

## **PLANNING AND APPLYING FOR RETIREMENT**

You should begin planning for retirement several years before the date you set to retire so that you will be aware of what is required to continue certain benefits as a retiree. For example, you need to know that health and life insurance coverage normally must be in effect continuously for at least **five years** before retirement or you will be ineligible to carry these benefits into retirement. Knowing about the choices that are available and how those choices will affect your retirement benefits will help you to make informed decisions.

It will be your agency's responsibility to guide you through the retirement process, supplying all of the information you may need about retirement and continuing insurance coverage into retirement. Your agency will also ensure that you complete all necessary paperwork and will be responsible for completing other forms to process your retirement.

The following checklists will provide you with the information you will need to plan in advance of retirement.

This checklist identifies important information you may need in planning for retirement. Put a checkmark next to the items that apply to you, get the answers to relevant questions, and check off pertinent items when completed. Use this as your personal retirement planning worksheet.

<b>ONE YEAR OR MORE BEFORE RETIREMENT</b>	
<b>ACTION ITEM</b>	<b>CHECK WHEN COMPLETED</b>
1. Determine when you will be eligible to retire	
2. Choose a retirement date	
3. Request to attend a retirement seminar	
4. Make arrangement to review your Official Personnel Folder (OPF). Here are the things you may be looking for:	
A. A record of all periods of service	
B. The beginning and ending dates for each period of service	
C. Effective dates for each promotion, within grade or other pay change for the period of service that will be used to compute your high-three average salary	
D. Pay rates for any period of non-deduction service that will be used to compute any deposit that is due	
E. Documentation of your tour of duty for any part-time service	
F. A record of time actually worked during any intermittent service	
G. Complete and legible copies of your military discharge papers ((DD 214s)	
H. A record of your FEHB enrollments. Do records show you have been covered long enough to allow you to continue FEHB as a retiree?	
I. A record of your FEGLI coverage. Do records show you have been covered long enough to allow you to continue Basic and Optional coverage as a retiree?	
J. Your designation of Beneficiary for FEGLI (SF-2823). Is it current?	
K. Your designation of Beneficiary for retirement contributions (SF-3102) if you are in FERS. If you are in CSRS, this form (SF-2808) is at OPM, and not in your OPF. Also, if you transferred to FERS, any SF 2808 is no longer valid. You should complete a new SF 3102 if you have not already done so. Is the designation current?	
If you cannot verify a period of service, or if any necessary documentation is missing from the OPF, request the assistance of the appropriate individual in your agency to obtain the necessary information/documentation.	
Review your Social Security statement to see what your future entitlement may be for Social Security benefits.	

<b>ONE YEAR OR MORE BEFORE RETIREMENT</b>	
<b>ACTION ITEM</b>	<b>CHECK WHEN COMPLETED</b>
When you are within 3 months of age 62, contact the Social Security Administration to decide when to apply for benefits	
Determine if the Windfall Elimination Provision or Government Pension Offset will affect any Social Security benefits you expect.	
Request estimated annuity computations at this time if decisions need to be made on paying deposits or waiving military retired pay	
Deposits/Redeposits: Apply to make payments for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Post-56 military service (to agency)</li> <li>▪ Redeposit for refunded service (to OPM). Find out how refunded service will be credited if you don't pay the redeposit.</li> <li>▪ Deposit service (to OPM). Find out how service will be credited if you do not pay the deposit.</li> </ul>	
Decide how and when to begin receiving funds from your TSP. Arrange to pay off any TSP loans before retirement.	

<b>SIX MONTHS BEFORE RETIREMENT</b>	
<b>ACTION ITEM</b>	<b>CHECK WHEN COMPLETED</b>
Decide if and when to send waiver of military retired pay (this should be received by the military finance center 60 to 90 days before you retire)	
Clear up any financial indebtedness to your agency. If you don't, you agency can ask OPM to withhold the debt from your annuity.	
Inform your supervisor of your proposed retirement date.	

<b>TWO MONTHS BEFORE RETIREMENT</b>	
<b>ACTION ITEM</b>	<b>CHECK WHEN COMPLETED</b>
At this point, you should make a final decision about the effective date of your retirement.	
Request a package of retirement forms.	
Complete the retirement application and all related forms. Be sure to SIGN your application in ink.	
Submit the retirement forms in accordance with procedures that have been established within your agency.	
Review and sign SF 2801-1 (CSRS) or SF 3107-1 (FERS), Certified Summary of Federal Service, when your agency has completed it.	
Remember that any TSP withdrawal elections must be submitted directly to the TSP Service Office, and that you do not have to make a decision about withdrawing funds from the TSP immediately at retirement.	
Complete all customary agency exit procedures	

## **CSRS Forms for Retirement**

The following is a list of forms you may need to prepare at retirement. This list does not include any forms that will be prepared by your agency.

- **SF 2801** Application for Immediate Retirement
- **SF 2801-2** Spouse's Consent to Survivor Election
- **SF 2801-3** Election of Former Spouse Survivor Annuity or Combination Current /Former Spouse Survivor Election
- **SF-2818** Continuation of Life Insurance Coverage
- **SF-2817** Life Insurance Election Form
- **SF-2823** FEGLI Designation of Beneficiary
- **SF-3112** Documentation in Support of Disability Application\*
- **TSP** A complete Withdrawal Package with Withdrawal Options Book, Annuity Book, TSP Fact Sheet on Tax Withholding and Form TSP-70
- **Form W-4P** Federal Tax Withholding Form

\* SF-3112 would be used only when applying for Disability Retirement.

## **FERS Forms for Retirement**

The following is a list of forms you may need to prepare at retirement. This list does not include any forms that will be prepared by your agency.

- **SF 3107** Application for Immediate Retirement
- **SF 3107-2** Spouse's Consent to Survivor Election
- **SF 3107-3** Election of Former Spouse Survivor Annuity or Combination Current /Former Spouse Survivor Election
- **SF-2818** Continuation of Life Insurance Coverage
- **SF-2817** Life Insurance Election Form
- **SF-2823** FEGLI Designation of Beneficiary
- **SF-3112** Documentation in Support of Disability Application\*
- **TSP** A complete Withdrawal Package with Withdrawal Options Book, Annuity Book, TSP Fact Sheet on Tax Withholding and Form TSP-70
- **Form W-4P** Federal Tax Withholding Form

\* SF-3112 would be used only when applying for Disability Retirement.

## **The Application Process**

Both the Human Resources Office and payroll office in your agency, as well as OPM, are responsible for processing your annuity claim. You can help reduce delays in processing by submitting your application in advance and by making sure your Official Personnel Folder (OPF) is complete. If you submit your paperwork early, your Human Resources Office and payroll office will be able to complete their actions before your retirement date. Your Human Resources Office must take the following actions to process your retirement application:

- Complete the “Agency Checklist of Immediate Retirement Procedures,” SF-2801 (CSRS) or SF-3701, Schedule D (FERS).
- Prepare and obtain your signature of the “Certified Summary of Federal Service,” SF-2801-1 (CSRS) or 3701-1 (FERS).
- Verify any service not fully documented in your OPF. If the HR Office is unable to obtain verification, OPM will complete verification upon receipt of your retirement application and records. However, this will cause a delay in processing your claim.
- Certify and transfer your coverage under the Federal Employee’s Group Life Insurance (FEGLI).
- Transfer your enrollment under the Federal Employees’ Health Benefits Program (FEHB) to OPM.
- Prepare SF-50, “Notification of Personnel Action.”
- Send all of your retirement materials to your payroll office.

### **After your HR Office completes all necessary actions, your payroll office:**

- Authorizes your final paycheck and lump sum payment for unused annual leave.
- Prepares your “Individual Retirement Record,” SF-2806 (CSRS) or SF-3100 (FERS) which reflects service, salary history, and annual retirement contributions.
- Forwards all documents to OPM.

When OPM receives your retirement application, they will notify you and will provide a civil service claim identification number (a seven-digit number preceded by “CSA”). You must use that identification number whenever you contact OPM about your annuity.

As soon as OPM gets all of your retirement records, they provide “interim” payments. These payments are usually made in four days or less, on the first business day of each month. They try to provide you with income until they finish processing your application. Interim payments can only be authorized if your records clearly show your eligibility for retirement. Generally, interim payments average more than 85 percent of your final benefit. If your records are complete, you will receive your first interim payment approximately 7 to 14 days after you receive your acknowledgement letter.

Regular monthly payments are due the first business day of the month immediately preceding. If your retirement records are complete upon receipt and an election of a benefit is not required, the processing of your claim will be completed in approximately five weeks. An additional three to four weeks may be added if a benefit election is required.