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Non-emergency transportation benefit for HealthSelectSM Medicare Advantage participants

Did you know that HealthSelectSM Medicare Advantage Plan preferred provider organization (MA PPO) participants have access to a non-emergency transportation benefit? Plan participants are eligible for up to 24 one-way rides every year to and from medical appointments and the pharmacy at no cost. Members can contact ModivCare for more information and to schedule trips at (833) 219-1182, TTY: (844) 488-9724, or online at [modivcare.com/BookNow](https://www.modivcare.com/BookNow).



Things to know:

- There is no cost to the participant for routine transportation, up to the annual limit. Trips must be to or from plan-approved medically related locations/appointments and limited to ground transportation only.
- Each one-way trip must not exceed 50 miles. A single trip is a one-way transportation; a round trip is two trips.
- The benefit cannot be used for emergency-related trips. In case of an emergency, call 911.
- You can have one companion per trip. (The companion must be at least 18 years old.)
- Wheelchair/stretcher services are available upon request.
- Standard transportation services must be requested at least two business days, but not more than 30 days, before a scheduled appointment.
- Weekend scheduling is available for urgent requests only. Contact ModivCare at the number above for more information.

Questions about the plan benefits?

Visit: [HealthSelect-MAPPO.com](https://www.healthselect-mappo.com) or call UnitedHealthcare[®] toll-free at (855) 853-0453, (TTY: 711), 7 a.m. – 7 p.m. CT, Monday – Friday; 7 a.m. – 3 p.m. CT, Saturday



Who will be our next trustee?

At the Employees Retirement System of Texas (ERS), we know you value your benefits—and so does the ERS Board of Trustees. One way to ensure you are represented in benefits discussions is to participate in this year’s ERS Board of Trustees election. ERS has always encouraged retirees to vote in the trustee elections. Now, for the first time, retirees can run to fill a Board seat.

On March 1, ERS began accepting nominations to fill the Board seat currently held by Catherine Melvin (of the Texas Department of Public Safety. Her term expires Aug. 31, 2023.



Message from the executive director

The constancy of change—and ERS’ commitment to change for the better

As retirees who’ve been around many decades, you’ve probably heard the saying, “The only constant is change” more times than you can count. I suppose people wouldn’t say it so often if it weren’t true. It’s also true that a lot of change is unwelcome or unexpected, and that some people cope with it better than others. Here at ERS, we try to focus on the positive and as with almost every year, 2023 will bring some changes. We expect most, if not all, of them to mean improvements for the benefits we administer and to have a positive impact on members.

Legislative activity

Of course, it’s a legislative session year and session can mean adjustments to retiree and employee benefits. You might have heard that the state has a historic budget surplus—good news for many state programs and agencies. As I’ve mentioned before, the legislature took a big step in 2021 to start bringing the ERS Retirement Plan to actuarial soundness. We are hopeful that the initial proposals in both the House and Senate budget bills, which include funding to eliminate the unfunded liabilities (debt) in the Law Enforcement and Custodial Officer Supplemental (LECOS) Plan and the Judicial Retirement System Plan 2 (JRS 2), are successful. Also included in the filed versions of the budget is funding for the annual “legacy” payment—about \$510 million to the ERS Retirement Plan in both Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025. These legacy payments should bring the ERS Retirement Plan back to actuarial soundness as soon as September 2023. About 16 months after that—possibly in January 2025—we expect a statutory, one-time cost-of-living adjustment for retirees who’ve been retired 20 years or more. I’m sure that will be a welcome change.

The Legislature has indicated funding to maintain the status quo for health insurance. As in the past few sessions, we haven’t had to ask the state to increase funding for health insurance for the next biennium. This is due primarily to cost management efforts ERS takes to help ensure we can continue to offer competitive benefits for retirees and employees.

Trustee election

Odd-numbered years also bring ERS’ biennial trustee election. This election is the first in which retirees can run, due to a change in statute last session. You can read more about the nominating requirements and process, as well as how to vote, in the article “[title]” in this newsletter. Even if you don’t run in the election or even sign a nominating petition, I hope you’ll vote in the upcoming election. ERS trustees make important decisions about your benefits, and the election is a great way to ensure you have representation on the ERS Board.

Customer service

After the post-pandemic “Great Resignation,” one change we’re very pleased about is the results of our ongoing efforts to re-staff. The staffing issues that most affected members were in our Customer Benefits Division. I’m proud of the way ERS managed an unusually busy year with a limited workforce, but there’s no denying we had customer service challenges. I’m happy to report we’re now fully staffed in Customer Benefits and have vastly improved our telephone and email wait times. We’re still not where we want to be, but expect continued improvements as employees complete needed training. We appreciate your patience during a trying time.

Plan administrator changes

ERS is required to regularly put up for bid the contracts for administering or insuring our benefits plans. Although these contracting efforts are a great deal of work, we are happy to do them because they usually result in cost savings, improved service or both. Recently, the ERS Board of Trustees approved new administrators for three of our plans:

- Starting Sept. 1, 2023, the administrator of the State of Texas VisionSM plan will change from Superior Vision to EyeMed.
- Starting Jan. 1, 2024, the administrator of our two prescription drug plans will change to Express Scripts. The HealthSelectSM Medicare Rx plan is currently administered by UnitedHealthcare, and the HealthSelectSM Prescription Drug Program is currently administered by OptumRx.

The new contract(s) or the prescription drug plans will save almost \$3 billion over six years. Those savings will go a long way toward helping ERS maintain high-quality drug coverage at reasonable costs.

We know these changes can be hard for some members, but as always, ERS will work to ensure that members experience the smallest possible negative impact. We’ll provide many more details about the changes this summer for State of Texas Vision, and in the fall for the prescription drug programs.

As ERS and our members work through changes in the coming months, I want to assure you we remain committed to our mission of offering competitive benefits to enhance the lives of our members. That includes providing good customer service and helping you adapt to new program administrators. Change might be inevitable, but none of us has to go through it alone.

Stay connected and, above all, stay well.

Porter Wilson

Why you should consider a run and make sure to vote.

The ERS Board of Trustees plays an important role in managing valuable benefits for State of Texas employees and retirees. The Board oversees the ERS Retirement Trust Fund, which invests state, agency and member pension contributions.

The Board also has oversight of the Texas Employees Group Benefits Program (GBP) and other benefits, such as the TexaSaverSM 401(k) / 457 Program.

Who can run?

State of Texas agency employees who are contributing to the ERS Retirement Trust Fund and state agency retirees who are getting an annuity from ERS can run to serve on the ERS Board of Trustees. This is the first year retirees can run for an ERS Board seat, following legislation passed in 2021.

Please note: Employees of the Texas Department of Transportation and Health and Human Services Commission cannot run in this year's election because they already have representation on the Board.

Nomination process

Each candidate must complete and submit to ERS the Nomination Petition and the Questionnaire for Board of Trustees Position.

- Potential candidates must submit a Nomination Petition with the signatures of at least 300 ERS members and/ or retirees qualified to vote in the trustee election. ERS encourages potential candidates to gather 400 to 500 signatures to allow for invalid entries. If a person signs a nomination petition for more than one candidate, ERS will not count the person's signature for either candidate.
- Potential candidates also have the option to gather voters' electronic signature (e-signature) on the ERS Board nominations website, rather than or in addition to going "door-to-door" in person to gain support. Potential candidates can contact the ERS election coordinator at ERSelection@ers.texas.gov to request a personalized electronic nomination site platform.

The process to provide an electronic signature for a nominee is very similar to online voting. On the ERS Board nominations website, the nominator will log in by typing in their individual credentials: their ZIP code, date of birth and

portions of their first and last names. Using the information they enter, the website will automatically authenticate voter eligibility.

The questionnaire and other nomination materials are available on the ERS website. Signed nomination petitions and questionnaires are due to ERS March 31 by 5 p.m. CT. ERS will certify the candidates on April 13.

Who can vote?

ERS retirees and members can vote in the Board election if they are retired state employees who get an annuity from ERS or have an ERS retirement account balance as of Jan. 31, 2023. If you're eligible to vote, you'll get an election newsletter in the mail in early May. The newsletter will include information about the candidates and detailed instructions about how to vote.

You can vote May 12 - June 16 via either:

- a mailed paper ballot or
- electronically, through a link on the ERS website or a personalized email link to the voting portal. ERS will send the email link on or around May 12. (This option is available to eligible members and retirees with an up-to-date and active email address on file with ERS as of Jan. 31, 2023. If necessary, update your email address through your ERS OnLine account. Voting electronically is convenient and secure, and saves money for ERS. It also decreases the chance of errors that could cause a ballot to be invalid.

Important dates in the 2023 Board trustee election:

- March 31: The nominations period closes.
- April 13: ERS certifies candidates and draws for ballot order.
- May 11: ERS conducts the candidate forum.
- May 12: Voting begins.
- June 16: Voting ends.
- July 20: ERS certifies the election results.
- September 1: The new trustee begins their term.

Visit the ERS Trustees Election and Appointments webpage. You can find it in the About ERS tab, then click on ERS Board of Trustees.

Annuity payment dates

ERS deposits or mails your annuity payment on the last business day of the month.

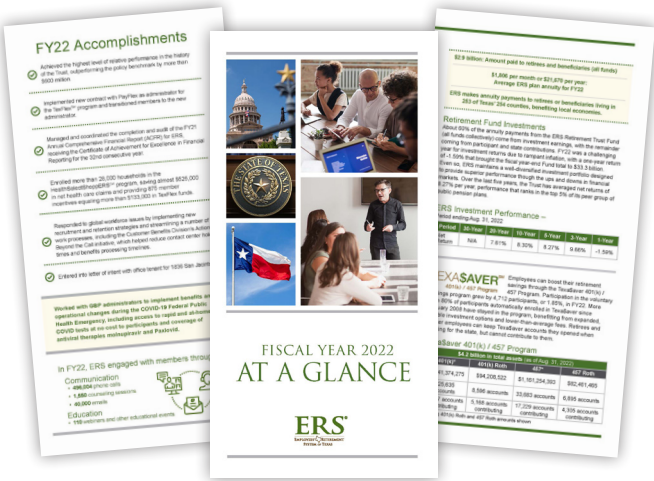
Search: Manage Your Annuity Payments on the ERS website for instructions on changing your tax withholding, personal information and more.

If you are a retiree from another system, such as TRS, TCDRS or TMRS, contact that system for annuity payment dates.

Annuity Dates

- March 31, 2023
- April 30, 2023
- May 31, 2023
- June 30, 2023





Take a “glance” at what ERS has accomplished

Being a retiree comes with a sense of achievement. A well-deserved retirement is the fruit of so many years of labor. A proud time, no doubt. Of course, ERS will never retire, but we take time at the end of every fiscal year to reflect on and take pride in our accomplishments of the year.

Check out the latest ERS at a Glance report and equip yourself with the latest facts about how ERS serves Texans:

- Despite a tumultuous market, the ERS’ investments beat expectations and achieved results that put our performance above many other public employee retirement systems.
- In just a little more than a year, the agency implemented an entirely new retirement benefit for new employees starting after Aug. 31, 2022 and has already enrolled more than 5,000 members in it.
- ERS responded to almost half a million phone calls and 40,000 emails, and conducted 1,550 one-on-one benefits counseling sessions. We also hosted 110 informational webinars and in-person presentations for members and retirees.
- One in 56 Texans is covered by the health insurance plans ERS administers. This includes more than 127,000 retirees, 200,000 employees, 194,000 dependents, and 6,000 survivors and others.
- ERS paid a total of \$2.9 billion to retirees and beneficiaries across 253 of Texas’ 254 counties, benefiting not just the annuitants, but the local economies where they spend their money.
- ERS worked with our plan administrators to quickly provide access to COVID tests and cover new antiviral therapies.

Read more in the FY22 ERS at a Glance. You can find it and other reports on our website’s Reports on ERS Operations and Overall Financial Management webpage.



Search the ERS website for these upcoming events

Medicare Preparation Webinars

- Tuesday, March 21, 12–1 p.m. CT
- Thursday, March 30, 2 p.m. CT
- Thursday, April 13 at 2 p.m. CT
- Wednesday, May 3 at 10 a.m. CT
- Tuesday, May 16 at 2 p.m. CT

Nutrition Connect Community:

Essential nutrients:

Why do I need them and how do I get them?

- Tuesday, March 28 at 10 a.m. CT
- Tuesday, April 25 at 10 a.m. CT

Does food affect my mental health?

- Tuesday, May 23 at 10 a.m. CT

Outdoors in the heat

- Tuesday, June 27 at 10 a.m. CT

Fitness Connection Community:

Got stress?

- Tuesday, April 11 at 10 a.m. CT

Mental health benefits of physical activity

- Tuesday, May 9 at 10 a.m. CT

2023 Trustee Candidate Forum

- Thursday, May 11 – Look for more information in the election packet ERS will mail to you in early May.

Joint ERS Board of Trustees and Investment Advisory Committee Meeting

- Wednesday, May 17 at 1836 San Jacinto, Austin 78701, 9th floor, or via livestream - Find the start time, livestream link and agenda on the ERS website about a week before the meeting.

The one thing we can all do today

By Lacy Wolff, MS, ERS Health Program Administrator



When we feel healthy, we wish for many things like money, success and travel. When we are sick we wish for only one thing, and that is to feel better.

Every time we or our family members experience an illness, it becomes glaringly obvious that our health and is the most important thing in life.

But doing all the things that keep us healthy — like physical activity, eating well, managing stress and getting enough sleep — can feel like an impossible task.

If we step back for a moment and focus on the one thing that is the most important to support our health, it may be our annual preventive exam.

You may think “I don’t have time” or “I don’t feel bad, so why should I go to the doctor?” And you are not alone! Many people do not schedule their annual preventive exam.

There are many reasons why people do not make time to go to the doctor. Here are a few reasons why this is an incredibly important step toward building and maintaining our health:

Prevention is key

Your annual exam can:

- help you to understand your current health status and the behaviors that are driving it and
- allow you to see yearly trends in your health history, so that you can make necessary changes before it’s too late.

For example, high blood pressure (hypertension) is a silent condition that, if not managed, can damage the body and lead to strokes and even death. You also cannot feel high cholesterol, but it is a risk factor for heart disease. Measuring these things regularly is the best way to get a clear picture of our health status.

Chronic conditions like diabetes, hypertension and high cholesterol are more likely to develop as we age. The good news is that if we visit the doctor regularly, we can prevent or effectively manage our conditions. Even better news, under our health plans you get an annual exam at no out-of-pocket cost. If you’re in a HealthSelect of Texas® plan and are not eligible for Medicare, you must see an in-network PCP for the annual exam to be covered at no additional cost to you. HealthSelect Secondary doesn’t require a PCP, preventive services are covered at no cost to the participant for in-network providers and for out-of-network providers, balance billing may apply.

How do I schedule an appointment?

If you haven’t already, schedule an appointment today with your primary care provider (PCP) for your annual preventive exam. If you don’t have PCP yet, and are covered by a HealthSelect of Texas plan, you can select one through the HealthSelect of Texas website or by calling a BCBSTX Personal Health Assistant toll-free at (800) 252-8039 (TTY: 711), Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. CT, and Saturday, 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. CT.

I hope you will join me in a proactive approach to making a difference in your own life and in the overall health of our state’s workforce and retirees. Let’s find a way to do the one thing — our annual exam — to support what’s most important to us all: our health.



Many Texans have unclaimed property. Are you one of them?

Texas has nearly \$7 billion in unclaimed property. Since 1963, the Lone Star state has required institutions, businesses, and governmental entities to report to the state any personal property that has been unclaimed for up to five years, depending on the property in question.

Unclaimed property can be abandoned assets. Some examples include:

- Dividend, payroll or cashier’s checks
- Stocks, bonds or mutual fund accounts
- Utility deposits and other refunds
- Bank accounts and safe deposit box contents
- Insurance proceeds
- Mineral interests or royalty payments
- Court deposits, trust funds or escrow accounts
- Overpayments on insurance, utilities and other bills

Unclaimed property does not include real estate or vehicles. There is no statute of limitations for unclaimed property. Funds reported will remain with the Texas comptroller’s office until claimed by the rightful owner.

It’s up to the individual to proactively check on the Texas comptroller’s website, as the state does not notify people about these funds. Visit [ClaimitTexas.gov](https://www.claimitexas.gov) to find out if you have any money to claim. Texans can visit [MissingMoney.com](https://www.missingmoney.com) or [FindMyFunds.com](https://www.findmyfunds.com) to search for property in other states.

YOUR ERS CONNECTION

Executive Director
Porter Wilson

Board of Trustees
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John R. Rutherford

Editorial & Subscription Information
Employees Retirement System of Texas
Benefits Communications Division
P.O. Box 13207
Austin, TX 78711-3207

www.ers.texas.gov

Toll-free (877) 275-4377
TTY: toll-free (800) 735-2989



Discount Purchase Program

Get your spring essentials this March by taking advantage of the Discount Purchase Program with these offers:

- Buy 3 days, get 2 days free at Universal Orlando Resort, and enjoy endless fun for you and the whole family.
- 65% off your first Hello Fresh meal box plus free shipping and 15% on every box after (for 51 weeks).
- Up to 60% off hotel rates across over 225,000 hotels in the U.S. and around the world.

Find these offers and more at <http://www.beneplace.com/discountprogramers/>.



Lots to like on Facebook!

Get updates on the ERS Facebook Page:
facebook.com/ersoftexas

