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Eligibility for Retirement

A Guide for Employees



**Defense Civilian Personnel Management Service
Field Advisory Services Division
1400 Key Boulevard, Suite B-200
Arlington, VA 22209-5144**

Introduction

Retirement is one of the most important events in your life and there are several things you should know well in advance about your future retirement benefits. Knowing when you can retire is very important and by planning and working closely with your agency, you can help assure that your retirement from Federal service will be smooth and worry free!

When an employee has the age and years of service to retire with no reduction in annuity, he/she may retire at any time. There are certain criteria to be met for retirement eligibility purposes under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). The eligibility requirements are different for each retirement system. Eligibility is determined by your age and number of years of creditable civilian service. Let us begin by discussing retirement benefits under the Federal Employees Retirement System.

Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS)

There are four types of annuities under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS).

Immediate

Early

Deferred

Disability

An **Immediate retirement** annuity is one that starts within 30 days from the date you stop working. If you meet one of the following age and service requirements, you will be entitled to an immediate retirement annuity:

Age	*Years of Service
Minimum Retirement Age (MRA)	30
60	20
62	5
Minimum Retirement Age (MRA)	10

*Note: FERS Employees under age 60 with 10 or more years but less than 30 years of service will incur an annuity reduction of 5/12 of 1 percent (or 5 percent less per year) for each month the commencing date of your annuity precedes on your 62nd birthday. This reduction is permanent.

Use the following chart to figure your Minimum Retirement Age (MRA)

If born before 1948	MRA is 55
In 1948	55 and 2 months
In 1949	55 and 4 months
In 1950	55 and 6 months
In 1951	55 and 8 months
In 1952	55 and 10 months
In 1953-1964	56
In 1965	56 and 2 months
In 1966	56 and 4 months
In 1967	56 and 6 months
In 1968	56 and 8 months
In 1969	56 and 10 months
In 1970 and after	57

In some cases, you *must* have reached the **MRA** to receive retirement benefits. Once you reach the **MRA with at least 10 years of service** you will qualify for a retirement benefit often referred to as **MRA + 10**. This type of retirement is a form of voluntary retirement available *only* to **FERS employees**.

An employee is eligible to retire voluntarily with an **immediate** annuity, without any reduction in annuity due to age, *if all* of the following conditions are met:

- Service requirement for your age
- Minimum civilian service requirement of 5 years of creditable civilian service
- Separation from a position subject to FERS coverage; and
- Minimum Retirement Age (MRA) see above listed chart

*Note: Military service *may* be used to meet the service necessary for a **Voluntary Retirement** if the employee makes a Post-56 Military service deposit *before* retirement.

Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) is available in certain cases of voluntary or involuntary separation during a major reorganization or Reduction In Force (RIF). If your installation is downsizing or closing, employees who are not eligible for optional retirement may qualify for early retirement under the DoD 's Voluntary Early

Retirement Authority (VERA). The Secretary of Defense has the authority to establish a permanent downsizing and restructuring program known as **Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA)**. This authority was re-delegated to the Heads of the DoD Components for positions up to the GS-15 level (and equivalent). To be eligible for VERA, an employee must meet one of the following requirements as shown below:

Early Retirement

*Age	*Years of Service
50	20
Any Age	25

***Note:** Under FERS, post-1956 military service cannot be used to meet the service requirement *unless* the employee makes the military deposit *before* retirement

There is no annuity reduction for FERS employees who retire on **early voluntary** retirement under the age of 55. **Early voluntary** retirement annuities will begin on the first day of the month following separation.

Discontinued Service Retirement (DSR) or involuntary retirement provides an immediate, possibly reduced, annuity for employees who are separated against their will. Employees who are separated for cause on charges of misconduct or delinquency are not eligible for a DSR. At separation you must meet one of the age and service requirements shown in the chart above. This service must include a minimum of 5 years civilian service.

A **retiree annuity supplement** is payable to FERS employees retiring on an **early voluntary** retirement or a DSR when you reach the **Minimum Retirement Age (MRA)**, if you have completed *at least* 1 calendar year of FERS service.

Deferred Retirement is an annuity benefit that *may* begin more than 30 days after separation. Employees who leave Federal service *before* meeting the age and service requirements for an immediate retirement *may* be eligible for deferred retirement benefits. You may receive a retirement benefit upon reaching one of the following ages with the required federal service:

**Deferred Retirement
FERS**

Age	Years of Service
Minimum Retirement Age (MRA)	10
Minimum Retirement Age (MRA)	30
60	20
62	5

*Note: Employees under age 62 with 10 to 29 years of service will be subject to a 5 percent reduction in their annuity for each year under the age of 62.

Former employees covered under FERS are eligible for a **deferred** annuity as early as their MRA if they have 10 or more years of creditable service. The **deferred** annuity is reduced by five-twelfths of 1 percent for each full month or 5 percent for each full year for which the commencing date precedes your 62nd birthday. You may elect to postpone the commencement date of your annuity to avoid or decrease the reduction in the annuity.

In addition to the general eligibility requirements the you must meet two additional requirements:

- Not be eligible for an immediate annuity within one month of separation
- Do not take a refund of retirement deductions after separating from service

It is your responsibility to file the RI Form 92-19, Application for Deferred or Postponed Retirement, with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) about 2 months before age 62, or the date you wish your annuity to begin if earlier. The application may be obtained by writing to the following address:

**Office of Personnel Management
Federal Employees Retirement System
Retirement Operations Center
P.O. Box 45
Boyers, PA 16017-0045**

Disability Retirement is available to employees who are no longer able to provide useful and efficient service in their current position or any other vacant position at the same grade and pay within the commuting area and same agency due to of a medical condition.

There are disability special requirements for covered FERS employees. You must have become disabled, while employed in a position subject to FERS, because of disease or injury. The **disability** *must* be expected to last at least one year. The agency *must* certify that it is unable to accommodate your disabling medical condition and, that they have considered you for any vacant position in the same agency at the same grade and pay.

A disability annuity commences, at the employee's option, on the date **after** separation or pay ceases and you meet the requirements for title to an annuity.

The interests of both you and your agency are served if you remain gainfully employed as long as you can provide useful and efficient service without endangering yourself or others. Disability retirement should be a last resort and is appropriate only when *reasonable* efforts to preserve your employment have failed. Certain criteria must be documented before you are eligible for disability retirement benefits. Usually a member of the Human Resources office or other designee will assist managers in determining if you meet the general statutory requirements for disability retirement.

You, or another legally responsible person, should complete forms SF-3107, Application for Immediate Retirement and SF-3112, Application for Disability Retirement. When applying for disability retirement it is important to provide medical documentation that includes a history of treatments, a medical diagnosis, and prognosis of the specific medical condition claimed. An agency representative will carefully review your application to assure that you have fully documented the application before it is submitted to OPM.

Disability Retirement

Age	Years of Service
Any Age	18 months creditable civilian service

Creditable civilian service includes the following:

- Service for which full FERS deductions were made and not refunded
- Non deduction service (temporary or intermittent service) performed *prior* to January 1, 1989, if a deposit for such service is made;
- Service for which full Social Security taxes and full or reduced CSRS deductions were taken, if all CSRS deductions were not refunded;

Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS)

Under the **Civil Service Retirement System** an employee is eligible to retire voluntarily with an immediate annuity, without any age reduction in the annuity if all of the following conditions are met:

- Age and service requirements
- Minimum civilian service requirements
- Separated from a position subject to CSRS
- The one-out-of-two service requirement is met

There are four types of retirements under the **Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS)**. Eligibility is based on your age and the number of years of creditable service and other special requirements.

- Optional/Voluntary
- Early Optional
- Discontinued Service
- Disability

An employee is eligible to retire voluntarily with an immediate annuity, without any reduction in annuity due to age, if all of the following conditions are met:

- Met age and service requirements
- Minimum civilian service requirement (5 years of creditable civilian)
- Separated from a position subject to CSRS coverage

As a rule, voluntary retirement annuities will begin on the first day of the month after you separate from service. However, if you separate on the 1st, 2nd or 3rd day of the month, your annuity will be effective on the day after separation.

Note: Voluntary retirement is a personnel action that results in a voluntary separation; thus, the filing of an application for retirement is equivalent to submitting a resignation.

The following chart shows the age and service requirements for each retirement option.

**Voluntary/Optional Retirement
Minimum Age and Service Requirements**

Age	*Years of Service
55	30
60	20
62	5

Early voluntary retirement allows *eligible* employees to retire early with an immediate annuity. It does not matter whether you are facing involuntary separation or transferring to another commuting area. Your retirement creates vacancies that may be filled by an employees who would otherwise be separated or downgraded. If your installation is downsizing or closing, employees who are not eligible for optional retirement may qualify for early retirement under a Department of Defense (DoD) VERA. As discussed on page 4, the Secretary of Defense has authority to establish a permanent downsizing and restructuring VERA program. To be eligible for VERA you must meet the following conditions:

- Age and service requirements;
- Minimum civilian service requirement;
- Separates from a position subject to CSRS coverage;
- "1-out-of-2" requirement under CSRS

**Early Optional
Minimum Age and Service Requirements**

Age	*Years of Service
50	20
Any Age	25

Your annuity will be reduced for age *if* you are under age 55. The age reduction is 1/6 of 1 percent (2 percent per year) for each month the commencement date of your annuity precedes your 55th birthday. An employee must have at least 5 years of creditable service to be eligible for an **early** voluntary retirement. If you retire under a VERA there are two additional requirements to be met:

- Employee must have served in a position for 30 days
- Employee must separate by the close of the early out period

Note: The annuity will begin on the first day of the month after the separation.

Discontinued Service Retirement (DSR) provides an immediate, but possibly reduced, annuity for employees who are involuntary separated. Employees who are separated for cause on charges of misconduct or delinquency are not eligible for a DSR. The final responsibility for determining whether a separation is involuntary for discontinued service annuity purposes rests with the OPM.

Listed below are some examples of involuntary separations for DSR:

- Reduction in Force (RIF);
- Abolishment of a Position;
- Unacceptable Performance (unless due to employee's misconduct);
- Transfer of function outside commuting area;
- Reassignment outside of commuting area when no mobility agreement exists;
- Failure to continue to meet qualification requirements of a position;
- Separation of a National Guard Technician because of loss of membership or rank required to hold the position.

If you are involuntarily separated you may be eligible for a **DSR** if you meet one of the age and service requirements below:

**DSR Retirement
Minimum Age and Service Requirements**

Age	*Years of Service
50	20
Any Age	25

*Note: One of the two age and service requirements above must be met and you must not have declined a reasonable job offer.

Disability Retirement is a benefit provided to employees who are no longer able to provide useful and efficient service in their current position or any other vacant position at the same grade and pay within the commuting area and same agency due to a medical condition. The **disability** *must* have occurred prior to applying for retirement and be expected to last at least one year.

As with FERS, the interests of both the agency and the employee are served if an employee remains gainfully employed as long as he or she can provide useful and efficient service without endangering themselves or others. Disability retirement should be a last resort and is appropriate only when *reasonable* efforts to preserve the employee's employment have failed. Certain criteria eligibility requirements must be met before an employee is eligible for disability retirement benefits. Usually a member of the HRO or other designee will assist managers in determining or ensuring that the application is accurate and complete.

Your or your representative should complete the forms SF 2801, Application for Immediate Retirement and SF-3112, Application for Disability Retirement. When applying for disability retirement it is important that you provide medical documentation that includes a history of treatments, a medical diagnosis, and prognosis of the specific medical condition claimed. An agency representative will review your disability application and documentation prior to submission to OPM.

Employees covered under CSRS must meet the following eligibility requirements for a disability retirement annuity:

**Disability Retirement
Minimum Age and Service Requirements**

Age	*Years of Service
Any Age	5

Deferred Retirement is a type of retirement benefit available to an employee who leaves Federal service before meeting the age and service requirements for an immediate retirement benefit. A former CSRS employee may be eligible for deferred retirement benefits upon reaching age 62. In addition, the individual must have at least 5 years of creditable civilian. Other requirements the individual must meet are:

- You are not eligible for an immediate annuity within 1 month of separation;
- You meet the minimum civilian service requirement with at least 5 years of creditable civilian service;
- You do not take a refund of their retirement deductions after separating from federal service;
- You meet the one out of two service requirements

If you received a full refund of your retirement deductions upon separation, you are not eligible for a **Deferred Retirement**. If you are eligible for a deferred annuity you should request an Application for Deferred Retirement (SF-1496A) from OPM at least two months before reaching age 62. Applications may be obtained at the following address:

**Office of Personnel Management
Civil Service Retirement System
Retirement Operations Center (ROC)
Boyers, PA 16017**

Special Retirement provisions apply to certain groups of **CSRS** and **FERS** employees who are Law Enforcement Officers (LEO), Firefighters (FF), Air Traffic Controllers (ATC), or National Guard/Military Reserve Technicians. These employees may be eligible for voluntary retirement at an earlier age than other Federal employees, with an enhanced annuity.

These groups must have a minimum 20 years of special retirement service in order to be eligible for retirement benefits under the special retirement provisions. Unused accrued sick and annual leave cannot be used to meet the minimum service requirement.

A **Law Enforcement Officer** is usually a Criminal Investigator whose primary duties are to conduct investigations of individuals suspected or convicted of offenses against the federal criminal laws. These individuals are subject to a minimum entry age of 37, that is they cannot be first appointed to these positions over age 37 without a waiver.

A **Firefighter** is an employee whose primary duties are to extinguish fires and provide emergency medical services and hazardous materials removal on government and military installations, as well as within small communities that cannot afford the costs of such services. Firefighters are also subject to a maximum entry age of 37.

The positions of Firefighters and LEOs must be approved by the head of the Departmental agency (or his designee). In DoD the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness has been delegated the authority to approve special retirement positions.

Firefighters and LEOs must meet certain retirement eligibility requirements before they are eligible for retirement under the special retirement provisions. These requirements are:

LEO/FF

	Age	Special Retirement Service
CSRS/FERS	50	20
FERS Only	Any Age	25

FERS law enforcement officers and firefighters are not eligible for special retirement if their separation is based on a removal for cause on charges of delinquency or misconduct.

An **Air Traffic Controller** is a civilian employee of the Department of Transportation or the Department of Defense in an air traffic controller facility or flight service station facility. The Secretary of Transportation and the Secretary of Defense are authorized to determine that an employee's service in a position is service as an air traffic controller. Air Traffic controllers may retire voluntarily at an early age without a reduction in the basic annuity *if* they have met the age and service requirements and are separating from a position subject to the retirement system. The CSRS and FERS age and service requirements are:

ATC

Age	ATC Service
50	20
Any Age	25

National Guard(NG)/Military Reserve Technicians (MRT) are individuals who as a condition of their civilian employment are required to be a member of the National Guard or National Guard Technicians, and one of the military reserve components for military reserve technicians.

National Guard Technicians must meet the same requirement as regular employees to be eligible for immediate unreduced retirement annuities. However, under special conditions a technician may qualify for retirement under the CSRS disability provisions even if he or she does not meet the regular disability retirement provisions.

Military Reserve Technicians are required to be a member of one of the reserve components serving in a specified military grade. MRTs must meet the same requirements as regular employees to be eligible for an immediate unreduced retirement, but they may also qualify for early retirement under special conditions.

Special Rule for Early MRT Retirement

Involuntarily separated due to disability or other reason determined by agency.	Age 50 and 25 years MRT Service	Eligible for immediate unreduced annuity and FERS annuity supplement
	55 Age 50 and less than 25 years MRT service	Eligible for immediate unreduced annuity
	Under age 50 and less than 20 years service	Eligible for special disability retirement

Mandatory separation provisions are applicable to individuals in special retirement positions. Congress enacted the mandatory retirement provisions to ensure a young and vigorous special retirement workforce through young entry age, continuous employment and mandatory separation age. Employees covered under the special retirement provisions must separate from the agency on the last day of the month in which the employee reaches the mandatory retirement age *and* has a minimum of 20 years special retirement service.

The mandatory retirement ages are shown below:

Mandatory Retirement Age for Special Groups

Type	Age
LEO	57
FF	57
ATC	56

LEOs and FFs *may* be exempt from mandatory separation up to age 61. The Secretary of Defense has delegated mandatory separation waiver authority to the heads of DoD Components, e.g., Secretary of Army, Secretary of Navy, and Secretary of Air Force.

Certain categories of CSRS ATCs are automatically exempt from mandatory separation:

- ATCs who were first appointed by the Department of Transportation before May 16, 1972;
- ATCs who were first appointed by the Department of Defense before Sep 12, 1980;
- Flight service station specialist who were first appointed before Jan 1, 1987; and
- Second-level supervisors.

There are no FERS ATCs automatically exempt from the mandatory separation provisions. If a FERS ATC has completed 20 years of ATC service then that employee must be separated on the last day of the month in which they turn 56, unless the Component Head has determined that it is in the public interest to continue their employment.

Some important things to remember when considering retirement

- Must meet retirement eligibility requirements
- Employee meets his/her age the day before their birthday
- Sick leave can never be used to meet retirement eligibility
- Sick leave is used to add length of service to retirement annuity calculation for **CSRS** employees after retirement eligibility requirements are met
- 50 % of unused sick leave is used in a **FERS** annuity calculation
- Regulations covered under **CSRS** are also applicable to **CSRS Offset** employees
- If a **CSRS Offset** employee elected **FERS**, then all of their **CSRS** service becomes **FERS** service for annuity computation
- The maximum annuity for **CSRS** employees is 80% of the highest three years average salary.
- There is no maximum annuity under **FERS**
- You should request a projected retirement estimate report from your servicing Human Resources Office before retirement.
- Submit your application for immediate retirement to your servicing Human Resources Office well in advance of your anticipated date of retirement

Retirement applications are available by visiting OPM website at: www.opm.gov

SF-3107 – FERS Application for Immediate Retirement

SF-2801 – CSRS Application for Immediate Retirement