



LOUISIANA SCHOOL EMPLOYEES'
RETIREMENT SYSTEM

Obtaining Social Security Benefit Information

Am I eligible for social security benefits?

How much will I receive?

Will my social security benefit be decreased if I receive a retirement benefit from LSERS?

These are only a few questions you may have when planning for your retirement. It is very important that you contact the Social Security Administration if you are considering Social Security benefits as a source of income when you retire. You can:

- visit your local Social Security office
- call 1.800.772.1213, they will answer questions from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday
- visit the website at www.ssa.gov

The Social Security Administration provides workers with secure and convenient access to their Social Security earnings and benefit information online. Your Social Security online Statement provides estimates for retirement, disability, and survivors which makes this statement an important financial planning tool. In addition, it is a convenient way to determine if earnings were accurately reported to your Social Security records. For more information about the online Statement, please visit www.ssa.gov/myaccount. There is no fee to create a *my Social Security* account, but you must have an email address.

Types of Social Security Benefits

There are two types of Social Security benefits:

- An **earned benefit** is paid to individuals who worked at jobs where they paid Social Security taxes long enough to earn a Social Security benefit.
- A **spouse's** or **widow(er)'s benefit** is paid to the spouse or surviving spouse of a Social Security pensioner if the spouse did not work long enough under Social Security to have earned their own benefit or their earned benefit is less than the pensioner's benefit. The spouse's benefit is generally one-half of the benefit paid to the Social Security pensioner.

Social Security Reductions if You Receive a LSERS Benefit

Your Social Security benefit may be reduced if you receive a retirement benefit from LSERS. Your LSERS benefit will *not* be reduced. The formula used to calculate reductions to your Social Security benefit is based on the type of Social Security benefit you receive, i.e. earned benefit or spouse's or widow(er)'s benefit.

The Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) is used for an earned benefit and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) is used for a spouse's or widow(er)'s benefit.

Please note that reductions in your Social Security benefit may also apply if a contribution refund is taken before you are eligible for a LSERS retirement benefit. You should contact the Social Security Administration for more information about their benefit provisions.

The Social Security Administration will use your first eligible date of retirement to determine if your Social Security benefit will be subject to reductions. Your first eligible date of retirement is the date you could have received a monthly benefit from LSERS. This is not the date you earned the minimum amount of service credit necessary to receive a monthly benefit once you met the necessary age requirement.

How the Reduction of Social Security Benefits is Calculated

Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP): Reduction for Earned Benefits

The Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), is used to reduce your Social Security earned benefit if you are receiving a retirement benefit from LSERS. The WEP, which was implemented beginning in 1986, applies when you reach age 62 or become disabled. The WEP does not apply to survivor benefits.

You will **NOT** have a reduction in your Social Security benefit under the WEP if any of the following exemptions apply:

- The only work you did where you did not pay Social Security taxes was before 1957
- You have 30 or more years of substantial earnings in a job where you paid Social Security taxes
- You had at least 10 years of service credit in LSERS that qualified you for a LSERS retirement benefit by September 1, 1985, even if you continued to work beyond 1986. You may submit a written request to LSERS for a letter that can be submitted to the Social Security Administration as proof that your benefit from Social Security is not subject to the WEP reduction.

We recommend that you contact the Social Security Administration for explanations of possible reductions under WEP.

Government Pension Offset (GPO): Reduction for Spouse's or Widow(er)'s Benefit

If you receive a pension from LSERS, your Social Security spouse's or widow's benefits may be reduced. The Government Pension Offset (GPO) **may** reduce your Social Security spouse's or widow(er)'s benefit by two-thirds of your LSERS benefit. In some cases, this offset could eliminate your Social Security benefit.

You will **NOT** have a reduction in your benefit from Social Security if any of the following apply:

- You are receiving a government pension that is not based on your earnings
- You were eligible to retire before December 1982 **and** you meet all of the requirements for Social Security spouse's benefits in effect in January 1977
- You were receiving one-half of your support from your spouse and received or were eligible to receive a state government pension on or before July 1, 1983
- You were not eligible for retirement when you withdrew your contributions from LSERS

Contact the Social Security Administration and request a calculation of the WEP and GPO reductions.