



# Defined Contribution Retirement Program (DCRP) if Ineligible for PERS or TPAF Enrollment

**Information for:**  
Employees below the minimum salary or hours required for PERS or TPAF enrollment

The Defined Contribution Retirement Program (DCRP) was established July 1, 2007, under the provisions of N.J.S.A. 43:15C-1 et seq. The DCRP provides eligible members with a tax-sheltered, defined contribution retirement benefit, along with life insurance and long-term disability coverage.

## ELIGIBILITY

This fact sheet addresses DCRP membership for employees who do not earn the minimum salary or work the minimum hours required for enrollment in the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) or Teachers' Pension and Annuity Fund (TPAF). Employees who are already enrolled in a New Jersey State-administered retirement system should refer to the *Defined Contribution Retirement Program (DCRP) Enrollment Due to Maximum Compensation Limits* Fact Sheet. Elected and appointed officials should refer to the *Defined Contribution Retirement Program (DCRP) for Elected and Appointed Officials* Fact Sheet. These fact sheets are available on our website at: [www.nj.gov/treasury/pensions](http://www.nj.gov/treasury/pensions)

Employees hired on or after November 2, 2008, and on or before May 21, 2010, must earn a minimum base salary of \$9,900\* or more per year to be eligible for enrollment in Tier 3 of the PERS or TPAF.

Any employee otherwise eligible to enroll in Tier 3 of the PERS or TPAF who does not earn the required minimum annual salary, but earns a minimum base salary of \$5,000 or more, must be enrolled in the DCRP.

Employees hired after May 21, 2010, must work a minimum of 35 hours per week if a State employee, or 32 hours per week if a local government or local education employee, to be eligible for enrollment in Tier 4 or Tier 5 of the PERS or TPAF.

Any employee otherwise eligible to enroll in Tier 4 or Tier 5 of the PERS or TPAF who does not work the required minimum hours, but earns a minimum annual base salary of \$5,000 or more, must be enrolled in the DCRP.

## ENROLLMENT

The employer is responsible for enrolling a DCRP-eligible employee as of the starting date of eligibility by using the *DCRP Enrollment Application* available on the Employer Pensions and Benefits Information Connection (EPIC), available on our website.

Enrollment is required for eligible employees. There is no option for waiver of DCRP enrollment for these individuals.

When enrolled in the DCRP, members contribute 5.5 percent of the base salary to a tax-deferred investment account established with Empower (formerly Prudential), which jointly administers the DCRP investments with the New Jersey Division of Pensions & Benefits (NJDPB). Member contributions are matched by a three percent employer contribution.

Contributions are required from the date of DCRP eligibility. If any back deductions are owed, employers must schedule and remit them to the DCRP.

## If Eligible Later for the PERS or TPAF

If an employee enrolled in the DCRP earns sufficient salary or works sufficient hours at a later date to qualify for enrollment in the PERS or TPAF, the employee will be enrolled in the PERS or TPAF.

Upon becoming a PERS or TPAF member, contributions to the DCRP will cease; however, prior contributions remain invested in the DCRP pending retirement or termination of employment.

Contributions to the DCRP cannot be transferred to the PERS or TPAF, and service credit as a DCRP member cannot be purchased as PERS or TPAF service credit.

A PERS or TPAF employee may once again become eligible for the DCRP if:

- The annual salary falls below the minimum salary required for PERS or TPAF Tier 3 membership; deductions will cease and the member will contribute to the DCRP plan;
- The number of work hours falls below the minimum hours per week required for PERS or TPAF Tier 4 or Tier 5 membership; deductions will cease and the member will contribute to the DCRP plan;
- The annual salary is in excess of the maximum compensation limit (members enrolled in the PERS or TPAF on or after July 1, 2007) — see the *Defined Contribution Retirement Program (DCRP) Enrollment Due to Maximum Compensation Limits* Fact Sheet; or

\*The Tier 3 minimum base salary is subject to adjustment annually in accordance with changes in the Consumer Price Index.

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- The employee becomes a State or local elected or appointed official — see the *Defined Contribution Retirement Program (DCRP) for Elected and Appointed Officials* Fact Sheet.

## Transfer of PERS or TPAF Membership

Employees who are PERS or TPAF members and transfer to another PERS or TPAF position are not subject to the minimum salary or minimum hours of their existing PERS or TPAF membership tier if any of the following situations apply:

- The member transfers to a PERS- or TPAF-eligible position without a break in service;
- Any break in service is two years or less from the date of the last PERS contribution, or 10 years or less from the date of the last TPAF pension contribution (extended to 15 years for vested TPAF members), and the account has not been withdrawn;
- Any break in service is two years or less from the date of the last PERS contribution, or 10 years or less from the date of the last TPAF pension contribution (extended to 15 years for vested TPAF members), or less from the end of an approved leave of absence; or
- The member's job is lost through no fault of the member (laid off or position is abolished — not terminated voluntarily or for cause) and the member returns to PERS or TPAF employment within 10 years of the termination date, or TPAF employment within 15 years of the termination date.

If a member transfers into the PERS or TPAF after a break in service that falls beyond the exceptions described above, the member will be subject to the Tier 4 or Tier 5 minimum hours requirement,\* regardless of the previous membership tier status.

If the work hours fall below the Tier 4 or Tier 5 mini-

um requirement, the employee will be ineligible for transfer into the PERS or TPAF but will be eligible for DCRP enrollment if the annual salary is at least \$5,000.

## PERS and TPAF Maximum Wage

In addition, Tier 2, Tier 3, Tier 4, and Tier 5 members are subject to a maximum wage limit for PERS or TPAF pension contributions. The maximum wage limit for 2026 is \$184,500 and is subject to annual adjustment. Members who earn in excess of the annual maximum wage will be enrolled in the DCRP in addition to the PERS or TPAF. See the *Defined Contribution Retirement Program (DCRP) Enrollment Due to Maximum Compensation Limits* Fact Sheet for more information.

## Vesting

Employer contributions are not vested in a DCRP member's account until after the member commences the second year of employment, unless at the time of initial employment the member either 1) participates in a program substantially similar to the DCRP program, or 2) is a member of another New Jersey State-administered retirement system.

As a vested member, you have a right to a benefit at retirement based on both the employee and employer contributions to the DCRP.

## WITHDRAWAL

Withdrawal occurs when a non-vested DCRP member separates from covered employment and submits a request to Empower for a withdrawal of contributions. Only the member's contributions are available for withdrawal — employer contributions are forfeited. After a withdrawal, the individual is eligible for reenrollment in the DCRP, or enrollment in another New Jersey State-administered retirement system, upon return to covered employment.

## RETIREMENT

Retirement occurs when a vested DCRP member separates from covered employment and elects to receive a distribution of funds containing both employer and employee contributions plus interest.

This action deems the former participant as retired and, therefore, ineligible to re-enroll in the DCRP or participate in any other New Jersey State-administered retirement system.

The acknowledgment of retirement will occur when a member requests a full or partial withdrawal of funds from their DCRP account during the completion of Empower's online *Withdrawal Application* form.

## Applying For Retirement

Six months before retirement, a member should contact the employer and Empower for information regarding DCRP benefits and options.

A DCRP member may elect to receive all or a portion of his/her account in a lump-sum distribution, or in a variety of periodic payment methods. Please contact your administrative services provider for more information. All returns of contributions and earnings are considered taxable in the year they are received; therefore, the type of payout plan should be considered carefully prior to retirement.

There is no minimum retirement age under the DCRP. The member will automatically be considered retired, regardless of age, if there is any distribution of vested contributions.

A member may take a distribution at any time after termination of employment; however, if you return to public employment in New Jersey, you cannot participate in any New Jersey State-administered retirement system. DCRP members considering future employment in a position covered by any of the New Jersey State-administered retirement systems should carefully consider this impact before requesting a distribution.

\*Tier 4 or Tier 5 members must work a minimum of 35 hours per week if a State employee, or 32 hours per week if a local government or local education employee.

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## Health Benefits at Retirement

It is important to note that service time from enrollment in the DCRP cannot be used to qualify for State Health Benefits Program (SHBP) or School Employees' Health Benefits Program (SEHBP) coverage at retirement. Please contact your employer's human resources office or benefits administrator to ask about health benefit coverage options available in retirement.

## **LIFE INSURANCE COVERAGE**

While employed, a DCRP member is covered by employer-paid life insurance, payable to designated beneficiaries in the amount of 1.5 times the annual base salary on which DCRP contributions were based. This coverage is available without a medical examination to members under age 60. Newly enrolled members 60 years of age or older must undergo a medical examination to qualify.

DCRP members will continue to be insured for up to two years if on an approved leave of absence without pay for personal illness.

**Note:** The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) classifies all life insurance coverage over \$50,000 as a fringe benefit subject to taxation. While the amount of the life insurance coverage is not taxable, the premium required to pay for the life insurance coverage is taxable. Members can elect to waive insurance coverage over \$50,000 at any time.

Upon retirement, life insurance under the DCRP reduces to  $\frac{3}{16}$  of the annual base salary on which DCRP contributions were based.

This life insurance coverage is available in retirement only to:

- Members age 60 or older if the member has completed 10 years of participation in the DCRP; or
- Members of any age if the member has completed 25 years of participation in the DCRP.

The member also must have been an active employee in the 12 months immediately preceding the initial receipt of a retirement annuity payment.

To update your Group Life Insurance beneficiaries, please complete the *Designation of Beneficiary – Alternate Benefit Program (ABP)/Defined Contribution Retirement Program (DCRP)* form available on our website.

To update the beneficiaries for your Empower account, please complete and submit any changes through Empower.

## Conversion

Other than the retired insurance benefit previously described, life insurance coverage under the DCRP ceases 31 days after termination of employment. During the 31-day period following termination of employment, a member may convert existing group life insurance coverage (less any amount of coverage carried over into retirement) into an individual policy, without medical examination. For more information, see the *Conversion of Group Life Insurance Fact Sheet*.

## **LONG-TERM DISABILITY COVERAGE**

A member is eligible for employer-paid long-term disability insurance coverage after one year of participation in the DCRP.

The member becomes eligible for the long-term disability benefit after six consecutive months of total disability due to an occupational or non-occupational condition.

To be considered totally disabled due to sickness or accidental bodily injury, the member must be unable to perform any and every duty pertaining to his/her occupation. The member need not be confined to home, but must be under a doctor's regular care.

Totally disabled members are eligible to receive a regular monthly income benefit up to 60 percent of the base salary on which DCRP contributions were

based during the 12 months preceding the onset of the disability. While disabled, the member's and the employer's mandatory contributions are automatically credited to the member's retirement account.

The monthly income benefit is offset by any other periodic benefit the member may be receiving, such as Workers' Compensation, short-term disability, or Social Security.

Eighteen months after the onset of long-term disability eligibility, the member must be unable to engage in any gainful occupation for which the member is reasonably suited by education, training, or experience. Total disability is not considered to exist if the member is gainfully employed, incarcerated, or if the disability resulted from an act of war or was intentionally self-inflicted.

Long-term disability benefits will be paid as long as the member remains disabled or until the member attains age 70. Should the member begin receiving payments under the retirement annuity, these benefits terminate.

## **CONTACTING THE DCRP**

For more information regarding the DCRP, visit the DCRP website at: <https://empower.com/njplans> or call toll-free 866-657-3327.

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