

# INFORMATION BULLETIN

## RETIREE RETURN TO WORK PROGRAM

July 2024

### Overview

To help alleviate the classroom teacher shortage problem in Illinois, a law that allows retired TRS members to teach for a full school year in districts declared to have subject shortage areas has been extended until June 30, 2027. Under the law, retired teachers who go back to approved subject shortage areas are not limited to post-retirement work restrictions of 120 days or 600 hours imposed on other retirees. The regional superintendent must designate the employment to be in a subject shortage area and TRS must give final approval in order for a retiree to be able to return to work without limitation.

### Regional Office of Education and school district certification procedure

1. The Regional Office of Education fills out the TRS form certifying that the school district has a shortage area and the district met the public act requirements.
2. After meeting the requirements of the public act, the Regional Office of Education forwards the completed form to TRS certifying a subject shortage area. TRS will forward a Return to Teaching in Subject Shortage Area Employer Notification form to the TRS-covered employer. The employer completes this form to certify the intent to hire a retiree under the program providing the retiree's name, hire date, health insurance status and the subject shortage area which applies to the retiree.
3. TRS will notify the retiree and employer that the certification form was received and will acknowledge the hiring of the retiree. **The retiree should not begin working in the sub-**

**ject shortage area until TRS has provided approvals to the retiree and the employer.**

### Eligibility

A retiree receiving an annuity may teach in a subject shortage area without compromising his/her retirement status if:

- The employment does not begin within the school year service was terminated.
- The retiree has not received the TRS early retirement incentive.
- The annuitant retired before age 60 and with less than 34 years of service and the eligible employment does not begin within the year following the effective date of the retirement annuity.
- The annuitant retired at age 60 or above or with 34 or more years of service and the eligible employment does not begin within the 90 days following the effective date of the retirement annuity.
- Before the eligible employment begins, the employer notifies TRS in writing of the annuitant's desire to participate in the program.

### Participation

If hired, the retiree shall continue to be a retirement annuitant, but shall be deemed an active teacher for other purposes, such as inclusion in a collective bargaining unit, eligibility for group health benefits, and compliance with the laws governing the employment, regulation, certification, treatment and conduct of teachers.

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## Health insurance coverage

The retiree will participate in the group health benefits offered by the employer without limitations based on pre-existing conditions. After the retiree stops teaching in a shortage area, the retiree should notify TRS and request a TRIP Participation Election form. The member will have to fill out the form and obtain a termination letter from the employer's insurance plan. The member must submit the TRIP Participation Election form along with the employer's insurance termination letter to TRS within 60 days of the employment termination.

The retiree should remain on employer insurance through summer breaks if he/she will be participating in the program the following year.

If the employer does not offer health insurance, the retiree must notify TRS and request to remain in TRIP.

## Notify TRS prior to hiring

Once a subject shortage area has been approved by the regional superintendent, TRS will send the Return to Teaching in Subject Shortage Area Employer Notification form to the employer to complete. The employer must return the form to TRS and must **not** hire the retiree for the subject shortage area until approval has been received from TRS.

## No recertification required

Once a retiree is approved into the program, the retiree may continue in the approved subject shortage area through the expiration date of June 30, 2027. The employer does not need to recertify each year. However, the employer is required to notify TRS annually if the annuitant is continuing to teach in the subject shortage area.

Accepting employment under the Retiree Return to Work Program limits the retiree's employment to this program only and for the subject for which he/she was hired. The retiree is not allowed to work under the Retiree Return to Work Program and work under the post-retirement work limitation of 120 days or 600 hours for either the same or a different employer. Failure to comply with these rules may result in TRS terminating his/her retirement annuity and payback of all retirement benefits received if in the year following retirement.

## No service credit

No employer or employee contributions can be made to TRS and no additional service credit can be earned when a retiree is hired to work in a subject shortage area. Employment will not affect the retiree's final average salary or the annuity amount.

## Post-retirement limitations

The retiree who returns to work in a subject shortage area is not required to comply with the 120-days/600-hours post-retirement employment limitations. The retiree will receive a pension although he/she is employed by a TRS-covered employer beyond the post-retirement employment limitations.

## Notify TRS when employment is terminated

TRS must be notified when a retiree terminates teaching in a subject shortage area.

## Questions

If you have questions, please contact the Member Services Department by calling 877-927-5877 or via email at [members@trsill.org](mailto:members@trsill.org).

