Beginning Account Balance	\$53,700.00		\$77,777
Total Annual Deposits	\$123,456.99		\$55,555
Interest Credited in 2013	\$87,543.09		\$44,444
Average Salary:			\$3,333
			\$87,654

Any errors or omissions for eligible salary or service must be corrected within five years from the end of the school year in which service was rendered. Similarly, compensation not reflected on the statement must be verified within five years from the end of the school year in which it is paid. If adjustments are not made within the applicable time frame, the member may not establish a year of service credit, or include the full eligible compensation used to determine TRS benefits.

## REPORTING INTERSESSION CONTRACTS FOR YEAR-ROUND SCHOOLS

If you're employed at a year-round school with employees working an intersession, this will need to be reported separately from their regular school year employment.

TRS established position code 09 for Independent School Districts (ISDs) to use for employees working summer school when their regular school year contract was subject to Statutory Minimum Contributions. Position code 09 enabled REs to report the summer school work and pay as "wholly separate" and not subject to Statutory Minimum Contributions.

Position code 09 was originally intended to be used only during summer school. However, it has come to TRS' attention that year-round schools with intersessions also need a method to report the intersession work as wholly separate from the regular school year contract. Thus, position code 09 will be used for these intersession contracts as well. Use of position code 09 for contracts outside of summer school will be limited to year-round schools only and will require an override by the reporting coach.

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# RE COACH SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS

Reporting Employer (RE) Coaches support employers in many ways and TRS management has defined the expectations of service, or Service Level Agreements (SLAs) by outlining timelines for different scenarios or services.

Below are expected response times, but some situations may take longer to fully resolve. For example, complex cases that require additional information or in-depth research from the REs may take longer to resolve and completion may be outside of the SLAs listed below.

Please note that any requests for assistance (questions, overrides etc.) received after 4 p.m. CDT will be considered received the next business day.

Service	Expectation
<b>Email</b>	Most responses should be within the same business day. If you receive an out of office message from your RE Coach, please be sure to forward the full original email to <a href="mailto:reporting@trs.texas.gov">reporting@trs.texas.gov</a> for support during your coach's absence.
<b>Phone</b>	Most phone call requests will be handled the same business day. This includes incoming calls, returning calls and voicemails. RE Coaches are expected to be available to accept incoming calls when not in training or responding to emails and chats. Most coaches take lunch between 12 and 1 p.m. Your coach should include their working hours in their email signature.
<b>RE Portal Chat</b>	Chat is available 9 a.m. – 12 p.m., and 1 – 4 p.m. each business day from the 11th through the end of the calendar month. There are resources available in the Chat feature even when Chat with an RE Coach is not available. You can access these through the Open Live Chat option in the RE Portal.  Please do not share any Personally Identifiable Information (PII) in the chat portal.
<b>Overrides</b>	Override requests should be completed within one-two business days once all required information is received. If a coach reaches out for additional clarification, please provide the information as quickly as possible.
<b>Fund Transfer Requests</b>	Within one business day.
<b>597A Forms</b>	Within one business day.
<b>Password Reset for Web Administrators</b>	Within one business day.
<b>Unfreeze RE Portal Account</b>	Within one business day.
<b>TRS Internal Requests for other departments.</b>	Three to five business days. Includes participant account updates.
<b>TRS Legal Review</b>	Generally, two weeks. Includes standard superintendent contracts and settlement pay. Certain requests may take longer.

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## WARNINGS 4 – MISC

There are two remaining warnings that have a direct impact on the errors that you receive in the next reporting period. Both of the warnings have an immediate impact on your next month's reports and should be worked as a part of your post-report processing.

The first warning deals with the IRS Salary Cap. Since TRS is a 401(a) retirement plan, there is a maximum amount that can be reported to TRS as eligible salary. You can find the [current amount here](#). The warning below appears once an employee has reached 85%+ of the IRS salary cap for the current year.

### WARNING MESSAGE 387

- *<The Member SSN> is approaching the annual creditable compensation limit in accordance with the Federal IRC 401(a)17 limitation. Only <\$\$\$> in salary is available to report for the remainder of this plan year ending on <August 31,2023>.*

The amount shown is the remaining amount that TRS will be able to accept in future reports until the end of the fiscal year (Aug. 31) if the employee is subject to the salary cap. You can go to the Employees Tab of the RE Portal and click the 401(a)17 limits drop down to view the total amount of eligible compensation remaining to be reported at any time. Once someone has reached the 401(a)17 limit, you would still continue to report the hours and days for each month worked. Make a note of the amount that is able to be reported and review your next month's RP report to ensure that the correct amounts are being reported.

The second warning is an indicator that concurrent employment has been reported. The warning reads as follows:

### WARNING MESSAGE 579

- *This employee may be reported by another RE as being in a TRS-eligible position. Please verify TRS membership eligibility.*

First, look at the View Employee Information screen. After entering two of the three identification fields and selecting enter, you will be able to see the summary page. On the lower right-hand side, it will show the TRS-Eligible Date range. If the employee is being reported as eligible, this will give you the beginning date of the eligible contract. Remember, if an employee is meeting eligibility with another TRS-Covered Employer, then all work that they perform for all TRS covered employers are eligible unless the employee is a substitute for your employer.

If the TRS-eligible date range is present, please reach out to your coach regarding the necessary contract adjustments and the required withholding of TRS contributions.

## UPCOMING TRS HOLIDAY CLOSURES

TRS will be closed on the following days:

- Wednesday Nov. 22, through Friday Nov. 24, 2023, in observance of Thanksgiving.  
We will resume normal business hours on Monday Nov. 27, 2023.
- Friday Dec. 22, through Tuesday Dec. 26, 2023, in observance of Christmas.  
We will resume normal business hours on Wednesday Dec. 27, 2023.
- Monday Jan. 1, through Tuesday Jan. 2, 2024, in observance of New Year's.  
We will resume normal business hours on Wednesday Jan. 3, 2024.

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# PHIGHT THE PHISH!

Last month, we mentioned a bit about phishing.

You're probably asking, *what is that? Do I need to bring my fishing pole and water boots?*

Let's dive into the phish tank. . .

**Social Engineering** is a tactic that cybercriminals use to gain access to systems and resources by way of psychological methods. The attacks are not against technology, rather they target the individual and play on our curiosity, kindness, and how we trust in others.

**Phishing** is one such type of social engineering - when attackers send malicious emails designed to trick you into

falling for a scam - and Information Security wants you to stay vigilant against them with these easy tips!

## How Bad Actors Lure You In

Email is arguably the most common method for compromising a network and is frequently the first step in a data breach. The most common way to breach an enterprise system is via a phishing email attempting to trick the recipient into giving away network login credentials or clicking on a nefarious hyperlink. The employee is always the first line of defense and ensuring that employees remain vigilant will significantly reduce the chances of a successful phishing attempt.

### Follow these easy tips to protect yourself from falling victim:

Security infrastructure captures most malicious traffic and inbound malicious emails; however, some malicious email still makes it through to employee inboxes.



#### THINK BEFORE YOU ACT

Be wary of communications that implore you to act immediately. Many phishing emails attempt to create a sense of urgency, causing the recipient to fear their account or information is in jeopardy. If you receive a suspicious email that appears to be from someone you know, reach out to that person directly via phone call or a new email. If the email comes from an organization but still looks "phishy," reach out to them via customer service to verify the communication.



#### DOUBLE YOUR LOGIN PROTECTION

Enable multi-factor authentication (MFA) to ensure that the only person who has access to your account is you. Use it for email, banking, social media, and any other personal service that requires logging in.



#### SHAKE UP YOUR PASSWORD PROTOCOL

Consider using the longest password or passphrase permissible. Get creative and customize your standard password for different sites, which can prevent cybercriminals from gaining access to these accounts and protect you in the event of a breach.



#### BE WARY OF HYPERLINKS

Avoid clicking on hyperlinks in emails and hover over links to verify authenticity. Also ensure that URLs begin with "https" when entering sensitive information like login information or financial information. The "s" indicates encryption is enabled to protect users' information.



#### PLAY HARD TO GET WITH STRANGERS

Links in email and online posts are often the way cybercriminals compromise your computer. If you're unsure who an email is from—even if the details appear accurate—do not respond, and do not click on any links or attachments found in that email. Be cautious of generic greetings such as "Hello Bank Customer," as these are often signs of phishing attempts. If you are concerned about the legitimacy of an email, call the company directly.

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## WATCH & LEARN: TRS MEMBER EDUCATION VIDEO SERIES

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.

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## LIFE EVENT RESOURCES FOR REs AND TRS MEMBERS

TRS members experience various personal and career changes throughout their lives. We're here with resources to help guide you through many of them whether you're nearing retirement, turning 65, working after retirement, starting a family, or even purchasing a home. 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.

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## COMING SOON: COMMISSIONED PEACE OFFICERS SURVEY

We need your help! This month, the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS) will be sending a preliminary survey to Reporting Employer (RE) contacts to help gather current information about Commissioned Peace Officers and other similar positions from your employer.

House Bill (HB) 4141, passed during the 88<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Regular Session, directs TRS to conduct a study on the feasibility of offering alternative service retirement benefits to peace officers who are members of the retirement system.

If you receive an email request from TRS@public.govdelivery.com to complete the survey, please be assured this is a legitimate request from TRS. This preliminary survey will allow us to gather current information. We also will be sending a follow-up survey early in the new year to gather final reporting information as of Dec. 31, 2023. This will allow us to conduct the legislatively required study in a timely manner.

You can find the link to the survey, along with information about who to contact with any questions, in the email request. Simply click the link in the email to complete the quick 10-15 minute survey at your earliest convenience, but no later than Nov. 30, 2023.

Thank you for your help in completing this important request!