MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Retiring with ORP

A Step-by-Step Guide for MSU Employees

Optional Retirement Plan · Retiree Insurance · Medicare

Revised September 2026

Welcome

Retirement is a major milestone, and the Department of Human Resources Management (HRM) is here to help you prepare for it. This guide explains the retirement process for Mississippi State University employees who participate in the **Optional Retirement Plan (ORP)**, including what to expect from HRM and your ORP vendor, how to access your account, and the deadlines that protect your retiree insurance.

Employees who are members of the Public Employees' Retirement System of Mississippi (PERS) should refer to the Retiring with PERS guide.

HOW ORP IS DIFFERENT FROM PERS

ORP is a defined contribution plan. Your retirement income comes from your **account balance** (employee and employer contributions plus investment earnings), not from a monthly PERS benefit. You are fully vested from your first day, and you choose when and how to take your money.

There is no PERS retirement application, no cost-of-living adjustment, and no service credit for unused leave.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Keep your home address and personal email address current with HRM and with your ORP vendor. HRM, your vendor, and Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi will send important notices to the address on file.

Questions? Contact HRM Benefits at **662-325-3713** or **benefits@hrm.msstate.edu**.

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GETTING STARTED

Overview and Eligibility

Begin retirement planning at least **12 months** in advance, notify your department and HRM about **six months** before your last day, and apply for retiree insurance at least **31 days** before your last day to avoid a gap in coverage.

Key Terms

- **Last day of employment:** your final day worked at MSU, as stated in your letter of resignation.
- **Termination of employment:** a complete separation from MSU by resignation or retirement. No ORP distribution may be made before termination of employment.
- **Vendor (Fund Sponsor):** the company that holds your ORP account: Corebridge Financial, TIAA, or Voya.
- **Years of service:** full years in which retirement contributions were made on your behalf to ORP or PERS. HRM can confirm your years of service.
- **Distribution:** any withdrawal, rollover, or payment from your ORP account.

Eligibility for Retiree Insurance

Your ORP account belongs to you at any age once you leave MSU. However, to continue State Health Plan coverage and state life insurance **as a retiree**, the State and School Employees' Health Insurance Plan requires you to qualify for **service retirement under the applicable PERS regulations**, the same as a PERS member hired on the same date:

Date First Hired	PERS Service Retirement Requirement
On or before June 30, 2007	25 years of service at any age, or age 60 with at least 4 years of service
July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2011	25 years of service at any age, or age 60 with at least 8 years of service
July 1, 2011 – February 28, 2026	30 years of service at any age, or age 60 with at least 8 years of service
On or after March 1, 2026	30 years of service at any age, or age 62 with at least 8 years of service

If you leave MSU before meeting these requirements, you may still take your ORP account, but you are not eligible for retiree health or life insurance. COBRA may be available instead. HRM can confirm your eligibility.

> **WHERE YOUR ORP CONTRIBUTIONS GO**
>
> You contribute **9%** of your salary. MSU contributes **14.9%** of your salary to your account if you were hired before July 1, 2025, or **9%** if you were hired on or after July 1, 2025.

AT A GLANCE

Retirement Timeline

Milestones labeled DEADLINE are firm deadlines. A missed retiree health insurance or life insurance deadline cannot be corrected later.

When	Milestone
12+ months before	**Plan and review your account** Vendor statements, meeting with your vendor representative, distribution options, beneficiaries
About 6 months before	**Decide and notify** Letter of resignation to your department; retirement meeting with HRM Benefits
31+ days before your last day	**Apply for retiree health and life insurance** Submit applications to HRM early to avoid a gap in coverage
Last day of employment	**Complete termination of employment** Active insurance ends on the last day of the month; leave payout follows one to two pay cycles later
1st of the next month	**Retiree health coverage begins** Pay your first premium to DFA with the voucher from HRM
Within 31 days after coverage ends	**Retiree health and life insurance deadline** DEADLINE Applications must be received by HRM
After final contributions post	**Request a distribution, if desired** Through your vendor; MSU approves every distribution
At age 59½	**Early withdrawal tax penalty no longer applies** Earlier if you leave MSU in or after the year you turn 55
At age 65	**Enroll in Medicare Parts A, B, and D** Medicare becomes primary; notify BCBSMS; stop HSA contributions beforehand
By April 1 after your RMD age	**Required minimum distributions begin** DEADLINE Age 73 or 75, depending on your birth year, or the year after you retire if later

STEP 1 · 12 OR MORE MONTHS BEFORE RETIREMENT

Planning

The purpose of this stage is to understand your account balance, your distribution options, and whether you meet the requirements for retiree insurance.

1. **Review your ORP account.** Your vendor sends a statement each quarter, and you can view your balance at any time on your vendor's website. If you have accounts with more than one vendor, review each one.
2. **Meet with your vendor representative.** Your vendor can explain your distribution options, estimate retirement income from your balance, and help you plan withdrawals. Contact information for MSU's vendor representatives is in the Contacts section.
3. **Update your beneficiaries.** Beneficiary designations are kept by your vendor, not by MSU or PERS. Review and update them with each vendor.
4. **Confirm your retiree insurance eligibility.** Check that you will meet the PERS service retirement requirements for your hire date (see Overview). HRM can confirm your years of service.
5. **Consider consolidating accounts.** You may transfer part or all of your account between ORP vendors, subject to each vendor's rules.
6. **Review Medicare and HSA timing.** If you will be age 64 or older at retirement, or you contribute to a Health Savings Account, review the Medicare section before selecting a retirement date.

> **SELECTING YOUR RETIREMENT DATE**
>
> Active insurance coverage ends on the last day of the month in which employment ends, and retiree coverage begins on the first day of the next month. Most employees choose the last working day of a month as their last day of employment.

STEP 2 · ABOUT SIX MONTHS BEFORE RETIREMENT

Decisions and Notification

At this stage, confirm your last day of employment, decide how you want to take your ORP money, and notify your department and HRM.

1. **Submit a letter of resignation.** Give your department a written letter stating that you are retiring and your last day of employment. HRM cannot begin processing without this letter.
2. **Schedule a retirement meeting with HRM Benefits.** HRM will review your insurance continuation options and provide a Retiree Benefits Information Sheet showing your retiree premiums.
3. **Understand how leave is handled.** ORP does not convert unused leave to service credit. Leave that is not paid out at retirement is forfeited (see Step 3).
4. **Decide how to take your money.** You do not have to take a distribution when you retire. Review your options with your vendor:

Option	How It Works
Leave it invested	Keep your balance with your vendor and continue to direct your investments until you need it or until required minimum distributions begin.
Direct rollover	Move all or part of your balance to an IRA or another eligible retirement plan. Taxes are deferred and no federal tax is withheld.
Lump sum	Take all or part of your balance as a single payment. It is taxable in the year paid.
Installments or systematic withdrawals	Receive regular payments over a period you choose, as offered by your vendor.
Annuity	Receive income for your lifetime, for your lifetime and a beneficiary's, or for a guaranteed period, as offered by your vendor.

TAXES ON DISTRIBUTIONS

Distributions are generally subject to federal income tax. If an amount eligible for rollover is paid directly to you, **20% is withheld** for federal income tax. A direct rollover avoids this withholding.

A **10% federal tax penalty** may apply to withdrawals before age 59½. It generally does not apply if you leave MSU in or after the calendar year you turn 55. Talk with your vendor or a tax advisor before taking a distribution.

STEP 3 · LEAVE

Leave Payout

At retirement, a portion of your unused leave is paid to you in a lump sum. **Any remaining leave is forfeited.** Unlike PERS, ORP does not convert unused leave to service credit.

Employee Type	Leave Paid at Retirement	Leave Forfeited
12-month employees	Unused personal leave, up to 240 hours	Personal leave above 240 hours, plus all major medical leave
9-month faculty	Accrued major medical leave, up to 240 hours	Major medical leave above 240 hours (9-month faculty do not earn personal leave)

Leave is paid at your rate of pay on the date of separation. Under Mississippi law, MSU may not pay leave at any other rate. ORP contributions are withheld from your leave payout, and the employee and employer contributions are deposited to your ORP account.

PLAN YOUR LEAVE

Because leave above the payout limit is forfeited, talk with your supervisor about scheduling leave before your last day.

STEP 4 · YOUR LAST MONTH

Final Month of Employment

During your final month, your department completes separation processing and your active benefits end. You must completely end your employment with MSU before any ORP distribution can be made.

1. **Separation processing.** Your supervisor or business manager initiates separation paperwork and completes the MSU Separating Checklist (keys, equipment, system access, and final leave).
2. **Leave records.** Confirm that all leave has been entered in Banner through your last day.
3. **Insurance applications.** Confirm that HRM has your retiree health and life insurance applications.
4. **Flexible spending accounts.** Submit receipts for eligible Mediflex and Careflex expenses incurred on or before your last day to SABC within 30 days after your last day of work.
5. **Contact information.** Provide a current mailing address to HRM and to your ORP vendor so you receive insurance, tax, and account documents.

Item	What to Expect
Active insurance	Active employee coverage ends on the last day of the month in which employment ends, unless continued as retiree coverage.
Final paycheck	MSU uses a non-delayed payroll. Your final paycheck is issued on the first regularly scheduled payday after your last day.
Leave payout	Paid separately, typically one to two pay cycles after your last day, once your department confirms all leave has been entered. It is direct deposited to the same account as your paycheck.
Final ORP contributions	Contributions from your final paycheck and leave payout are sent to your vendor after your last day.
W-2 and 1095-C	Mailed to the address on file with HRM.

STEP 5 · AFTER RETIREMENT

Accessing Your ORP Account

After your employment ends, you may access your ORP account at any age. Distributions are requested through your vendor, and **MSU must approve every distribution**, including rollovers.

1. **Wait for your final contributions.** Before closing your account or rolling over your full balance, confirm with your vendor that contributions from your final paycheck and leave payout have posted.
2. **Contact your vendor.** Your vendor will provide the distribution or rollover forms and explain processing times.
3. **MSU approval.** HRM approves the distribution after your separation is processed. Your vendor will tell you whether it sends the request to MSU or whether you should submit the employer section to HRM through the HRM retirement drop box.

4. **Tax forms.** Your vendor mails Form 1099-R each January for any year in which you received a distribution.
5. **Address changes.** Notify your vendor directly if your address changes.

Required Minimum Distributions

Federal law requires you to begin taking distributions by **April 1 of the year after the later of** the year you reach your required minimum distribution (RMD) age or the year you retire.

Year of Birth	RMD Age
1951 through 1959	73
1960 or later	75

If you have not requested payment by 60 days before your required beginning date, your vendor will begin paying you automatically under its default payout option.

CONTINUING YOUR HEALTH COVERAGE

Retiree Health Insurance

ORP retirees may continue State and School Employees' Health Insurance Plan coverage for life, but **only if they meet the same eligibility requirements as PERS retirees**. Retirees pay the full premium for all coverage.

> **DEADLINE: 31 DAYS**
>
> Your retiree health application must be received by HRM **no later than 31 days after your active coverage ends**. Late applications are not accepted, and the right to retiree coverage is permanently forfeited. Apply at least 31 days before your last day to avoid a lapse.

Eligibility for Retiree Health Coverage

ORP retirees must meet the same eligibility requirements as PERS retirees. To continue health coverage as a retiree, you must:

1. Be enrolled in the Plan on the day before your retirement;
2. Have been an **active member with the Plan for at least four years preceding retirement** (unless retiring due to a work-related disability; Miss. Code Ann. § 25-15-9); and
3. Qualify for service retirement under the applicable PERS regulations (see Overview).

Rule	What It Means for Retirees
Legacy or Horizon	Your premium depends on your original hire date. **Legacy:** first employed before January 1, 2006, or a full-time employee of a Mississippi public community college, library, school district, state agency, or university before that date. **Horizon:** first employed on or after January 1, 2006.

Rule	What It Means for Retirees
Base or Select coverage	Non-Medicare retirees may choose Base or Select coverage. Medicare-eligible retirees are covered under Select coverage only, and the Plan does not provide prescription drug benefits once you are Medicare-eligible.
Eligible dependents	Your spouse and your children to age 26 (coverage ends at the end of the month the child turns 26). A child who became permanently disabled before age 26 may remain covered at any age with approval from BCBSMS.
Adding dependents	Retirement is not a qualifying event, and retirees cannot add dependents during Open Enrollment. A new dependent may be added within 60 days of marriage, birth, adoption, legal guardianship or custody. A dependent who loses other coverage may be added within 60 days only if you declined coverage for that dependent when first eligible because the dependent had other coverage.
Changing coverage	Non-Medicare retirees may switch between Base and Select coverage during Open Enrollment each fall. After enrollment, submit all changes directly to BCBSMS.
Surviving spouse	If a covered retiree dies, a covered spouse may continue coverage for life, and covered children may continue to age 26. The spouse must apply to DFA within 60 days after the retiree's death.
Waiving or dropping coverage	If you waive or cancel retiree coverage for any reason, including to enroll in another plan, you may never re-enroll as a retiree. COBRA is available during the COBRA election period only.

Monthly Retiree Health Premiums

Rates below are effective **January 1, 2027**. Your first premium is paid by check to DFA with the voucher HRM provides. Because ORP retirees do not receive a monthly PERS benefit, premiums cannot be deducted from a retirement check; after your first payment, BCBSMS bills you directly, with payment due on the first of each month. Automatic bank drafts are available. HRM will confirm your exact premium on your Retiree Benefits Information Sheet.

Retirees Not Yet Eligible for Medicare

Coverage Level	Legacy Base	Legacy Select	Horizon Base	Horizon Select
Retiree	$628	$653	$1,002	$1,038
Retiree + Spouse (non-Medicare)	$1,315	$1,437	$2,009	$2,140
Retiree + Spouse & Child(ren) (non-Medicare)	$1,673	$1,795	$2,246	$2,379
Retiree + Child	$807	$893	$1,181	$1,278
Retiree + Children	$1,083	$1,132	$1,456	$1,517
Retiree + Spouse (Medicare)	Not available	$920	Not available	$1,304
Retiree + Spouse & Child(ren) (one or more Medicare)	Not available	$1,160	Not available	$1,544

Medicare-Eligible Retirees (Select Coverage)

Coverage Level	Legacy	Horizon
Retiree	$266	$266
Retiree + Spouse (non-Medicare)	$1,049	$1,369
Retiree + Spouse & Child(ren) (non-Medicare)	$1,407	$1,607
Retiree + Child	$504	$504
Retiree + Children	$744	$744
Retiree + Spouse (Medicare)	$532	$532
Retiree + Spouse & Child(ren) (one or more Medicare)	$772	$772

COBRA: An Alternative to Retiree Coverage

Instead of retiree coverage, you and your covered dependents may continue State Health Plan coverage through COBRA. COBRA provides the same benefits as the Plan, but it is temporary. COBRA is also the option for employees who leave MSU before meeting the PERS service retirement requirements.

> **BEFORE CHOOSING COBRA**
>
> COBRA coverage ends after a set period. If you do not enroll in retiree coverage within 31 days after active coverage ends, you may still elect COBRA during the COBRA election period, but **once the COBRA election period expires, you will have no option for coverage under the Plan**, including retiree coverage, for the rest of your life.

Retiree Coverage	COBRA Coverage
Available for life	Available for a limited period (generally 18 months)
Application to HRM within 31 days after active coverage ends	Election with BCBSMS within 60 days after coverage ends or the date of the notice, whichever is later
First premium to DFA; then billed monthly by BCBSMS	First payment due within 45 days of election; then paid monthly to BCBSMS
Continues when you become eligible for Medicare, as secondary coverage	Ends if you enroll in Medicare after COBRA begins

Who Is Eligible and for How Long

Qualified Beneficiary	Qualifying Event	Maximum Length of COBRA
You (the retiring employee)	End of employment	Up to 18 months

Qualified Beneficiary	Qualifying Event	Maximum Length of COBRA
Your covered spouse and children	End of your employment	Up to 18 months
Your covered spouse and children	A second qualifying event during the 18 months, such as divorce or legal separation, your entitlement to Medicare, or a child no longer being an eligible dependent	Up to 36 months from your last day of employment
Any qualified beneficiary	Determined disabled by the Social Security Administration at the time of the qualifying event or within the first 60 days of COBRA	Up to 29 months (an 11-month disability extension)

- **Cost:** You pay the full premium. During the first 18 months, COBRA premiums are limited by law to 102% of the regular Plan premium; during a disability extension, they may be up to 150%.
- **Disability extension:** BCBSMS must receive a copy of the Social Security disability determination within 60 days of receiving it and before the initial 18 months end.
- **Medicare:** If you are already enrolled in Medicare when COBRA begins, you may keep COBRA. If you enroll in Medicare after COBRA begins, your COBRA coverage ends.
- **Missed payments:** If the first premium is not received within 45 days, coverage is terminated back to the date of the qualifying event.
- **New dependents:** A spouse or child who joins your family during COBRA may be added, subject to the Plan's enrollment rules.

2027 Monthly COBRA Health Premiums

Coverage Level	Legacy Base	Legacy Select	Horizon Base	Horizon Select
Participant	$555	$580	$555	$614
Participant + Spouse	$1,166	$1,274	$1,166	$1,308
Participant + Spouse & Child(ren)	$1,484	$1,593	$1,484	$1,628
Participant + Child	$715	$824	$715	$858
Participant + Children	$961	$1,068	$961	$1,103

2027 Monthly COBRA Disability Extension Premiums (Months 19–29)

Coverage Level	Legacy Base	Legacy Select	Horizon Base	Horizon Select
Participant	$818	$853	$818	$904
Participant + Spouse	$1,716	$1,874	$1,716	$1,925
Participant + Spouse & Child(ren)	$2,184	$2,344	$2,184	$2,395
Participant + Child	$1,052	$1,212	$1,052	$1,263

Coverage Level	Legacy Base	Legacy Select	Horizon Base	Horizon Select
Participant + Children	$1,415	$1,572	$1,415	$1,623

For COBRA questions, contact BCBSMS at 800-709-7881.

BCBSMS automatically mails a COBRA notice to employees covered by the State Health Plan. COBRA is not needed if you elect retiree health coverage.

AGE 65 AND OLDER

Medicare

For retirees age 65 and older, **Medicare is the primary payer** and the State Health Plan is secondary. **Enroll in Medicare Parts A, B, and D when you retire, or at age 65 if you are already retired.** The Plan calculates benefits as though you are enrolled in Parts A and B whether or not you have enrolled, and it does not provide prescription drug coverage for Medicare-eligible retirees.

Coordination of Benefits

Coordination of benefits determines which coverage pays a claim first. The primary payer processes the claim first, and the secondary payer considers the remaining balance.

Your Status	Primary	Secondary
Active MSU employee age 65 or older	State Health Plan	Medicare
Spouse age 65 or older of an active employee	State Health Plan	Medicare
Retiree age 65 or older, or a covered spouse or dependent age 65 or older	Medicare	State Health Plan (Medicare-eligible retiree coverage)
Retiree, spouse, or dependent under age 65 with Social Security disability	Medicare	State Health Plan
Retiree, spouse, or dependent under age 65 with end-stage renal disease (ESRD)	State Health Plan for the first 30 months of Medicare eligibility	Medicare; after 30 months, Medicare becomes primary
COBRA participant age 65 or older or disabled	Medicare	COBRA
Covered dependent who is not eligible for Medicare	State Health Plan (regular benefits)	None

When to Enroll

Your Situation	What to Do
Retiring before age 65	The State Health Plan is primary until age 65. Enroll during your Initial Enrollment Period, which begins three months before your 65th birthday month and ends three months after it. Enroll at least three months early so Part B begins on the first day of your birthday month. The same applies to a covered spouse.
Retiring at or after age 65	While covered as an active employee, you may delay Part B without penalty. At retirement, enroll in Parts B and D through the Social Security Administration so coverage begins the same day as your retiree coverage. Although federal rules allow an eight-month Special Enrollment Period, the Plan will process claims as if Medicare were primary beginning on your retiree coverage date.
Any time you or a dependent becomes eligible	Notify BCBSMS when you or a covered dependent becomes entitled to Medicare.

Medicare Enrollment Periods

If you already receive Social Security benefits when you turn 65, you are enrolled in Parts A and B automatically. Otherwise, you must sign up through the Social Security Administration.

Period	When It Applies	When Coverage Starts
Initial Enrollment Period	Seven months: the three months before your 65th birthday month, your birthday month, and the three months after	The month you turn 65 if you sign up in the first three months; otherwise, the first day of the month after you sign up
Special Enrollment Period	Any time you or your spouse are covered by a group health plan based on current employment, and for eight months after that employment or coverage ends, whichever is first	The first day of the month after you sign up. Retiree coverage and COBRA do not count as coverage based on current employment.
General Enrollment Period	January 1 through March 31 each year, if you missed your other enrollment periods	The first day of the month after you sign up. Late enrollment penalties may apply.

Late Enrollment Penalties

- **Part B:** Your monthly premium increases 10% for each full 12-month period you could have had Part B but did not sign up, and the penalty lasts as long as you have Part B. There is no penalty for delaying Part B while you are covered as an active employee.
- **Part D:** A penalty is added to your Part D premium if you go 63 or more days in a row without Part D or other creditable prescription drug coverage after your Initial Enrollment Period ends. The State Health Plan's prescription drug coverage is creditable coverage while you are an active employee, so you will not pay a penalty for enrolling in Part D when you retire.

- **Retiree claims:** Because the Plan pays as though you have Parts A and B, not enrolling on time can leave you responsible for the share Medicare would have paid.

How Retiree Coverage Works with Medicare

After Medicare processes a claim, the State Health Plan pays **100% of the remaining balance** based on the Medicare allowance for covered services. For services covered by the Plan but not by Medicare, the Plan pays 100% of its allowance. Emergency room and telehealth copayments do not apply, and pre-certification is required only when Medicare does not cover a service.

- **Medicare deductibles and coinsurance:** The Plan pays 100% of the Medicare deductible and coinsurance amounts for covered services, whether or not your provider participates in Medicare.
- **Wellness services:** If Medicare denies a wellness service, the Plan pays 100% of its allowance. Network and out-of-network differences do not apply.
- **Prescription drugs:** The Plan does not cover prescriptions for Medicare-eligible retirees, spouses, or dependents. You must enroll in a Medicare Part D plan for drug coverage.
- **Dependents not eligible for Medicare:** A covered spouse or child who is not Medicare-eligible keeps regular Plan benefits, including deductibles and coinsurance.
- **Your coverage continues:** Becoming eligible for Medicare does not end your retiree coverage. Your premium changes to the Medicare-eligible rate.
- **Medicare due to disability:** If you are approved for Medicare because of a Social Security disability, send BCBSMS a copy of your Medicare card right away. If approval is retroactive, the Plan updates your records, refunds any premium overpayment, and reprocesses claims for up to two years.
- **Spouses and dependents age 65 or older:** The Plan pays as though they are enrolled in Parts A and B, whether or not they are.

2026 Medicare Costs

Item	2026 Amount
Part A premium	$0 with 40 quarters of Medicare-covered employment
Part B standard premium	$202.90 per month (higher for higher incomes)
Part B annual deductible	$283
Part D premium	Varies by plan

HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNT HOLDERS

You may not contribute to an HSA once you are enrolled in any part of Medicare, including premium-free Part A.

If you apply for Medicare or Social Security after age 65, Part A is made retroactive for up to six months (but not before your 65th birthday month). **Stop HSA contributions six months before you apply** to avoid excess contributions and tax penalties.

You may continue to use existing HSA funds tax-free for qualified medical expenses, including Medicare Part B and Part D premiums. Medicare supplement (Medigap) premiums are not qualified expenses.

Medicare Tips

1. **Create your my Social Security account** at ssa.gov/myaccount before you apply. You can apply for Medicare online at ssa.gov or by calling Social Security at 800-772-1213.
2. **Start early.** Apply about three months before you want Medicare to begin so there is no gap between your retiree coverage and Medicare.
3. **Send BCBSMS a copy of your Medicare card** as soon as you receive it, and notify BCBSMS when a covered spouse or dependent becomes eligible for Medicare. Claims may be denied or delayed until BCBSMS has your Medicare information.
4. **Choose a Part D plan that covers your prescriptions.** Compare plans at medicare.gov or by calling 800-633-4227 (1-800-MEDICARE). You may change Part D plans each year during Medicare Open Enrollment, October 15 through December 7.
5. **Keep your creditable coverage notice.** The Plan's annual notice shows that your prescription drug coverage as an active employee was creditable. You may need it to avoid a Part D late enrollment penalty.
6. **Think carefully before replacing retiree coverage.** If you cancel State Health Plan retiree coverage to enroll in a Medicare supplement or Medicare Advantage plan, you may never re-enroll as a retiree.
7. **Higher incomes pay more.** Part B and Part D premiums are higher if your income from two years earlier is above certain limits. If your income has dropped because you retired, you may ask Social Security to use your current income by filing Form SSA-44.
8. **Help is available.** If you have limited income and resources, Extra Help can lower Part D costs (ssa.gov/extrahelp), and Medicare Savings Programs can help pay Part B premiums. For free, unbiased Medicare counseling, contact your State Health Insurance Assistance Program at shiphelp.org.
9. **Your Medicare card uses a Medicare number,** not your Social Security number. Keep it in a safe place and use it with your BCBSMS card at every visit.

LIFE, DENTAL, VISION, AND FLEXIBLE SPENDING

Other Insurance

In addition to health coverage, you may be able to continue life insurance and dental and vision coverage after you retire. Each has its own deadline, and retirees pay the full premium.

DEADLINE: 31 DAYS

Your state group life insurance application must be received by HRM **no later than 31 days after your active coverage ends**. Late applications are not accepted. Apply before your last day to avoid a gap in coverage.

Retiree Life Insurance

- **Eligibility:** You must be enrolled in the state group term life insurance plan (Minnesota Life) as an active employee at the time you retire and qualify for service retirement under the applicable PERS regulations.
- **Coverage amount:** Retirees may continue $5,000, $10,000, or $20,000 of coverage. Dependents are not eligible, and retirees are not eligible for accidental death and dismemberment (AD&D) coverage.
- **Portability:** You may also port some or all of the coverage you are losing to an individual Minnesota Life policy (minimum $10,000), without evidence of insurability. Retiree and ported coverage combined may not exceed your active coverage. At age 65 and older, ported coverage is limited to 65% of your active coverage, and it ends at age 70. Contact Minnesota Life (877-348-9217) for ported coverage rates.
- **Conversion:** You may instead convert coverage to an individual whole life policy by applying within 31 days.
- **Premiums:** Retirees pay the full, age-based premium. Because ORP retirees do not receive a PERS benefit, premiums are billed to you monthly. The premium increases each year until age 70.

Monthly Retiree Life Insurance Premiums by Age

Rates effective January 1, 2014, as published by the Department of Finance and Administration. Rates for ages under 55 are available at dfa.ms.gov/insurance.

Age	$5,000 Coverage	$10,000 Coverage	$20,000 Coverage
55	$4.25	$8.50	$17.00
56	$4.70	$9.40	$18.80
57	$5.25	$10.50	$21.00
58	$6.00	$12.00	$24.00
59	$6.75	$13.50	$27.00
60	$7.50	$15.00	$30.00
61	$8.25	$16.50	$33.00
62	$9.00	$18.00	$36.00
63	$9.75	$19.50	$39.00
64	$10.50	$21.00	$42.00
65	$11.25	$22.50	$45.00

Age	$5,000 Coverage	$10,000 Coverage	$20,000 Coverage
66	$12.00	$24.00	$48.00
67	$12.75	$25.50	$51.00
68	$13.50	$27.00	$54.00
69	$14.25	$28.50	$57.00
70 and older	$15.00	$30.00	$60.00

Other Coverage at a Glance

Coverage	Continuation Available	Deadline and Contact
State group life (Minnesota Life)	$5,000, $10,000, or $20,000 retiree coverage; portability or conversion of additional coverage	Application to HRM no later than 31 days after active coverage ends. Minnesota Life, 877-348-9217.
Unum term life	May be continued for life; coverage reduces to 65% at age 70 and 50% at age 75	Application and first premium within 31 days after your last day of employment. Unum, 800-343-5406.
Dental (Delta Dental) and vision (Davis Vision)	Up to 18 months through COBRA	COBRA notice mailed by HRM; elect within 60 days of the notice. Full premium plus 2% administrative fee, due to MSU on the first of each month. No bills are mailed.
SABC retiree dental and vision	Not limited to 18 months	Apply directly with SABC.
Mediflex and Careflex	Claims only (Mediflex COBRA available if the account is underspent)	Submit receipts to SABC within 30 days after your last day of work.

REEMPLOYMENT

Working After Retirement

ORP is a defined contribution plan, so leaving MSU is a termination of employment rather than a formal retirement. If you are rehired after leaving MSU, you are generally treated like any other new hire, and your position and pay determine whether you return to ORP.

- **Complete separation first.** No ORP distribution may be made before a valid termination of employment: a complete severance by resignation, dismissal, discharge, or retirement. Any agreement, formal or informal, to be rehired means there has not been a valid termination.
- **No required waiting period.** ORP does not require a waiting period before you may be rehired, as long as there was no agreement to return.

- **Working less than half time.** If you return to work for less than one-half of the normal working load **and** less than one-half of the normal pay for the position, no ORP or PERS contributions are made.
- **Working half time or more.** If you return to work for one-half or more of the normal working load **or** one-half or more of the normal pay, you are again eligible for retirement plan participation. If the position is ORP-eligible, you must return to active ORP participation, and employee and employer contributions resume. You will have 30 days to return a Vendor Selection form; otherwise, your previous vendor selection is reactivated.
- **Returning to a position that is not ORP-eligible.** If you are rehired in a PERS-covered position that is not ORP-eligible, you will participate in PERS for that position.
- **Distributions and taxes.** If you are rehired after starting distributions from your ORP account, talk with a financial advisor and your vendor about the tax effects of returning to work while receiving distributions.
- **Retiree insurance.** Talk with HRM before accepting a position about how reemployment affects your retiree health and life coverage.

QUICK REFERENCE

Forms, Contacts, and Reminders

Forms

Form	Purpose	Submitted By	When
Letter of resignation	States your intent to retire and last day	You to your department	About six months before
Application for Coverage (State Health Plan)	Retiree health coverage	You to HRM	At least 31 days before your last day; no later than 31 days after coverage ends
State life and Unum applications	Retiree life insurance	You to HRM	Before your last day; no later than 31 days after coverage ends
Vendor distribution or rollover forms	Withdrawals, rollovers, annuities	You to your vendor; approved by MSU	After your termination is processed
Vendor beneficiary forms	Beneficiary designations	You to your vendor	Review before retirement
Vendor Selection Change (Form 4S)	Vendor selection if rehired in an ORP-eligible position	You to HRM	Within 30 days of rehire

Contacts

Office	Assistance With	Contact
MSU Human Resources Management	Retirement meetings, retiree insurance, distribution approval	150 McArthur Hall · 662-325-3713 benefits@hrm.msstate.edu HRM retirement drop box
Corebridge Financial	ORP account and distributions	Elton Thomas, 662-661-0260 Corebridge MS ORP website
TIAA	ORP account and distributions	Rosaline Rogers Banks, 901-498-6165 TIAA MS ORP website
Voya	ORP account and distributions	Marcus Kincaid, 601-624-5108 Voya MS ORP website
PERS of Mississippi (ORP administrator)	Plan rules and ORP Plan Document	800-444-7377 or 601-359-3589 PERS ORP website
Department of Finance and Administration	State Health Plan retiree premiums	601-359-3411
Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi	Retiree coverage changes; billing; COBRA	800-709-7881
Minnesota Life	State group life portability	877-348-9217
Unum	Term life continuation	800-343-5406
Social Security Administration	Medicare and Social Security enrollment	ssa.gov

Important Reminders

1. No ORP distribution may be made until you have completely ended your employment, and MSU must approve every distribution.
2. Your retiree health and life insurance applications must be received within 31 days after active coverage ends, or retiree coverage is permanently forfeited.
3. Retiree insurance requires meeting the PERS service retirement requirements for your hire date.
4. Unused leave that is not paid out is forfeited; ORP does not provide service credit for leave.
5. Confirm that your final contributions have posted before closing your account or rolling over your full balance.
6. Required minimum distributions must begin by April 1 of the year after you reach your RMD age or retire, whichever is later.
7. Enroll in Medicare Parts A, B, and D at age 65 to avoid unpaid claims and obtain prescription drug coverage.
8. Stop HSA contributions before Medicare coverage begins, including the six-month retroactive period for Part A.
9. Retiree health coverage cannot be reinstated once it is cancelled.

This guide summarizes Optional Retirement Plan and State and School Employees' Health Insurance Plan provisions as of September 2026 and is provided for general information. It is not tax or investment advice. In the event of a conflict, applicable law and plan documents govern. Please confirm your individual information with your ORP vendor and MSU Human Resources Management.

Sources: ORP Plan Document (July 1, 2026); PERS ORP Overview; PERS letter on termination and reemployment of ORP participants (March 29, 2011); MSU HRM ORP webpage; State and School Employees' Life and Health Insurance Plan Document (rev. July 1, 2026); Know Your Benefits (Sept. 2026); DFA 2027 Monthly Premium Rates; DFA Retiree Life Insurance Rates; CMS 2026 Medicare premiums; IRS rules on distributions and required minimum distributions; MSU HRM Retiree Benefits Information Sheet; Leaving MSU Benefits Guide 2026.

PRINT AND KEEP

Retirement Checklist

Use this checklist to track your progress. Deadlines shown in bold maroon cannot be extended; missing them may forfeit coverage.

12 or More Months Before Retirement

Done	Task	Deadline or Timing	Date Done
☐	Review your ORP account balance and statements with each vendor	12+ months before	
☐	Meet with your vendor representative about distribution options	12+ months before	
☐	Review and update your beneficiaries with each vendor	12+ months before	
☐	Confirm you will meet the PERS service retirement requirements for retiree insurance	12+ months before	
☐	Review Medicare and HSA timing (age 64+ or HSA participants)	12+ months before	

About Six Months Before Retirement

Done	Task	Deadline or Timing	Date Done
☐	Choose your last day of employment (usually the last working day of a month)	About 6 months before	
☐	Submit a letter of resignation stating that you are retiring	About 6 months before	
☐	Schedule a retirement meeting with HRM Benefits (662-325-3713)	About 6 months before	
☐	Decide how you will take your ORP money and review tax effects	About 6 months before	
☐	Schedule leave above the payout limit, since it will be forfeited	Before your last day	

Before Your Last Day

Done	Task	Deadline or Timing	Date Done
☐	Submit the State Health Plan Application for Coverage to HRM	**No later than 31 days after coverage ends**	
☐	Submit your state group life insurance application to HRM	**No later than 31 days after coverage ends**	
☐	If considering COBRA instead of retiree coverage, review the COBRA section carefully	Before electing	
☐	Decide whether to continue Unum term life, dental, and vision coverage	Before your last day	
☐	Confirm all leave is entered in Banner through your last day	Last day	

Done	Task	Deadline or Timing	Date Done
☐	Complete the Separating Checklist with your supervisor	Last day	
☐	Update your mailing address with HRM and your vendor	Before last day	

After Retirement

Done	Task	Deadline or Timing	Date Done
☐	Submit Mediflex and Careflex receipts to SABC	**Within 30 days after last day**	
☐	Submit Unum application and first premium	**Within 31 days after last day**	
☐	Elect dental and vision COBRA, if desired	**Within 60 days of notice**	
☐	Mail your first retiree health premium check to DFA with the HRM voucher	Upon enrollment	
☐	Set up BCBSMS billing or bank draft for later premiums	After first payment	
☐	Confirm final ORP contributions have posted before any full distribution	After final paycheck	
☐	Request a distribution or rollover through your vendor, if desired	Any time after termination	

Later Milestones

Done	Task	Deadline or Timing	Date Done
☐	Enroll in Medicare Parts A, B, and D	Age 65	
☐	Stop HSA contributions six months before applying for Medicare	**6 months before applying**	
☐	Notify BCBSMS that you are entitled to Medicare	When enrolled	
☐	Begin required minimum distributions	**By April 1 after RMD age or retirement**	