THINKING ABOUT RETIREMENT?
Do Your Homework Before You Decide to Leave Your Job.

Are you thinking about retiring? If so, think about your age, savings, and health before you make that transition into retirement, and don’t forget to do some much needed homework as well.

When you start considering retirement, countless questions will arise that you will need the answers to in order to be properly prepared to retire and to ensure you are making the best decisions with respect to your retirement plans. Planning for retirement can be exhausting and overwhelming and for many, that can lead to avoiding research and hoping that everything will simply work out the way it should.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES FOR RETIREMENT PLANNING
There are many resources available at your fingertips to help you get the answers you need before deciding to retire. Below are some of the best resources available to PS&T employees and PEF members:

1) **Pre-Retirement Seminars:** (goer.ny.gov/pre-retirement-planning-information)
The Governor’s Office of Employee Relations (GOER) conducts full-day DIRECTIONS Pre-Retirement Seminars around the State. Contact your agency liaison to learn how to enroll or visit goer.ny.gov/directions-pre-retirement-seminar-contact-information. Seminars are funded in part, with money negotiated in the contract between PEF and the State. Seminar participants receive a Self-Help Guide to Pre-Retirement Planning for New York State Employees that is also available for download at goer.ny.gov/self-help-guide-pre-retirement-planning-new-york-state-employees.

2) **Retirement System:** (osc.state.ny.us/retire/index.php)
The Office of the New York State Comptroller’s website has resources available for retirement planning, including a *5 Step Plan for Retirement* available at www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/planning/index.php. There, you will also find a Benefit Projector Calculator (osc.state.ny.us/retire/members/projecting-your-pension.php) that will help you estimate your pension based on the information you enter.

In addition, the Office of the New York State Comptroller’s website provides access to Consultation Site Offices (osc.state.ny.us/retire/consultation_site_offices/index.php), locations throughout the state where you will find personalized services to help with retirement planning. Appointments are required for individual consultations at all sites.

**RETIREE HEALTH CARE:**
Health care during your retirement years can be a major expense. Understanding and preparing for your heath care coverage and costs is a critical part of retirement planning.
1) **Department of Civil Service**: (cs.ny.gov/employee-benefits/login/index-retiree.cfm)

At the Department of Civil Service at NYSHIP Online, you will find information on the New York State Health Insurance Program for State and Local Government retired enrollees. Some health insurance-related questions that you should consider include:

- Can I continue my NYSHIP coverage in retirement?
- Will I be able to stay in the same plan I have now if I move out of NYS?
- When do I need to enroll in Medicare?
- Will I be able to use my sick leave to offset the cost of my coverage as a retiree?
- What will happen to my dental and vision care coverage when I retire?

For answers to these and other questions regarding your health, dental, and vision care coverage in retirement, start by visiting NYSHIP Online at cs.ny.gov/employee-benefits.

- Select: I am a New York State Active Employee (NY) and “Continue”
- Choose your Group—PEF (from the drop down menu provided)
- Choose your Plan and select “Finish”
- Select “Planning to Retire?” from Current Topic Listing

Here you will find publications, videos, contact information, and links to important resources that will help you prepare for retirement. You can also order a Planning for Retirement Package that includes a helpful Retirement Booklet and a Benefits Checklist, that helps you navigate the retirement process. This package is also available from your agency’s health benefits administrator (HBA) in Human Resources or the Business Service Center.

As an active employee, your HBA is your primary source for benefit information. Before retiring, meet with your HBA to discuss all of the information you need regarding health insurance in retirement, including:

- Eligibility requirements for continuing health insurance coverage as a retiree (and whether you meet the requirements)
- Whether your current health insurance plan will meet your health care needs during retirement.
- When to enroll for Medicare coverage.
- Whether you can continue your existing dental and vision coverage.
- How to calculate the dollar value of your sick leave credits.

2) **Frequently Asked Questions & Answers to Help You Get Started:**

**Will I be able to stay in the same plan I have now if I move out of NYS?**

If enrolled in a NYSHIP HMO and you move out of NYS, you must change to the Empire Plan. The Empire Plan is available to all NYSHIP enrollees regardless of where they live or work in retirement. Coverage is worldwide. However, you should carefully review the list of network providers in the area where you plan to retire, as the Empire Plan does not offer in-network providers in all 50 states. If you move out of NYS, there may be no in-network providers within a reasonable distance of where you reside.

NYSHIP enrollees with retiree benefits can change health plan options once during any twelve-month period. This offers greater flexibility than the Option Transfer Period for active employees, which is takes place each year in the fall.
When do I need to enroll in Medicare?

Three months prior to your 65th birthday, the Employee Benefits Division (EBD) of the NYS Department of Civil Service will send you a letter with information regarding Medicare and how it works with NYSHIP, as well as a booklet entitled, Medicare & NYSHIP. This booklet explains when Medicare eligibility begins; when Medicare becomes primary (pays first) to NYSHIP; and when you MUST have Medicare Parts A and B coverage in effect to avoid a reduction in your overall benefits. You will receive this letter even if you are still an active employee.

As an active employee, if you or your dependents are eligible for Medicare, it is usually secondary to (pays after) NYSHIP coverage. Although you are not required to enroll in Medicare, EBD recommends that all individuals enroll in Part A when first eligible because there is typically no premium cost for Part A and timely enrollment should prevent individuals from incurring the Medicare late enrollment penalty. EBD further recommends that these individuals defer enrolling in Part B when first eligible because there is a premium cost for Part B.

Under NYSHIP rules, you and your dependents must be enrolled in Medicare Part A and Part B when first eligible for Medicare coverage that is primary (pays first) to NYSHIP. For most enrollees and dependents who are already 65 at the time of their retirement, Medicare will become the primary coverage on the first day of the month following the end of the 28-day run-out period for coverage as an active employee. Check with your HBA to find out the exact date that your active employee coverage ends.

It is important to enroll in Medicare on a timely basis. For more information, see Medicare and NYSHIP.

Will I be able to use my sick leave to offset the cost of my coverage as a retiree?

You may be able to use the value of your unused sick leave to pay for all or part of the cost of your health insurance during retirement. The actuarial value of your unused sick leave hours is converted to a monthly dollar value. The result is a lifetime monthly sick leave credit, used to reduce your share of the monthly NYSHIP premium, as long as you are enrolled in NYSHIP.

You are only eligible for the sick leave credit if you retire directly from Active Employment, Leave Without Pay status, Preferred List coverage, or if you are approved for disability retirement retroactive to your last date of employment. This credit will not apply if you are in vested status or after retiring from vested status.

To obtain an estimate of your sick leave credit, visit NYSHIP Online at cs.ny.gov/employee-benefits, and select “Planning to Retire?”

What will happen to my dental and vision benefits?

The State does not provide dental and vision benefits to retirees. However, depending on your Medicare eligibility, it may be possible to continue dental and vision benefits through COBRA (Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act). If already enrolled in at least one part of Medicare (e.g., Medicare Part A) at the time of retirement, you may enroll in COBRA for up to 36 months. Individuals who first enroll in COBRA, and later enroll in Medicare for the first time, lose COBRA eligibility.

You also have the option to convert to a direct pay dental plan administered by Emblem Health. Benefits offered under this plan are not the same benefits offered under the Preferred Dental Plan for active employees, nor the COBRA Plan offered to retirees. You should automatically receive an enrollment form and summary of benefits after you retire.

After your COBRA expires, you also have the option of using the PEF Retirees’ Dental and Vision plans, billed through the PEF Membership Benefits Program (PEF MBP), instead of Emblem Health. Learn more about these options at www.buymbp.com/insurance/retiree-insurances.
Some other things to remember:

- If you retire with a loan from the Retirement System, it will diminish your potential pension forever.
- If after getting Medicare, you also choose to purchase a Medicare Advantage Plan, you will lose your State Health Insurance as your secondary Insurance.

By joining the PEF Retirees at pefretirees.org, you can take advantage of the PEF Retirees Dental and Vision plans, as well as the more than 250 different product benefits that PEF MBP offers.

The PEF Membership Benefit Program provides these valuable benefits that should be of interested to all PEF members and retiree members:

- **Financial Planning**: a FREE, annual, one-hour, personal consultation and comprehensive financial overview with a Stacey Braun Associates’ Certified Financial Planner or Registered Investment Provider.

- **Voluntary Legal Service Plan**: For an annual fee of $78/year, members and retirees receive an affordable legal service plan that provides advice from a powerful team of legal experts at substantially reduced rates and maximum fee caps, as well as free key estate planning documents inclusive of: a Simple Will, Health Care Proxy, Power of Attorney, and Living Will—annually.

- **Free College Benefit**: Accessible, online, debt-free, and convenient higher education opportunity (Associate Degree or Certificate) through Eastern Gateway Community College. The benefit extends to one’s spouse, domestic partner, children/step-children, grandchildren/step-grandchildren, children-in-law, siblings, parents, and financial dependents.

- **Educational Seminars**: Free education on topics such as: retirement planning, elder law planning, investment planning, tax planning, and more. Watch your email for seminar invitations or visit pefmbp.com for a listing of seminar topics and dates in your region. Seminars are offered each spring and fall.

**Join PEF Retirees**: pefretirees.org/how-to-join/


**Important Phone Numbers & Website Sites**:  
- PEF Membership Benefits Program: pefmbp.com / (800) 342-4306, ext. 243  
- PEF Retirees: pefretirees.org / (800) 342-4306, ext. 288  
- NYS Retirement: osc.state.nys.us/retire / (518) 474-6612  
- NYS Civil Service: cs.ny.gov / (518) 457-2487  
- Social Security: ssa.gov/ny / (800) 772-1213  
- Medicare: medicare.gov/index / (800) 633-4227  
- NYS Deferred Compensation: nysdcp.com / (800) 422-8463