Section 6: The Employer Secure Area (ESA)

Introduction

The **Employer Secure Area (ESA)** was designed to offer employers a secure, fast and efficient means to interact with NYSTRS online.

How to Access ESA

From NYSTRS' website (nystrs.org), select the **Employers** tab and then click Employer Secure Area (ESA). Please do not save the login page as a shortcut or favorite because security updates might not carry over when they are made.

Each time you log in to ESA, you must read and agree to the terms of the disclaimer to continue.

If you forget your password or username, click the applicable Forgot Username or Forgot Password link on the login page.

Role of the Chief School Administrator or President

As the head of your district or college, the chief school administrator (CSA) or president has been established as the assignor of rights to access ESA. The CSA or college president cannot update their own information in ESA. To update the CSA or college president information, the employer must submit a *District Contact Change (CSA)* (QTR-81A) form to NYSTRS by mail or fax to 518-431-8798.

The CSA or president is asked to perform three tasks to maintain the integrity of your school's Employer Secure Area account:

1. Assign a security administrator (SA) for your location. The designated security administrator will have almost the same rights as the CSA. The role of the security administrator is to assign and remove rights for all users and applications within ESA. Please note that NYSTRS does not maintain users other than the CSA. All other district users **must** be added/removed/updated by the CSA or SA.
2. Keep track of your password, as it must be changed periodically. NYSTRS will email a reminder when it is time to change your password. For security purposes, please do not share usernames and/or passwords with other staff.
3. Annually, validate authorized district users.

Once the CSA or president has performed the first task, the assigned security administrator can take care of any further maintenance or assignment of rights needed. Each district can assign only one security administrator.

Adding New Users

To grant access to new users of the system, navigate to the Account Management page. Under Account Management, you will see the applications to which you have access. To add new users, you must click on User Account Management.

Complete the fields in the section "Enter user details to create a new account." Select which applications you would like to provide to the new user. There is no limit to the number of applications a user may access. Once you have entered the required fields, select the *Submit* button.

The table below describes what each application allows the user to do. Review it to determine who should be assigned access to these applications.

Application	Access
Reporting	• ESA Secure Messaging • Monthly Overview • Upload Monthly Report • Submit Retroactive Payments • View Retroactive Pay • Retirement/Benefit Report Processing • Year-End Exception Reports • Rejected and Pending Monthly Reports • Accepted Monthly Reports by Reporting Period
Billing	• Loan Billing • Monthly, Estimated and Final Billing
Membership	• Verification • Registration • Tier 6 Action Items • Tier 6 Member Rates • Deceased Member Notification
Convention Delegates System (CDS)	• Enter and Amend NYSTRS Delegate Information
District Reports	• Art. 19 Report–Contributions No Longer Required • GASB Statements • Member Service Credit • Deceased Member Report • Contract Status
Earnings After Retirement	• Add New Retiree • Edit Retiree Earnings • Certify Retiree Earnings • Historical Data
ESA Secure Messaging	• Review and respond to secure messages from NYSTRS • Initiate secure messages to NYSTRS • NOTE: Users with secure messaging rights will be able to see all messages between NYSTRS and the employer, even if initiated or responded to by a different ESA User

Account Management	• Change My Password • Change My Security Question • Change My Phone Number • ESA Users • Employer Contacts (QTR-81) - CSA & SA Only

The following chart shows the applications typically assigned to each role.

Role	Reporting	Billing	Membership	CDS	Earnings After Retirement	District Reports	ESA Secure Messaging	Account Management
Superintendent/ Administrator	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Security Administrator	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Membership Verification User			X			X		X
Loan Billing User		X	X					X
Employer Reporting User	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Employer Billing User		X				X		X
Earnings After Retirement User					X			X
Convention Delegates User				X				X
ESA Secure Messaging User							X	X

Once the information is submitted, a username and password will be sent via separate emails from **ESAWebAudit@nystrs.org** to the new user(s). The person assigning rights will also receive a confirmation email from NYSTRS. The password may take up to an hour to arrive after the username email. If you do not receive either email, please check your spam or junk email folder. After you have successfully logged in, you will be required to change your password and select a security question. Please pay close attention to the password requirements provided.

Updating Users' Rights and Email Addresses

As NYSTRS adds new features to ESA, it may be necessary to update existing users' rights or grant access to new users. To do so, navigate to the Account Management page and click User Account Management. Select a user to modify their rights. You then may add or delete privileges or change the user's title and first or last name. When done, click *Submit*.

If the user's email address has changed, update the email address by navigating to the User Account Management page. Select a user to modify their rights. Delete the old email address in the box and add the new email address. Click *Submit*. A new username and password will be sent to the new email address.

Please be sure to remove ESA Users on the Account Management page as soon as an employee terminates employment. Failure to delete users from the ESA after they have separated service is a security risk as they will still have access to ESA until you remove their account.

Please note: *If a username and/or password has been or is suspected of being compromised, please call NYSTRS immediately at 800-348-7298, ext. 6220, so we can take steps to invalidate the appropriate account and reduce the risk of someone accessing member information or sending fraudulent information on your behalf.*

Role of the Security Administrator

The security administrator is responsible for setting up all users for each available function of the ESA. The security administrator is also responsible for removing rights if an ESA user leaves the district or changes positions and no longer requires rights to ESA. The security administrator cannot update their own information or the superintendent's or college president's information. To update this information, please submit *District Contact Change (CSA)* (QTR-81A) form by mail or fax to 518-431-8798. If you need further assistance, please contact NYSTRS at 800-348-7298, ext. 6220.

NYSTRS will annually send you a reminder to review ESA rights. To view current ESA users, visit the Account Management page and select ESA Users. Please be sure to review users periodically and promptly remove access for any users who have left the district or no longer need access.

ESA Users

The ESA Users page, found under Account Management, lists the ESA Users from your district as assigned by the chief school administrator, president or security administrator. Please see the **Adding New Users** or **Updating Users Rights' and Email Addresses** sections of this chapter to update a contact's information or designate a new contact. Please note that updating ESA users will not update the contacts on file with NYSTRS. Please see the School Districts Contact Page section of this chapter for information on updating the contacts on file with NYSTRS. If you need further assistance, please contact NYSTRS at 800-348-7298, ext. 6220.

School District Contacts Page

The School District Contacts page, found under Account Management, lists the names of the contacts from your district which are on file with NYSTRS. ESA Users designated as the Chief School Administrator (CSA) or the Security Administrator (SA) may update this information in ESA. Alternatively, contact information may be updated using the *District Contact Change* (QTR-81) form. Please note that filing this form will not alter the district's ESA users; those can only be updated through ESA by the CSA or SA. If you need further assistance, please contact NYSTRS at 800-348-7298, ext. 6220.

Membership: Verification and Registration

Employers are required to register new NYSTRS members. Entering the basic information necessary to establish a membership requires little time.

Employers should first visit ESA's Verification page, found under the Membership tab, to determine if the employee is already a NYSTRS member. If the person is not a member, follow the steps in the **New Entrant Registration** manual to register the employee. The verification page should also be used to verify contribution requirements for NYSTRS members.

When registering a new member in ESA, refer to the member's completed **Application for Membership** (NET-2) to ensure the information you provide is accurate. The original application must be mailed by the employer to NYSTRS to complete the member's registration. The member will receive NYSTRS membership information once the System has completed the registration process.

Submitting Monthly Employer Reports

To submit a monthly file, navigate to the Reporting page and select Upload Monthly Report. Browse your system for the file. Once the appropriate monthly report file is located, click *Upload*.

The Rejected and Pending Monthly Reports page contains the files you previously submitted until they have been processed by NYSTRS. If the file is rejected, it will stay on the Rejected and Pending Monthly Reports page. To determine the rejection reason, click on View More Info. If you require further details, please select Rejected File Error Messages and look for the error message associated with the message. Once you have corrected the district file, you can upload the corrected file.

The Accepted Monthly Reports by Reporting Period page displays the files submitted for the plan year. This will be your tool to determine which monthly files your district needs to submit. You will only find accepted files on this page.

Important Note: If BOCES submits your district's monthly reports to NYSTRS, you will need to give the BOCES' representative rights to the Employer Reporting rights in ESA. See the **Adding New Users** or **Updating Users Rights' and Email Addresses** sections above for instructions on adding users and granting them additional capabilities.

Processing Your District Specific Issue Report (DSIR)

The Reporting > Monthly Overview page provides a status summary of your monthly employer reports and DSIRs. This summary grid also helps you determine if additional DSIR information is needed to finalize the report. NYSTRS will email your district's employer reporting contact to notify them when more information is requested.

Please refer to our **District DSIR Procedures** for an overview of this feature. The procedures also include definitions of the various statuses you will see on the Reporting > Monthly Overview grid.

You can also review the **Employer District Specific Issue Report – Issue Code Reference Guide** to learn more about the different DSIR messages, warnings and errors, and how to respond to them.

Tier 6 Action Items & Tier 6 Member Rates

To report projected earnings for a Tier 6 member, go to the Tier 6 Action Items page, found under the Membership tab. Any required action will be listed on this page. To view Tier 6 contribution rate information, select Tier 6 Member Rates from the Membership tab. Please refer to our **Tier 6 Overview** for reporting instructions.

Retroactive Pay Reporting

If you report retroactive pay, you will receive an email asking you to log into ESA and instruct us where to apply the payments. This feature will also allow you to select a single year payment, upload your own spreadsheet if you are paying out multiple-year retroactive payments to your employees, or enter the information directly into our Retroactive Payments worksheet.

Your Reporting > Monthly Overview page will have the link to the Submit Retroactive Payments page. Please refer to our **District Retroactive Pay Procedures** for detailed instructions on using this feature. A **Retroactive Pay Template** is available for reporting multiple-year retroactive payments. Please see pages 9 and 10 of the procedures for further information on creating a template.

Holdover Pay/Prior Year Earnings

It is important to ensure that part-time members are given credit in the appropriate school year for all the days they worked. When an employee(s) receives a payment in July, August or September for work performed in the previous school year, it is imperative to report the appropriate days of service to match the payment. This credit is especially important to part-time employees. This feature will allow you to provide NYSTRS with the number of days due in the previous school year.

The Reporting > Monthly Overview > Holdover Pay/Prior Year Earnings page displays the directions for completion, but the instructions can also be found on **Holdover Pay/Prior Year Earnings Procedures.**

Retirement/Benefit Report Processing

Any time an active member terminates from NYSTRS, final salary information is needed from the district. You will receive an email with a notification to log into ESA under Reporting > Retirement/Benefit Report Processing for a list of the employees for whom you must complete a Retirement/Benefit Processing Report. We have tailored the fields to the type of position the member held to help make the process more efficient. If you'd like to retain a paper copy of each document, you can download a PDF for your records. For complete processing instructions, please see **Retirement/Benefit Report Processing Instructions**.

Processing Your Year-End Exception Report (YEER) and Year-End Certification Statement

The year-end reports will be available once the System has processed your June monthly report. An email notification will be sent when the reports are available for completion by the district. The Certification Statement should be completed by October 15.

The YEER can be found on the Reporting > Year-End Exception/Certification Reports page.

Please refer to our **District Year-End Exception/Certification Report Procedures** for an overview of this feature.

ESA Secure Messaging

ESA Secure Messaging allows employers to exchange secure messages with NYSTRS through the Employer Secure Area (ESA). This communications process allows districts to create, categorize and add a subject line for secure messages sent to NYSTRS via ESA. Messages will be maintained on a rolling 24-month basis.

ESA Secure Messaging Roles

Four ESA User Roles have rights to create and respond to a Secure Message: CSA (Chief School Administrator), SA (Security Administrator), ER (Employer Reporting), and the stand-alone ESA Secure Messaging Role. They each have access to all secure messages between NYSTRS and the employer.

ESA Secure Messaging Email Notifications

If the message is initiated by NYSTRS, then any Employer Reporting Users and any ESA Users assigned the ESA Secure Messaging Role will receive an email notification that NYSTRS has sent a new ESA Secure Message.

If the message is initiated by an ESA User, then when NYSTRS replies to the secure message an email notification will be sent to the ESA User who initiated or has claimed the message.

For detailed instructions on how to use ESA Secure Messaging, please refer to the **ESA Secure Messaging User Guide**.

Employer Billing

Annual estimated and final bills are generated for each employer after the System has finished processing the school year. Monthly bills are generated when an adjustment to member earnings is made for a prior school year on which a final bill has already been generated. See **Section 16: Employer Billing** for more information.

An employer billing user role has been established for those who only need ESA access to this application. The security administrator should provide the appropriate employees of the district with access.

Users with employer billing rights may access all estimated, final, and monthly bills, as well as the detail for each. The detail can be sorted and downloaded as needed. To access your billing information, click the Billing page, then Monthly, Estimated and Final Billing. You have the option of viewing the bill detail or the statement.

To save or print a copy of the detail, click either Save to CSV or Save to PDF. If available, you can view the bill which corresponds with the monthly billing detail by clicking Statement. You may sort the detail based on your preferences.

Loan Billing

Users with loan billing rights may access all monthly loan bills, as well as the regular notifications/changes, in the Loan Billing section. The detail may be sorted and downloaded as needed. To access your district's loan billing information, click the Billing page, then Loan Billing. The display will provide the status of the last 12 months of loan bills and daily notifications.

To save or print a copy of the billing detail, select the appropriate month and click either Save to CSV or Save to PDF.

For detailed instructions on how to process your loan bill, please refer to the **Loan Billing Procedures**.

Article 19 Report-Contributions No Longer Required

The Article 19 Report provides a list of members who, as of July 1 of the current year, are no longer required to make the mandatory 3% Tier 4 member contributions due to tier reinstatement or membership transfer. In these cases, a letter is also sent to the employer when the member's reinstatement or transfer is completed. The Article 19 report can be found on the District Reports page > Article 19-Contributions No Longer Required.

Member Service Credit

The Member Service Credit report provides a list of total service credit for all NYSTRS members currently on your monthly reports. This report can be found on the District Reports page > Member Service Credit. Date of membership and tier information are also provided. To save or print a copy of the detail, click either Save to CSV or Save to PDF.

The data will reflect all service credited from the latest monthly file posted.

Deceased Member Notification – It is important to notify NYSTRS promptly regarding the death of an active member or retiree. The timely notice will allow us to reach out to the beneficiary to ensure timely payment of any benefit due. To notify NYSTRS, simply click on Membership > Deceased Member Notification. Just enter the SSN and the first three letters of the first name, then the date of death. Once submitted, you will be presented with the corresponding member's name. Timely notification helps us to properly process any benefits due to beneficiaries.

Deceased Member Report – There are times when NYSTRS may be notified of the death of a member but the district, which may be carrying the health insurance for this former employee, was never notified. This report was created to reflect this information for the district's use. Under District Reports > Deceased Member Report, we display any deceased members/retirees who appeared on one of your monthly reports in their last year of working. These members will stay on the list for a period of 24 months after the date of death.

Entering Delegate Election Results

To report delegate election results, click on CDS and select Convention Delegates. The District Delegate Information page will populate. Enter election results on this page. Note that delegates and alternates are elected as a ticket and cannot be split.

The following information must be entered on the District Delegate Information page:

- Date of election (see **Election Timelines**).

- NYSTRS EmplID for the delegate(s) and, if applicable, the corresponding alternate(s).

- School email address for each delegate and alternate (Email/Confirm fields).

The *Save* button **must** be clicked for the data that was entered to be saved.

Once the information is saved, a downloadable PDF of election results becomes available. The PDF may be provided to those elected to verify election results have been successfully submitted.

Insufficient Delegate Interest

An employer may not always be able to fill all vacant delegate/alternate positions. In these instances, the employer should fill as many positions as possible. If someone is interested in the vacant delegate position(s) after the reporting period has closed, these vacancies may be filled the following year.

Until election results are reported, you will receive periodic reminders regarding the election reporting deadline. If an employer cannot find anyone interested in serving as a delegate, you may select the "Insufficient Interest" option located at the bottom of the page, and we will discontinue sending election reminders for the current year. The employer will be contacted again the following year regarding holding an election.

Voting Status

Delegate(s) will have a default status of "Attending/Voting" and alternate(s) will have a default status of "Not Attending," as only one member of a delegate/alternate ticket can vote at the Annual Delegates Meeting. Attendance status can be changed by the employer up to three business days prior to the Delegates Meeting by checking the box on the District Delegate Information page indicating the alternate will be attending in place of the delegate.

Earnings After Retirement

Employers are required to report earnings of all retired employees who receive a NYSTRS pension, no matter the capacity in which they are employed. Retiree earnings should be reported to NYSTRS either through regular payroll or using the Earnings After Retirement (EAR) feature in ESA. For complete instructions, please see the **Earnings After Retirement Instructions.**

When to Report EAR Through Regular Payroll

Payments made to NYSTRS retirees through regular payroll must be included on your monthly report under NYSTRS Pay Type N: MTD Post-Retirement Pay and should not be reported through the Earnings After Retirement section of ESA. If you have not been reporting these payments correctly, please notify your employer reporting contact.

When to Report EAR Through ESA

Please use the EAR feature in ESA to enter, edit and certify earnings for NYSTRS retirees working in your district and receiving compensation from a source other than your district payroll. This includes retirees paid:

- As consultants (whether or not a 1099-MISC was issued)
- By voucher
- Through accounts payable
- From other New York State funds, such as grants
- Through a business entity (i.e., LLC, S-Corp, Partnership, etc.)
- Through a third-party vendor

Earnings after retirement for a particular calendar year (Jan. 1 – Dec. 31) must be updated in ESA no later than March 31 of the following year.

For additional information, please refer to **Section 20: Earnings After Retirement**. If you require assistance, please call our Employer Reporting Unit at 800-348-7298, ext. 6150.

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