



ALAMEDA COUNTY EMPLOYEES'
RETIREMENT ASSOCIATION

Reciprocity with Other Retirement Systems

If you previously worked for another public agency in California, or you plan to in the future, you may be able to link together your ACERA membership and your membership in the other retirement system. This linking is called reciprocity.

Reciprocity gives you retirement portability, ensures you receive the maximum retirement allowance, and prevents you from contributing more than your share into the system.

Based on California's County Employees Retirement Law of 1937, you can establish reciprocity with the retirement systems of most counties in California, as well as the State of California, and many of California's cities and public agencies.

In fact, you can establish reciprocity with any public agency that has reciprocity with the State of California's Public Employees Retirement System (CalPERS).

If you have questions on whether a particular public employer has reciprocity with ACERA, check ACERA's reciprocity webpage at www.acera.org or contact ACERA Member Services.

Benefits of Establishing Reciprocity

There are several benefits to establishing reciprocity if you are joining ACERA from a reciprocal agency, or if you leave ACERA at some point in the future and move to another reciprocal public employer:

- **You contribute at a lower rate.** Your employee contribution rate with ACERA is determined using your age of entry in the retirement system. The younger you are when you enter, the less you contribute. If you worked elsewhere previously and establish reciprocity, your contribution rate will be based on your age of entry into the first system you've linked together, so you will pay a lower rate. (Note: Not all systems use age of entry to determine contribution rates, so check with the new system you are entering to see if this benefit applies.)
- **Service earned under all linked systems qualifies you to retire.** Service credit earned in your reciprocal agency(ies) is combined with your ACERA service when establishing your vesting rights and eligibility to retire.
- **Your retirement calculation for all systems is based on highest pay under any system.** The highest compensation attained under any reciprocal agency is used by all reciprocal systems to calculate your final average salary which is factored in to the calculation of your monthly retirement allowance.

TAKE NOTE:

Reciprocity gives you retirement portability. You can perform public service for multiple public agencies and link the retirement systems together.



**TAKE NOTE:**

To establish reciprocity, you must notify both retirement agencies, the one you already belong to and the one you're entering.

Qualifications for Reciprocity

To qualify for reciprocity, you must do **both** of the following:

- Elect to leave your contributions to the retirement system on deposit and defer retirement with your previous employer's retirement system and
- Begin membership in the next system within six months (180 days) after termination of covered employment in the first system

Additionally, when you retire, you must retire from each reciprocal retirement system on the same day (except for Judges Retirement System). See the back page for the consequences of breaking reciprocity.

Date of Membership, Not Date of Hire

The day you start your new job in Alameda County is your Date of Hire. Typically, the first day of your second pay period is your Date of Membership, which is the first day you are an ACERA member. To qualify to establish reciprocity, no more than 180 days may pass between your last day of paid status at your previous employer, and your Date of Membership with ACERA (not your Date of Hire).

Establishing Reciprocity Beginning Employment

When you complete your *ACERA Member Enrollment Questionnaire* as a new member, you will be asked about your previous experience with public agencies. If you answer that you have left funds on deposit with your previous employer(s), ACERA will send you an election letter explaining the benefits and requirements of establishing a reciprocal agreement

with your previous employer's retirement plan. If you meet the eligibility requirements, you may elect to establish reciprocity by indicating so on the letter and returning it to ACERA. ACERA will mail this letter to you within 30 days of receipt of your *ACERA Member Enrollment Questionnaire*.

If you did not indicate previous public service on your questionnaire but think you may qualify for reciprocity, you may contact ACERA so we may attempt to verify your eligibility for reciprocity.

Leaving Employment

If you are leaving employment with your ACERA employer to begin a job under another retirement system, complete a Termination Election of Membership Form available at www.acera.org to elect reciprocity and inform ACERA of the new system you are entering.

Once you are retired, you will receive a separate retirement check from each system based on the service earned in that system.

Once you establish reciprocity, your election is irrevocable. Thereafter, you cannot withdraw contributions from any linked retirement system unless you terminate employment.

Reciprocity for Certain Safety Members (Law Enforcement or Fire Fighters Only)

If you were a Safety member (law enforcement and fire fighters only) in a reciprocal agency and you withdrew your retirement contributions after termination of your employment, and you currently work for another reciprocal agency, you may redeposit funds for either partial or full reciprocal benefits.

Full Reciprocity

You may redeposit and establish full reciprocity if the time lapse between system memberships is six months (180 days) or less. While you are still employed, your current retirement system may adjust your contribution level to be based on your age of entry in the previous system. Your total service earned under all linked systems will be used to establish your eligibility to retire. When you apply to retire, all systems will use the highest compensation earned in any system to compute your retirement allowance calculation.

Partial Reciprocity

You may establish partial reciprocity if the time lapse between your system memberships is more than six months. While you are still employed, your current retirement system will not make an adjustment to your age of entry, so your contribution rate will be based on the age of entry into the current system. Your total service earned under all linked systems will be used to establish your eligibility to retire. When you apply to retire, each system will pay an allowance based on final compensation earned only in that individual system.

Reciprocity and Disability Retirement

If you apply for and are granted a disability retirement and you have a reciprocal agreement with one or more retirement systems, each system will pay you a separate retirement allowance. The disability retirement allowance is generally pro-rated based on service earned in each system. In some instances, one system may pay the entire allowance based on your service under all of the linked systems. If this is the case, ACERA may not pay any allowance at all (or return of contributions and interest) because

the total amount of your retirement allowance from all systems cannot equal more than what one system alone would have paid if all service had been earned in that system. Additionally, allowance amounts may be adjusted further depending on how much each system is paying. Once you apply for retirement, you may not withdraw your contributions from any retirement system.

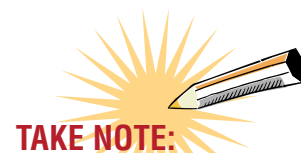
Avoid Overlapping Employment

Overlapping employment will disqualify you for reciprocity. You must terminate from your first employer before starting with a second employer. For example, you take one week of leave during your final week of employment with your previous employer, and you start employment in Alameda County during that same week. You are employed by two systems simultaneously. This overlapping employment is a disqualifying factor for establishing reciprocity. This would also be true in reverse when leaving Alameda County to join a reciprocal agency.

Make sure you discuss and coordinate your employment transition with member services in both retirement systems if you are planning to establish reciprocity.

STRS, JRS, and UC

Reciprocity with the State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) and the Judges Retirement System (JRS) may be established under special circumstances. Contact ACERA Member Services for more information. There is no reciprocity established with the University of California system.



TAKE NOTE:

If you are employed by two public agencies during the same time period, this is overlapping employment and will disqualify you from establishing reciprocity. Terminate from your first employer before beginning work for your second.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

If I have reciprocity, what do I need to do to retire and collect my allowance?

You must apply to retire with each retirement system that you have established reciprocity with. You must retire from all systems on the same date.



TAKE NOTE:

Reciprocity rules are subject to change by legislation.

Contact ACERA

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Applying for Retirement With Reciprocity

You must file a service retirement application with each individual system that you've established reciprocity with. On each application you will designate your retirement date from that system. To maintain reciprocity, you must retire on the same date with all systems, so each application should have the same retirement date on it. Your applications must be submitted on or before the date of retirement. The retirement systems will obtain verification from the other reciprocal systems that you have filed to retire, and will request the figure for your highest average salary earned in each system. To compute your retirement allowance, each system should use the highest average salary earned under any of the systems (usually earned in the last system you worked for), the service you earned in that individual system, and your age factor according to your age at retirement. You will receive an allowance from each system.

If You Don't Retire From Systems on the Same Day

If you do not retire from the reciprocal retirement systems on the same day, reciprocity will be broken. This situation could have consequences for your retirement. If you came to ACERA from another retirement system, ACERA may need to recalculate your employee contribution rate throughout your entire ACERA career, and you may owe this increased contribution to ACERA.

If you do not have over 5 years of service with one or more of the systems, you may not be eligible to retire from those systems.

If you are eligible to retire, your retirement allowance calculation from ACERA will be based on your highest salary only under ACERA.

Other Post-Employment Benefits

Some systems offer benefits in addition to the retirement allowance, such as medical and death benefits. Each system may provide their other post-employment benefits differently. Benefits such as medical and death benefits should be discussed individually with each system with the awareness that you are a reciprocal member.

ACERA provides a \$5000 lump sum death benefit to retirees' beneficiaries. ACERA may pro-rate this benefit if one of the other reciprocal retirement systems pays a lump sum death benefit.

Contact ACERA

If you have questions or need more information, feel free to contact us.

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