



Prioritizing service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic

While there have been a number of changes at DRS in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been able to maintain our normal schedule of processing member retirements and paying retiree benefits.

These core services remain our priority as DRS manages through the latest developments from the pandemic, in particular the implementation of mandatory furloughs for state employees. Furloughs were directed by Gov. Jay Inslee as one of several steps to address a forecast of severe economic and budget impacts in the coming months.

At the same time, DRS is entering a period of high seasonal volumes of retirement processing. To address these challenges, DRS is reducing customer service delivery beginning in late June.

Here's a summary of our status as of the publication of this newsletter. Keep in mind that circumstances will continue to change in the coming months. Your best source of current information is the [DRS website](#) (where you can also sign up to receive email and text [news updates](#)).

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Important information about DRS availability

- DRS will be closed on the following dates: July 17, July 24 and Aug. 21, 2020.
- DRS will be available for customer service questions via phone calls and emails on Mondays only through the week of July 20, 2020. Customers are encouraged to contact DRS only for pressing retirement issues.
- Due to COVID-19, DRS remains closed to in-person customer visits and onsite services.
- Online services are still available. As always, customers can [apply for retirement online](#).

We've also moved in-person retirement planning seminars and workshops online, where we regularly present webinars on a variety of topics, including sessions designed especially for members who are nearing retirement. You can join these presentations through the [education section](#), where you'll also find videos, calculators and other planning resources.

For the latest information on our services and operations, visit [DRS' Response to COVID-19](#). This webpage provides updates and resources to assist you as we navigate through the impacts of the pandemic.

DRS offers live retirement planning webinars

Want to find out more about the topics below? DRS offers free live webinars each month for a variety of retirement topics.

Visit **DRS webinars** for a schedule of available workshops.



- Nearing retirement
- Deferred Compensation Program (DCP)
- DCP withdrawals
- Choosing a plan (new employees)
- Online resources
- Plan 2: PERS, TRS, SERS
- Plan 2: LEOFF, WSPRS, PSERS
- Disability and death benefits
- Plan 3: PERS, TRS, SERS
- Plan 3 withdrawals
- Purchasing an annuity
- Investment basics
- Early retirement (PERS, SERS, TRS)
- Plan 1: WSPRS
- Getting ready for retirement
- Applying for retirement
- Benefit payment options at retirement
- Returning to work after retirement
- Medicare
- Social Security basics
- Identity theft/protection

**For more retirement
planning resources visit
drs.wa.gov/education**



Pension-related bills passed for the 2020 session



The following bills were approved by the House and Senate and signed into law by Gov. Jay Inslee.

Bill number	Title and summary
HB 1390	Providing a benefit increase to certain retirees of the Public Employees' Retirement System Plan 1 and the Teachers' Retirement System Plan 1. (By request of the Select Committee on Pension Policy.) Provides certain retirees of PERS 1 and TRS 1 who are retired by July 1, 2019, a one-time benefit adjustment of 3% multiplied by their monthly benefit, not to exceed \$62.50, effective July 2020.
HB 1661	Concerning the higher education retirement plans. Establishes institution-specific employer contribution rates for supplemental benefits of each higher education retirement plan. Administration of benefit payments would transition to the Department of Retirement Systems at a point after the Pension Funding Council has determined that an institution has accumulated sufficient assets in a supplemental benefit fund to adequately fund the benefits.
HB 2189	Including specified competency restoration workers at DSHS institutional and residential sites in the Public Safety Employees' Retirement System. Modifies eligibility for PSERS to include specified competency restoration workers at Department of Social and Health Services institutional and residential sites.
HB 2544	Concerning the definition of a veteran. Amends the definition of veteran to include members who were awarded an expeditionary medal from any armed conflict.
SB 6218	Modifying the definition of salary for the Washington State Patrol Retirement System. (By request of the Select Committee on Pension Policy.) Allows WSPRS Plan 1 members who entered the system on or after July 1, 2001 to have lump sum payments for holiday pay and unused vacation leave included in the definition of salary for calculating pension benefits.
SB 6383	Concerning the retirement strategy funds in the Plan 3 and the Deferred Compensation programs. (By request of the Select Committee on Pension Policy.) Allows the Washington State Investment Board to include the state's commingled trust fund in the asset mix for Plan 3 and DCP Retirement Strategy Fund options.
SB 6417	Allowing retirees to change their survivor option election after retirement. (By request of the LEOFF Plan 2 Retirement Board.) Contingent on approval by the IRS, this measure would provide retirees of all DRS systems up to 90 days after receipt of their first retirement allowance the ability to change their survivor option election.
SB 6499	Concerning the confidentiality of retirement system files and records relating to health information. (By request of the Department of Retirement Systems.) Exempts medical records provided to the Department of Retirement Systems from public inspection and copying.

For more on pension-related legislation see the Legislation section of the DRS website



A new record keeper coming for Plan 3, DCP and JRA customer accounts

The Department of Retirement Systems will transition to a new record keeper to serve customers in:

- Plan 3 (PERS, SERS and TRS)
- Deferred Compensation Program (DCP)
- Judicial Retirement Account (JRA)

Prior to the transition, DRS will mail information packets to all Plan 3, DCP and JRA customers. The record keeper change will have minimal impact for most DRS customers. Some new services will include online withdrawal for investment accounts including DCP, a live online chat feature for account assistance and online accounts for TAP annuitants. For the latest information about the record keeper change, visit drs.wa.gov/rk.

What is a record keeper?

The DRS record keeper maintains the accounting of Plan 3, DCP and JRA investments and assists customers with transactions such as fund transfers and withdrawals. Empower Retirement is the current record keeper and will continue to serve customers until the services are transferred to Voya Financial.

Visit drs.wa.gov/rk for the latest news about the record keeper change.



Get news updates from DRS by email or text when you select topics at drs.wa.gov/updates



The Washington State Department of Retirement Systems publishes *Retirement Outlook* for active members twice a year.

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