

Update

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TEACHER RETIREMENT SYSTEM OF TEXAS

TEAM Program update

As you know, TRS is undertaking a modernization effort of its pension administration system to ensure that we are able to continue to provide the best possible service to our members. The effort, known internally at TRS as the TEAM Program (TRS Enterprise Application Modernization Program), includes a new and improved web interface for employee data and payroll reporting and will replace the TRS Reporting and Query System (TRAQS). TRS must update technologies to allow greater flexibility in providing service to TRS membership and to reduce the risks associated with obsolete technology.

Once the new system is implemented, TRS will be requiring more information than is currently provided to us each month. For example, TRS will be asking you to report all employees on your payroll register, not just eligible employees. Additional data elements will also be needed to ensure that TRS has complete and accurate information and information needed to comply with the new GASB 67 and 68 reporting and allocation guidelines. To this end, TRS has already begun reaching out to software providers to ensure the payroll systems you currently use will be ready for the new requirements when the new TRS Reporting Entity (RE) reporting system is implemented.

What are we doing?

We are implementing a Hewlett Packard (HP) technology solution called “Clarety” that will provide a framework for all of our benefit-related processes. We are working in conjunction with Provaliant, a project management firm that has assisted other entities as they implemented HP’s Clarety framework. Currently, the Clarety framework is used by 10 pension funds across the United States.

Along with HP and Provaliant, TRS is building out the Clarety framework so that it allows us to more effectively and efficiently meet all of our business needs. From the reporting entity perspective, this means electronically submitting (uploading) employee data and payroll reports produced by your current software successfully each month and providing the flexibility to manually submit employee and payroll information directly into the TRS RE reporting system.

While the dates are still just estimates, TRS is anticipating implementing the new reporting system very late in calendar year 2015 or in the early part of the 2016 calendar year. We will keep you informed regarding changes in the timeline as we move along in our implementation process.

Where are we in the process?

We are currently in the requirements design phase of our implementation, nearing the final stages of confirming Detailed Level Requirements with HP. Draft and final report file layouts will be provided to all reporting entities and known software providers as soon as they’re available so you/they can begin development. That should happen over the next few months.

Next steps:

- Reporting entities and software providers will receive draft report file layouts.
- HP developers will build out the system incorporating all of the specifications developed throughout the Detailed Level Requirements sessions.
- Final report file layouts will be provided to Reporting Entities and software providers.
- The system will be tested by both HP and TRS to verify system functionality and performance. A few reporting entities and software providers will be asked to assist with this testing.
- Software providers (including internal IT departments who work for the Reporting Entity) will distribute new software to their respective reporting entities once the software is ready.

- TRS will begin training sessions for all 1,300+ reporting entities throughout Texas that can then submit reports for testing and certification.

In the coming months, TRS will include regular status reports, training information, and other system replacement news in the TRS *Update* newsletters. In the meantime you can visit the [TEAM Program Communications page](#) on the TRS Employer Web page for information and updates.

Reminder regarding 403(b) company changes

Public school districts and open enrollment charter schools are reminded that the list of companies certified with TRS to receive 403(b) salary reduction contributions may change. Although many districts and schools contract with third-party administrators to manage their 403(b) programs, responsibility for compliance remains with the 403(b) plan sponsor (districts and schools). A complete list of all companies currently certified to receive 403(b) contributions can be found on the TRS website at http://www.trs.state.tx.us/403b/documents/certified_companies_list.pdf. A complete list of all changes to the list of 403(b) certified companies, including those companies whose certifications have expired, can be found at http://www.trs.state.tx.us/403b/documents/history_companies.pdf. Questions regarding the list of 403(b) certified companies may be addressed to Sam Martin at 512-542-6667.

Correction to October 2014 Update article: “Changing payroll dates to synchronize with the TRS standardized school year”

Information in the October *Update* article regarding the required length of pay periods under Texas law was incorrect as the Texas Payday Law does not apply to public school employees. TRS regrets any confusion caused by the misstatement. However, please note that the TRS plan terms provide that compensation creditable for TRS purposes is money that is paid or payable at fixed intervals, generally at the end of each pay period. Again, you are not required to change payroll or contract dates in order to comply with the standardized school year and you should not attempt to shift compensation paid to employees into the new school year by manipulating the pay periods. Please contact your TRAQs coach if you have questions regarding this issue.

2015 TRS Board election nomination forms available online

Active public school district, charter school and regional education service center employees who are TRS members may now request petitions to nominate candidates to a position on the TRS Board of Trustees.

In spring 2015, an election will be held to field nominees who are eligible for appointment to fill one of the two public education positions on the board of trustees. The position will be for a six-year term beginning as early as Sept. 1, 2015. All TRS members whose most recent credited service is or was performed for a public school district, charter school or regional education service center are eligible to vote in this election. Members of the system who are currently employed in a TRS-eligible position by a public school district, charter school or regional education service center may have their names listed on the official ballot as candidates by filing an official petition.

Petitions must be signed by 250 public school district employees who are TRS members and whose most recent credited service is or was performed for a public school district, charter school or regional education service center. In addition, when members sign the petition, they must include their printed or typed names, the first five digits of their current residential zip code, and the last four digits of their social security number. All valid nominating petitions **filed with TRS by Jan. 20, 2015**, will be accepted.

By March 15, 2015, TRS will mail ballots and an edition of *TRS News* containing candidate information to all TRS participants who are eligible to vote in the elections. TRS must receive completed ballots on or before May 5, 2015. Then, TRS will certify the names of the three candidates who received the highest number of votes to the governor. The governor will then appoint one of those candidates to serve on the board.

To obtain a petition form, you may:

- Print the petition form from the TRS website at www.trs.state.tx.us/about/documents/trustee_election_petition.pdf;
- Write TRS at 1000 Red River; Austin, TX 78701-2698;

- Call 1-800-223-8778, ext. 2702; or
- Fax a request to 1-512-542-6585.

Nominating instructions are included on the form.

TRS offices closed for Veterans Day and Thanksgiving holidays

In observance of Veterans Day, TRS offices will be closed on Tuesday, Nov. 11. In addition, our offices will close for the Thanksgiving holidays on Wednesday through Friday, Nov. 26-28. We will reopen for business at 8 a.m. on Monday, Dec. 1.

TRAQS - Tip of the Month

Around the 6th of the month, TRAQS processing runs will take longer than usual due to the volume of reports being sent in. Please note that it may take two or three hours for reports to process instead of the usual 30-45 minutes.