

SERENITY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEMS

SUBJECT:	RETIREMENT
POLICY NUMBER:	HR-37.00
EFFECTIVE DATE:	September 2001
SUPERSEDES:	N/A
LAST REVISION DATE:	February 2011

POLICY:

It is the policy of Serenity Behavioral Health Systems (SBHS) that in accordance with Federal law, no employee will be forced to retire on the basis of age. Employees of any age may continue employment provided that the quality and quantity of their performance and work conduct meet the standards of performance expected of all employees. This does not change the "at will" employment status of unclassified employees.

RETIREMENT BENEFITS:

- I. The Employees' Retirement System (ERS) manages the retirement process for eligible employees. Benefits through ERS include service retirement, disability retirement and survivor benefits.
- II. Members of ERS become vested for service retirement after accumulating ten (10) years of creditable service.
- III. Members of ERS who are under age sixty (60) and become totally and permanently disabled from the further performance of duties in their positions may apply for disability retirement benefits if they have accumulated at least 13 years and 4 months of creditable service.
- IV. Members are encouraged to have current beneficiary information on file with ERS.
- V. Members should refer to the Explanation of Benefits Booklet published by ERS for comprehensive retirement benefits information or visit the ERS web site at www.ers.ga.org.
- VI. Refer to SBHS Human Resource Policy HR-5.01, Eligibility For Benefits for information regarding eligibility for membership in ERS.

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INVOLUNTARY SEPARATION RETIREMENT BENEFITS:

- I. Employees', who first established membership with ERS prior to April 1, 1972 and have more than eighteen (18) years of State service, may be eligible for involuntary separation retirement benefits under retirement law.
- II. The Human Resource Department must be contacted prior to taking action to separate employees who may be eligible for involuntary separation retirement benefits.

CREDITABLE SERVICE:

ERS members earn credits toward retirement for each month of membership contributions. Members may receive additional creditable service toward retirement under certain circumstances.

- I. Creditable service may be received for current accumulated and unused sick leave, forfeited annual and sick leave, and sick leave that was previously lost due to a break in service if these leave balances total at least 960 hours.
- II. ERS members, who are placed on leave without pay due to job-related temporary disabilities and do not qualify for disability retirement benefits, may purchase creditable service for up to twelve (12) months of the period of absence without pay.
- III. Creditable service must be purchased within six (6) months after returning to work.
- IV. Employees must pay the employee portion of the retirement contribution for the period of absence plus regular interest compounded based on the last monthly salary before going on leave without pay. ERS should be contacted for additional information.
- V. ERS members who are called to active military duty may purchase creditable service for the period of military leave without pay, up to a maximum of five (5) years.
 - A. Employees must contact ERS regarding the purchase of creditable service within six (6) months after returning to work.
 - B. Employees must pay the employee portion of the retirement contribution for the period of absence within five (5) years or within three (3) times the length of the qualified military service, whichever is shorter. ERS should be contacted for additional information.
- VI. Employees should refer to the Explanation of Benefits Booklet published by ERS for a complete list of opportunities for receiving creditable service.

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REFUND CONTRIBUTIONS:

- I. Employees who leave employment with state government for a reason other than retirement may request and receive a refund of their contributions to ERS plus interest.

NOTE: In case of death, the named living beneficiary may receive a refund of contributions plus interest.

- II. The portion of employee contributions used for Group Term Life Insurance premiums is not refundable.
- III. Request for refunds must be submitted on the correct Application For Refund Of Contributions Form (Form D-3 ERS for ERS or Form D3-DCP for the Georgia Defined Contribution Plan).

FILING FOR RETIREMENT BENEFITS:

- I. Applications for retirement are to be filed with ERS at least thirty (30) calendar days, but no more than ninety (90) calendar days before the retirement date.

NOTE: Applications for retirement are not considered filed until received by ERS.

- II. When applications for retirement are received less than thirty (30) days prior to the effective date of retirement, there will be a one-month delay in receiving the check.
- III. Applications for disability retirement must be filed prior to last day of employment. It generally takes at least sixty (60) to ninety (90) days to process an application for disability retirement.
- IV. Retirement benefits always begin on the first of a month.
- V. Employees who have selected a retirement date and have received confirmation from ERS should advise their supervisors of the retirement date as soon as possible. Supervisors should be given at least thirty (30)-calendar days advance notice.

REFERENCES:

- I. Federal Law (29 U.S. C. Chapter 14, Subsection 623- Prohibition of age Discrimination)
State Law (O.C.G.A. §47-2-1 *et.al.*- Employees' Retirement System)

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APPROVAL SECTION:

Chief Executive Officer

Date

Committee Chairperson

Date

RESCISSION SECTION:

Chief Executive Officer

Date

REVIEW SECTION:

Committee Chairperson

Date

Committee Chairperson

Date

Committee Chairperson

Date