YOU DESERVE THE CREDIT

WHY AND HOW TO BUILD YOUR SERVICE CREDIT
WHY CARE ABOUT SERVICE CREDIT?

Did you know working as a teacher or administrator isn’t the only way to build service credit in the Retirement System? Or that you may be able to purchase eligible prior service?

Obtaining all the service credit for which you are eligible is important because it may affect when your benefits begin and how much you will receive. Here’s how:

When: The amount of service credit you have determines your eligibility for benefits. These include vesting rights, disability retirement, death benefits and loans. In addition, with 10 years of membership or service credit, Tier 4 members can stop making 3% member contributions toward their retirement.

How Much: Service credit helps determine your pension factor, a primary component of the formula used to calculate your retirement benefit. Additional credit will increase the pension factor. The formula used to calculate your benefit is:

Pension Factor \times \text{Age Factor (if applicable)} \times \text{Final Average Salary} = \text{Your Maximum Annual Pension}

Ways to earn service credit include:

- Working for a NYSTRS participating employer.
- Transferring credit from another New York State public retirement system.
- Reinstating to an earlier date of membership.
- Receiving credit for:
  - Prior service
  - Military service \textit{(as allowed by law)}
  - Benefit Enhancement/Article 19 \textit{(Tiers 1 and 2 only)}

You cannot receive credit for federal government employment or non-public school teaching except for a charter school participating in NYSTRS.

In most cases receiving additional service credit does not change your date of membership or tier. Exceptions are if it is credited as a membership reinstatement or transfer, both of which are addressed in this pamphlet.
CREDIT FOR MEMBER SERVICE

The number of days of service credit earned in a given school year (July 1-June 30) is the actual number of paid work or paid leave days (or parts thereof) reported to the System by participating employers. You can receive a maximum of one year of credit within a school year.

To receive credit for part-time, partial-year or substitute teaching, you must have worked the equivalent of at least 20 full days in a school year. Days of service are then converted into months of credit as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days Per Year</th>
<th>Credit</th>
<th>Days Per Year</th>
<th>Credit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 20 days</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>90-109</td>
<td>5 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>110-129</td>
<td>6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-49</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>130-149</td>
<td>7 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-69</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>150-169</td>
<td>8 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-89</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>170+</td>
<td>9 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>170+</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you plan to retire before the end of the school year, be aware your service for that final school year is limited to what is actually possible based on your date of retirement.

Review your NYSTRS Benefit Profile carefully each year to verify your service credit and salary information — the basis for your NYSTRS benefits — have been correctly reported to us by your employer(s). If you notice an error, ask your employer to correct the records and to submit the revision to NYSTRS. Correcting any misinformation now will help expedite the processing of your benefits in the future.
**TRANSFERRED SERVICE**

If you are currently a member of another New York State public retirement system and no longer work in employment reportable to that system, you may transfer service and membership from the other system to NYSTRS. Your service credit, member contributions (if any) and original date of membership may be transferable.

Before deciding whether to pursue a transfer, contact both systems to discuss how a transfer could affect your benefits. You cannot transfer to or from an out-of-state public retirement system.

**REINSTATED SERVICE**

If you had a previous membership in this System or any other New York State public retirement system, you are eligible to reinstate to your earlier date of membership. You will receive the service credited under that membership, provided it is not credited to another system, along with any possible advantages of an earlier tier.

There is no deadline or window to file for reinstatement. However, applying early in your career has its benefits. For example, if you are reinstated from Tier 3-6 to Tier 1 or 2, your contributions (if any) will cease only after the form is filed and your eligibility is confirmed.

There are some situations where reinstatement may not be to your advantage. Also, if you can purchase credit for prior service in addition to being reinstated to a former membership, the timing of your actions is extremely important. Carefully review the information found on the *Election to Reinstate* (RIS-1) form and call us at (800) 348-7298, Ext. 6070 to discuss.

**Reinstatement Cost**

If you are reinstated to a former Tier 1 or 2 membership, there will be no cost and you will not be required to make member contributions. However, if you are reinstated to a former Tier 3-5 membership, you will be required to repay, in a lump sum with interest, the amount refunded from the previous membership.
How to Apply

You must file an Election to Reinstate (RIS-1) form with NYSTRS. NYSTRS forms can be obtained on the Forms page at NYSTRS.org or by calling (800) 782-0289. It may take a year or more to finalize your reinstatement.

If you are reinstating from Tier 3 or 4 to Tier 1 or 2 and you do not have 10 years of membership or service credit, your contributions will cease only after the election is filed and your eligibility is confirmed.

IRS Section 401(a)(17)

NYSTRS' position on Section 401(a)(17) of the Internal Revenue Code is that members who last joined the System prior to July 1, 1996 and are reinstated to an earlier date of membership will not be subject to the Sec. 401(a)(17) compensation limits. This is of particular importance to those members who were reinstated to Tier 1 and are eligible for a five-year final average salary. For more information on this section of law, contact us at (800) 348-7298, Ext. 6250.

Prior Service

Prior service is New York State public service completed before your current date of membership in this System. Receiving credit for prior service does not change your date of membership or your tier, unless it is the result of a membership reinstatement or transfer (see Transferred Service or Reinstated Service on page 4). Additional service credit can affect your eligibility for, and the calculation of, your benefits. Claiming prior service early in your career may also have financial benefits.

Service Previously Credited in a NYS Public Retirement System

Members of all tiers are eligible to receive credit for prior service completed under a former membership in:

- This System;
- The New York State and Local Employees’ Retirement System;
- The Teachers’ Retirement System of New York City; or,
- Any other New York State (including New York City) public retirement system.

Prior NYS Service Not Credited to a Membership

Members of all tiers may receive credit for work prior to their date of membership that would have been creditable in a New York State public retirement system. This includes partial year(s), part-time and substitute teaching.
Out-of-State Prior Service

Tier 1 members may receive credit, up to a maximum of 10 years, for teaching in the public schools and colleges of another state if they will not receive a benefit for that service from another state or the federal government. You can only receive credit for employment that occurred before your current date of membership in this System. Any portion of this credit that causes you to exceed 35 years of total service credit is excluded from the pension calculation.

Tier 2 members may receive credit for out-of-state service only if it had been credited under a previous Tier 1 membership in NYSTRS.

Tier 3-6 members cannot receive credit for service in another state.

Prior Service Cost

**Tiers 1 and 2:** Prior service is cost-free.

**Tiers 3 and 4:** The cost is 3% of salary received during the period of the service. In addition, Tier 4 members must pay interest of 5%, compounded annually. Tier 3 members must pay 5% interest only on service under a former Tier 3 membership.

**Tier 5:** The cost is 3.5% of salary received during the period of service plus 5% interest, compounded annually.

**Tier 6:** The cost is 6% of salary received during the period of service plus 5% interest, compounded annually.

How to Apply

MyNYSTRS account holders have the convenience of submitting and tracking their prior service claim online. If you did not have credit for the service under an earlier membership, upon submitting the claim online you will be directed to print the applicable verification of salary and service form. Complete Part 1 and send it to your former employer for completion. It is the employer’s responsibility to submit the verification form to NYSTRS.

Alternatively, you can print a Prior Service Claim (PRS-2) form from our website or call our forms Hotline at (800) 782-0289 to request one. If applicable, you must also send your former employer the appropriate verification form.

After you earn two years of service credit under your present membership and make any required payment, you will receive the prior service credit. Priority is given to those who are retiring and Tier 4 members who will be eligible to end mandatory contributions as a result of the additional service. Members are urged to submit their claims early.

Once a claim has been verified and fully processed, those with a MyNYSTRS account can see how much it will cost to purchase the service by selecting the Service Credit tab and then clicking on Cost Summary. In addition to seeing how much it will cost to purchase the service immediately, you’ll also be able to see how delaying the purchase will impact your cost.
MILITARY SERVICE

Two types of service credit are available for active military duty: service preceding NYSTRS membership and service interrupting NYSTRS membership. In all cases, honorable discharge documentation is required as verification of military service. There are limits to how much credit you can receive. Following is a brief overview; please refer to our publication Claiming Military Service for additional information about obtaining military service credit.

Service Preceding NYSTRS Membership

Chapter 41 of the Laws of 2016 allows active NYSTRS members to purchase up to three years of credit for active military duty regardless of when or where they served provided the veteran was not a member of a public retirement system upon entry into the military. (Chapter 41 eliminated eligibility restrictions that previously existed.) Only members actively employed on or after May 31, 2016 and honorably discharged from the military are eligible for credit under Chapter 41.

To be eligible to receive credit for your military service under this section of law, you must have at least five years of NYSTRS service credit. Total credit under Chapter 41 cannot exceed three years and cannot exceed the “net active service” indicated on the member’s military document (DD 214).

Service Interrupting NYSTRS Membership

Generally, you may be eligible for credit if: a) you were a full-time or part-time NYSTRS member under contract when military service interrupted your membership; and b) you were re-employed under contract in a NYSTRS-eligible position within 90 days of your discharge or no later than the September following the date of discharge. However, other conditions may exist that would allow you to obtain this credit. Call NYSTRS’ Military Service Unit at (800) 348-7298, Ext. 6060 for more information.

Military Service Cost

For service preceding NYSTRS membership: For each year purchased the cost for Tier 1-5 members is 3% of the salary you earned during the 12 months of credited service immediately preceding the year in which you make the claim. For Tier 6 members, the cost is 6%. In the event a member is not able to benefit from any service purchased under this law, the cost of this service will be refunded (including 5% annual interest) to the member at retirement or upon death.

Full payment for military service credit must be made to the System by June 30 of the plan year immediately following the year in which you are provided a cost by the System. If payment is not received within this time frame, a recalculation will be required, which could result in a higher cost.

For service interrupting NYSTRS membership: There is no cost for Tier 1 or 2 members, as well as for Tier 3 or 4 members who stopped making mandatory contributions before entering military service. All other members must make the mandatory contributions they would have made if they were employed in NYS public service during the period of military service, with the exception of those called to duty between Sept. 11, 2001 and Jan. 1, 2006 (see next paragraph). For those who returned to work before Dec. 12, 1994, the cost would include interest to the date of payment.

Non-Contributory Military Service Credit legislation, signed as Chapter 326 of the Laws of 2005, waives the stipulation that member contributions be paid in order to obtain military service credit for members called to active military duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001 and prior to Jan. 1, 2006.
How to Apply

To apply for military service credit, forward a copy of your honorable military discharge form DD214 to NYSTRS for evaluation. If you do not have this form, you may obtain a copy by contacting:

National Personnel Records Center
Military Personnel Records
1 Archives Drive
St. Louis, MO 63138

(314) 801-0800 | www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records

If you are a recently separated veteran, you may be able to access your DD 214 online through the eBenefits portal at www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/homepage.

We encourage you to submit your DD214 before retirement so we can provide you the full benefit for which you are eligible on a timely basis. It generally takes three to four months to process requests for military service.

SUBSEQUENT SERVICE

NYS Public Service Earned in Another Retirement System

As a result of Chapter 675 of the Laws of 2006, you may obtain credit for service earned in another New York State public retirement system subsequent to your NYSTRS membership, even if your membership in the other system has ceased. To claim this credit, you must have been an active NYSTRS member on or after June 30, 2006, and you must have at least two years of NYSTRS service. To claim this service, file a Claim for Service Credit Under Chapter 675 of the Laws of 2006 (MAC-80) form. Once NYSTRS verifies this service, you will be advised of the cost to purchase the credit.

New York City Subsequent Service

You can obtain service credit for teaching in New York City public schools at a time when you were a member of NYSTRS and were prohibited from joining a city retirement system. To be eligible, you must have taught prior to July 1, 1990, and must have at least two years of NYSTRS service. You must claim this service by filing a NYC Subsequent Service Under Chapter 352 of the Laws of 2002 (MAC-79) form. NYSTRS must receive verification of this service before it is credited.

BENEFIT ENHANCEMENT (ARTICLE 19)

At retirement, eligible Tier 1 and 2 members receive one-twelfth of a year in enhancement credit for each year of their service credit at retirement, up to a maximum of two years of credit. To be eligible for the credit, you must have been in active service for at least 20 days in any one school year on or after July 1, 1992.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Review your records, think about all the work you have done, and make sure you have claimed all the credit for which you are eligible. Each year, when you review your NYSTRS Benefit Profile, make sure all of your service has been accurately reported and credited. This is your guarantee that you will receive all the benefits you are entitled to in retirement.

If you decide to claim additional service, you will find the necessary forms on the Forms page of NYSTRS.org or by calling our Hotline at (800) 782-0289.
CONTACT US

(800) 348-7298
(518) 447-2900
from the Albany area

Prior Service ................................................. Ext. 6030
Transfer In .................................................... Ext. 6040
Military Service ............................................ Ext. 6060
Reinstated Membership ................................. Ext. 6070
Member Service Credit ................................. Ext. 6075
Consultations ............................................... Ext. 6100
General Information ................................... Ext. 6250

New York State Teachers’ Retirement System
10 Corporate Woods Drive
Albany, NY 12211-2395
NYSTRS.org | communit@nystrs.org

January 2019