

TEACHER RETIREMENT SYSTEM of TEXAS

UPDATE

HOW TO DEFINE FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT

For TRS purposes, we define the Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) as the number of hours per week that an employee must work to be considered full time in a particular position.

Generally, a full-time position requires an employee to work 40 hours per week, which would be reported as an FTE of 40. A Reporting Employer (RE) may have positions that require fewer than 40 hours per week to be considered full time, but a full-time position can never be less than 30 hours per week.

If an RE has positions in which no employee is required to work between 30-40 hours a week, TRS considers these positions to have no full-time equivalent. If there is no FTE for a given position, an employee must be hired to work at least 15 hours per week to be eligible to participate in TRS. This requirement applies to **all** positions, including bus drivers, but excludes [adjunct faculty in higher education](#).

PROPERLY COMPLETING THE TRS28 – ELECTION TO PARTICIPATE IN OPTIONAL RETIREMENT PROGRAM AND/OR REFUND

Certain higher education positions are eligible to opt out of TRS participation and elect to participate in the Optional Retirement Program (ORP). Election for ORP requires the employee to complete a [TRS 28](#) form and for the reporting employer business official to authorize the form. The completed TRS 28 form must then be mailed to TRS.

Pages one and two must be completed by the employee and page three is to be completed by an RE contact with signature authority level. Below are the fields on page three of the TRS 28, including instructions on how to complete each field with the correct information:

- **Date First Eligible to Elect ORP**
 - Date the employee first entered the ORP-Eligible Position
- **ORP Eligibility Notification Date**
 - Date employer notified the employee of their eligibility to elect ORP in lieu of TRS
- **ORP Election Date**
 - The date that the employee actually signed the TRS 28 election form. This must be within 90 days of the eligibility date.
- **ORP Effective Date**
 - Election on Initial ORP Eligibility Date – for new employees who sign the TRS 28 ORP election form on or before their initial ORP eligibility date, the participation start date shall be the initial ORP eligibility date (i.e., first day of ORP-eligible employment)
 - Election after the Initial ORP-Eligibility Date – the participation start date for ORP-eligible employees who sign the TRS 28 ORP election form after their initial ORP-eligibility date, shall be the first day of the month.
- **Report Month/Year for Final Deposit to TRS**
 - No Dual Contributions – contribution to TRS and to an ORP company within the *same* calendar month shall not be permitted, as provided in Rule [§25.6\(a\)\(4\)](#).
 - The Final Report Month to TRS should be based on compensation earned up to the Effective Date of the ORP election.
 - **Example:** employee entered ORP-eligible position Sept. 1 and made the election Sept. 15. The effective date of ORP is Oct. 1. The compensation earned in September must be reported as eligible with contributions to TRS. The month in which the employee receives this compensation is the Final Report Month to TRS.
 - If the employee elected ORP on or before the first day eligible, this field should be left blank.

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UTILIZING THE ‘LESS THAN HALF-TIME’ EMPLOYMENT TYPE

The *less than half-time* employment type on the ED 40 position record is intended for positions that do not meet the TRS membership requirements on their own. The employee working in the position would be working less than half of the position's full-time equivalent. As an example, an employee is hired to work 18 hours per week in a position with a 40 hours per week full-time equivalent. The employee would not establish TRS eligibility in this position; therefore, the employment type will be less than half time.

The scenarios below are provided to further illustrate the use of this employment type.

Eligibility Established at a Single Employer, Single Position

If an employee's single position meets the TRS eligibility requirements at your employer, the less than half-time employment type should not be used. The employment type for a position that meets the TRS membership-eligibility requirements must be reported with the *half-time or more* employment type. An employee in this position would be hired to work at least one half of the position's full-time equivalent. In our example above, the employee was hired into a position with a 40 hours per week full-time equivalent. If the employee is hired to work 20 or more hours per week, the employee is likely eligible for TRS and the employment type should be *half time or more*.

When an employer submits an ED 40 with TRS eligible “yes” and employment type *less than half time*, TRS will question if the employee is truly eligible.

Eligibility Established at a Single Employer, Multiple Positions

If an employee holds multiple positions at a *single* employer and only one of the positions meets the eligibility requirements, each position's employment type will be based on the individual position.

As an example, an employee is hired as a teacher's aide for 24 hours per week and a bus driver for 10 hours per week. The aide position establishes the employee's membership eligibility and the ED 40 record should have the *half-time or more* employment type. The bus driver position on its own does not meet eligibility and should have the employment type of *less than half time*. Both positions will have TRS eligible “yes.”

Eligibility Established with a Concurrent Employer

If an employee establishes employment on a concurrent basis, each employer will report the employment type based on the position held at their employer.

As an example, employee establishes eligibility with employer A and works in a *less than half-time* position for employer B. Employer A will report TRS eligible “yes” and employment type *half time or more*. Employer B will report TRS eligible “yes” and employment type *less than half time*.

COVID-19 RESOURCES FOR TRS HEALTH PLAN PARTICIPANTS

The coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to be a top concern in the U.S. Aetna and CVS Caremark have the following resources available to your TRS-ActiveCare employees:

- Waived costs for all diagnostic testing for COVID-19 for patients who meet CDC guidelines.
- \$0 TRS Virtual Health (Teladoc) visits for any health care need.
- Free home delivery of all prescription medications.
- Care packages for participants or their family members who contract COVID-19. The packages contain over-the-counter medications to alleviate symptoms and household cleaning supplies to help protect other household members from possible exposure.
- Refills for maintenance medications before a 30-day prescription is up (strongly encouraged).
- Access to the following programs:
 - Crisis Response Lines for participants who may be experiencing anxiety related to COVID-19 (coming soon).
 - Expanded 24/7 access to the Aetna Nurse Medical Line.
 - Resources for Living toolkit with materials specifically developed for members experiencing anxiety related to COVID-19.

TRS has sent communication with this information out to all TRS health plan participants with an email on file. If an employee with TRS-ActiveCare is transitioning to TRS-Care while COVID-19 remains uncontained, all of the benefits listed above will still be available to them.