

The **Oklahoma Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS)** is a defined benefit retirement plan qualified under Section 401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code. Participation in OPERS is mandatory for eligible hazardous duty employees. OPERS provides you a lifetime retirement benefit when you meet the eligibility requirements described below.

You participate in OPERS by contributing a portion of your salary each pay period. Your employer also contributes on your behalf. The amount of your contributions does not determine the amount of the benefit OPERS promises you. Your benefits are determined by a formula which includes your salary and years of credited service. The paid contributions are invested, under the direction of the OPERS Board of Trustees, to provide retirement benefits to eligible members.

This handout is an overview describing OPERS plan provisions as of November 1, 2024. It is not a plan document and does not create any type of binding obligation, contract, or promise to pay benefits. OPERS reserves the right to correct any errors contained herein to comply with federal or state statutes. For more information, visit [www.opers.ok.gov](http://www.opers.ok.gov).

### Membership and Participation

Participation in OPERS begins on the first day of the month, or on the first day of employment for returning members whose prior service has not been withdrawn immediately following the beginning date of your employment, provided that all of the following apply:

1. Your position is permanent, not seasonal, or temporary; and,
2. Your position requires at least 1,000 hours of work per year; and,
3. Your salary is equal to or greater than the minimum wage.

Hazardous Duty provisions only apply to those in positions listed on the back of this document as designated by statute.

### Contributions

Current contribution rates are 8.0% for employees and 16.5% for employer contributions.

The employee contribution rate is required for a maximum of 20 years of hazardous duty participating service. After you have contributed at the higher rate for 20 years, you will contribute at the non-hazardous duty rate (excluding Oklahoma Military Department firefighters<sup>1</sup>) and you can choose to participate in Step-Up at that time.

### Vesting

To be vested means you have accumulated enough service credit to entitle you to a lifetime monthly retirement benefit in the future. You must have eight years<sup>2</sup> of credited service (including six full years of full-time-equivalent employment<sup>3</sup>) to be considered vested.

### Eligibility for Normal Retirement Benefits

If you have 20 Years of Service:

- You can begin receiving full, unreduced retirement benefits with **20 full years** of full-time-equivalent employment in the hazardous duty plan, provided you retire from a hazardous duty position.

### Retirement eligibilities if you are not retiring under the 20-year criteria.

If you became a member of OPERS before November 1, 2011:

- **Age 62** – You can begin receiving full, unreduced retirement benefits when you are at least age 62 with six full years of full-time-equivalent employment<sup>4</sup>; or
- **80 Points** – You can begin receiving full, unreduced retirement benefits when the sum of your age and years of service equals 80 if you became a member before July 1, 1992; or
- **90 Points** – You can begin receiving full, unreduced retirement benefits when the sum of your age and years of service equals 90 if you became a member on or after July 1, 1992.

If you became a member of OPERS on or after November 1, 2011:

- **Age 65** – You can begin receiving full, unreduced retirement benefits when you are at least age 65 with six full years of full-time-equivalent employment; or
- **90 Points** – You can begin receiving full, unreduced retirement benefits when you are at least 60 years of age and the sum of your age and years of service equals 90.

### Eligibility for Early Retirement Benefits

If you became a member of OPERS before November 1, 2011:

- You can begin receiving reduced retirement benefits once you have reached age 55 and have at least 10 years<sup>2</sup> of participating service.

If you became a member of OPERS on or after November 1, 2011:

- You can begin receiving reduced retirement benefits once you have reached age 60 and have at least 10 years<sup>2</sup> of participating service.

If you choose early retirement, you will receive a **permanent** actuarial reduction in your benefit based on your age at retirement.

### Eligibility for Disability Benefits

If you must terminate participation in OPERS due to significant health problems resulting in permanent disability, you may be entitled to disability benefits if you meet four conditions:

1. You qualify for payment of disability from the Social Security Administration (SSA) or the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB).
2. The disability date established by the SSA or RRB is within one year after your last date physically on the job with an OPERS participating employer.
3. The disability is a result of an injury or illness which occurred while you were physically on the job.
4. You have completed at least eight years of participating service, six years of which must be full-time-equivalent service.

### Hazardous Duty Job Positions

Department of Corrections<sup>5</sup>

Correctional Security Officer  
Correctional Security Manager  
Correctional Chief of Security  
Probation and Parole Officer  
Fugitive Apprehension Agents

Grand River Dam Authority Lake Patrol Officer

Oklahoma Military Department Firefighters

County Deputy Sheriff

County Jailer

Licensed Emergency Medical Personnel<sup>6</sup>

### Calculating Your Retirement Benefits

Your gross annual retirement benefit is calculated using a formula<sup>7</sup> multiplying your:

- **Final Average Compensation** – If you became a member **before July 1, 2013**, this is the average of your compensation during your highest three years out of the last 10 years of participating service prior to retirement (including highest three longevity payments). If you became a member **on or after July 1, 2013**, this is the average of your highest five years out of the last 10 years of participating service prior to retirement (including highest five longevity payments).<sup>8</sup>
- **Total Service Credit** – The years and full months you have participated in OPERS, including any purchased service, prior service, bonus years, and months of unused sick leave (six months maximum). If you became a member **before November 1, 2012**, your total service will round up or down to the nearest full year. If you became a member **on or after November 1, 2012**, you will receive credit for your full years and months of service without rounding.
- **Computation Factor of 0.025 (or 2.5%)** on whole years for up to 20 years of Hazardous Duty service.

- <sup>1</sup> Oklahoma Military Department Firefighters continue to pay the hazardous duty contribution rate and earn additional service credit at the 2.5% computation factor for service in excess of 20 years.
- <sup>2</sup> Rounding eliminated for members who begin on or after November 1, 2012. These members will be credited with full years and months of participation.
- <sup>3</sup> Full-time equivalent employment refers to a member's actual employment with a participating OPERS employer and is credited on service where the member is making contributions or purchasing service that constitutes full-time employment with a participating employer.
- <sup>4</sup> In this scenario, a member only needs six full years of full-time-equivalent employment and must be actively employed with a participating OPERS employer at the applicable age to become eligible for normal retirement.
- <sup>5</sup> A Department of Corrections (DOC) employee who has at least five years of participating service in one of these classification codes and changes to another position within DOC may be required to continue participation under the hazardous duty provisions.
- <sup>6</sup> Licensed emergency medical personnel who are hired by a participating employer for the first time on or after November 1, 2024 will participate in the hazardous duty plan. This plan is open only to members who have not worked as licensed emergency medical personnel prior to November 1, 2024.
- <sup>7</sup> If you have non-hazardous duty service in OPERS, your benefit formula includes separate calculations for your hazardous duty and non-hazardous duty service, which are added together to create one single benefit. Non-hazardous duty service is calculated using a 2.0% computation factor. Hazardous duty service is calculated on full years. Additional months of hazardous duty will be calculated with other service at the non-hazardous duty rate.
- <sup>8</sup> In the past, certain salary caps applied. Therefore, if any of the highest years of annual compensation out of the last 10 years of compensation prior to retirement was earned before July 1, 1999, compensation for that year is subject to a cap. Contact OPERS for more information.