

# FIRST THINGS FIRST

YOUR GUIDE TO *SAMCERA* RETIREMENT BENEFITS

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For New Sheriff's Safety Employees  
Hired On or After January 8, 2012

***SamCERA***

San Mateo County Employees'  
Retirement Association

[www.samcera.org](http://www.samcera.org)

# Welcome to *SamCERA*

## What you need to do **now...**



As a new member of *SamCERA*, you need to **do three things right away:**



Read this booklet—it will help you make important decisions about your benefits



Complete and return your Plan 5 Enrollment Form for Sheriff's Safety Members



Complete and return your *SamCERA* Beneficiary Designation Form\*

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Your *SamCERA* benefits are governed by the County Employees' Retirement Law of 1937; therefore, any discrepancies between the law and the information in this booklet will be resolved in accordance with the law.

This manual is only for Sheriff's Safety members hired on or after January 8, 2012.

\**SamCERA* is not part of San Mateo County's Benefits Division. You must complete *SamCERA's* Beneficiary Designation Form and submit it to *SamCERA*.

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### ***SamCERA***

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## PLANNING FOR YOUR RETIREMENT

As a rule of thumb, many studies indicate that you will need at least 80% of your pre-retirement income to maintain your standard of living after you retire. Successful retirement planning will typically require income from a number of sources, including:

- Your SamCERA retirement benefits
- Deferred compensation benefits from a 457 or 401(k) account
- Personal savings and investments
- Social Security benefits from other employment
- Other sources of income, such as salary from work that you perform after retirement

Keep in mind that as an employee of the San Mateo County Sheriff's Department, you do not contribute to Social Security, so you may not be eligible to collect Social Security benefits unless you qualify based on your earnings from another employer.

### When will you qualify for SamCERA benefits?

You qualify for benefits if you are 50 years old with 5 years of service credit and 10 years of membership; or if you are any age with 20 years of service credit; or if you are 70 years old, regardless of your years of service credit.

As you get closer to retirement, our SamCERA retirement analysts can help you figure out how to calculate what your SamCERA benefits would be for different retirement dates and scenarios.



### Learn More About Retirement Planning

You can learn more about planning for your retirement by taking one of the free financial planning workshops offered by SamCERA throughout the year. There's more information on the SamCERA website, or check the San Mateo County Learning Management System (LMS) for course listings.

## HOW MUCH WILL YOU GET IN RETIREMENT?

Your SamCERA retirement benefit will depend on your age at retirement, your years of service, and your monthly Final Average Compensation (FAC)\*. The longer you work, the more money you will earn toward retirement. This table shows how your Plan 5 retirement benefits will increase with your age and service time.

### Plan 5: Estimated Retirement Benefits as % of Pay based on the 3%@55 formula

		Age at Retirement														
		41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55+
Years of Service	5										11.5	12.0	12.7	13.4	14.1	15.0
	6										13.7	14.4	15.2	16.1	17.0	18.0
	7										16.0	16.9	17.8	18.7	19.8	21.0
	8										18.3	19.3	20.3	21.4	22.6	24.0
	9										20.6	21.7	22.8	24.1	25.4	27.0
	10										22.9	24.1	25.4	26.8	28.3	30.0
	11										25.2	26.5	27.9	29.5	31.1	33.0
	12										27.5	28.9	30.4	32.1	33.9	36.0
	13										29.8	31.3	33.0	34.8	36.7	39.0
	14										32.1	33.7	35.5	37.5	39.6	42.0
	15										34.4	36.1	38.1	40.2	42.4	45.0
	16										36.6	38.5	40.6	42.8	45.2	48.0
	17										38.9	40.9	43.1	45.5	48.0	51.0
	18										41.2	43.3	45.7	48.2	50.9	54.0
	19										43.5	45.8	48.2	50.9	53.7	57.0
	20	28.7	30.3	32.1	33.9	35.7	37.7	39.8	41.6	43.6	45.8	48.2	50.7	53.6	56.5	60.0
	21	30.1	31.9	33.7	35.6	37.5	39.6	41.7	43.7	45.8	48.1	50.6	53.3	56.2	59.3	63.0
	22	31.5	33.4	35.3	37.3	39.3	41.4	43.7	45.8	48.0	50.4	53.0	55.8	58.9	62.2	66.0
	23	33.0	34.9	36.9	39.0	41.1	43.3	45.7	47.9	50.2	52.7	55.4	58.4	61.6	65.0	69.0
	24		36.4	38.5	40.7	42.9	45.2	47.7	49.9	52.3	55.0	57.8	60.9	64.3	67.8	72.0
25			40.1	42.4	44.7	47.1	49.7	52.0	54.5	57.3	60.2	63.4	67.0	70.6	75.0	
26				44.0	46.5	49.0	51.7	54.1	56.7	59.5	62.6	66.0	69.6	73.5	78.0	
27					48.2	50.9	53.7	56.2	58.9	61.8	65.0	68.5	72.3	76.3	81.0	
28						52.8	55.7	58.3	61.1	64.1	67.4	71.0	75.0	79.1	84.0	
29							57.7	60.3	63.2	66.4	69.8	73.6	77.7	81.9	87.0	
30								62.4	65.4	68.7	72.2	76.1	80.3	84.8	90.0	
31									67.6	71.0	74.6	78.6	83.0	87.6	93.0	
32										73.3	77.1	81.2	85.7	90.4	96.0	
33											79.5	83.7	88.4	93.2	99.0	
34												86.3	91.1	96.1	100	
35													93.7	98.9	100	
36														100	100	
37															100	

\*Your Final Average Compensation (FAC) is based on a calculation of your highest 3 years (three sets of 2,080 consecutive hours) of compensation earnings—essentially equal to your annual salary—divided by 36.

## HOW MUCH WILL SAMCERA BENEFITS COST YOU?

From each of your paychecks, your employer will withhold pre-tax money from your salary and send it to *SamCERA* as your **Member Contribution**. These contributions are a percentage of your salary and other eligible earnings, and throughout your career will be based on your age when you joined *SamCERA* or a reciprocal retirement system (your **Entry Age**).

To calculate your Member Contribution, find your Entry Age from the **Member Contribution Chart** on the next page. The **Total Member Rate** times the amount of your eligible earnings is your Member Contribution.

Because of a requirement to help fund your cost of living adjustment (COLA) during retirement, the Total Member Rate includes the **Basic Member Rate** plus the **COLA Rate** and a **Cost Share**.

Your contribution rates will stay relatively stable but may be adjusted by the Board of Retirement due to a review which takes place every three years. The rates shown in this booklet do not take into account any amount of your member contributions your employer may pay (this is called an employer's **pickup**). The amount of any employer's pickup may change according to your current union agreement.

While you are a member of *SamCERA*, your contributions are held in the retirement trust fund in a separate account created in your name. Interest is credited to your account biannually at rates determined by the Board of Retirement.

**You cannot borrow money from your account.** The only way you can withdraw money from *SamCERA* before retirement is to terminate employment and take a refund of your contributions and interest. If you choose to do that, you lose all rights to any future *SamCERA* benefits previously earned unless you return to *SamCERA* membership and redeposit all withdrawn funds plus interest.

## Member Contribution Chart: Plan 5

Entry Age	Basic Member Rate	COLA Rate	Member Rate	Cost Share*	Total Member Rate**
18	6.88%	2.10%	8.98%	*	**
19	7.01%	2.14%	9.15%	*	**
20	7.14%	2.18%	9.32%	*	**
21	7.27%	2.22%	9.49%	*	**
22	7.40%	2.26%	9.66%	*	**
23	7.53%	2.30%	9.83%	*	**
24	7.67%	2.34%	10.01%	*	**
25	7.81%	2.38%	10.19%	*	**
26	7.95%	2.42%	10.37%	*	**
27	8.10%	2.47%	10.57%	*	**
28	8.24%	2.51%	10.75%	*	**
29	8.39%	2.56%	10.95%	*	**
30	8.55%	2.61%	11.16%	*	**
31	8.70%	2.65%	11.35%	*	**
32	8.86%	2.70%	11.56%	*	**
33	9.03%	2.75%	11.78%	*	**
34	9.19%	2.80%	11.99%	*	**
35	9.37%	2.86%	12.23%	*	**
36	9.54%	2.91%	12.45%	*	**
37	9.71%	2.96%	12.67%	*	**
38	9.88%	3.01%	12.89%	*	**
39	10.05%	3.07%	13.12%	*	**
40	10.21%	3.11%	13.32%	*	**
41	10.36%	3.16%	13.52%	*	**
42	10.50%	3.20%	13.70%	*	**
43	10.63%	3.24%	13.87%	*	**
44	10.74%	3.28%	14.02%	*	**
45	10.83%	3.30%	14.13%	*	**
46	10.00%	3.28%	13.28%	*	**
47	10.88%	3.32%	14.20%	*	**
48	11.26%	3.43%	14.69%	*	**
49+	11.68%	3.56%	15.24%	*	**

**\*\*Calculating Your Total Member Rate:** Your Total Member Rate includes your Member Rate plus your Cost Share. Simply add your Member Rate to your Cost Share and you will have your Total Member Rate.

**\*Calculating Your Cost Share:** Your Cost Share varies depending on your age and service time. The cost share amounts are as follows:

- 3.0% if you are under age 45 and your service time is less than 5 years
- 3.5% if you are under age 45 and your service time between 5 and 15 years
- 4.5% if you are under age 45 and your service time is more than 15 years
- 4.5% if you are age 45 or older

## CHOOSING YOUR BENEFICIARY



### Why It's Important to Choose a Beneficiary

Naming your primary beneficiary(ies) will ensure your benefits go to the person of your choosing in the event of your death. You can also name a contingent beneficiary(ies) in the event something happens to your primary beneficiary.

In order to name a beneficiary, you must complete and return SamCERA's **Beneficiary Designation Form**, along with the required documents.

California is a community property state. If you are married or have a registered domestic partnership, and you want someone other than that person to be your primary beneficiary, your spouse or registered domestic partner must acknowledge your selection on the Beneficiary Designation Form.

### How to Change Your SamCERA Beneficiary

If you marry, divorce, remarry, have a baby, or if for any other reason you want to change your designated beneficiary, you must make the change officially by submitting a new SamCERA Beneficiary Designation Form.

You can obtain a new Beneficiary Designation Form from SamCERA's website at [www.samcera.org](http://www.samcera.org) or by calling (650) 599-1234.

For your privacy and security, SamCERA will not disclose the name of your current beneficiary over the telephone.

SamCERA is not part of San Mateo County's Benefits Division. You must complete SamCERA's Beneficiary Designation Form and submit it to SamCERA.

## What Your Beneficiary May Receive

Below are some of the various benefits that your beneficiary may be entitled to receive.

Benefits	Conditions
Lifetime spousal/partner benefits if <b>active</b> member dies ( <i>non-duty death</i> )	Yes, after five years service credit*
Lifetime spousal/partner benefits if <b>active</b> member dies ( <i>duty death</i> )	Yes, as of your first day on the job**
One-time benefit if <b>active</b> member dies ( <i>non-duty death</i> )	Yes, if member has less than 5 years of service credit
Beneficiary receives lifetime benefits if <b>retired</b> member dies	Yes*

Note: For your spouse or partner to receive your active member death benefits, you must be married or registered domestic partners for at least one year prior to the time of your death.

\*The lifetime monthly Death Benefit amount is based on a special calculation which can vary depending on your service time and age. Contact a SamCERA retirement analyst for more details.

\*\*The monthly Duty Death Benefit is equal to 50% of your final average monthly compensation. If you do not have an eligible spouse/partner, your minor children will receive the monthly benefit until they reach the age of 18, or age 22 if they are unmarried full-time students.

## RECIPROCITY

### Are you coming from another public retirement system?

SamCERA has an arrangement with nearly all California public retirement systems (not federal or out-of-state public systems) for employees who move from one public employer to another public employer. This cooperative arrangement is known as reciprocity.

If you move from one cooperating agency to another within 180 days, your member contribution rate will be based on the age you were when you entered the first agency.

**You cannot transfer** your retirement funds or service credit from one employer to another, **but you can coordinate** your retirement benefits. In order to preserve these benefits you must retire from all systems at the same time.

When you finally retire, your final average monthly compensation for calculating your retirement benefit will be based on the highest final average compensation you earned while working for any of the cooperating agencies. Your service in all systems usually counts toward vesting.

There are additional requirements for reciprocity, so if you think you qualify, read more about it on our website (below), and contact a SamCERA retirement analyst who can help you establish reciprocity.

ON THE WEB

#### Read more about it...

For more information on reciprocity, please read our booklet, **'Understanding Reciprocity'** which can be found on our website at: [www.samcera.org](http://www.samcera.org) under 'Communications.'

[www.samcera.org](http://www.samcera.org)

## LEAVING BEFORE RETIREMENT

If you terminate employment prior to retirement, SamCERA will mail you a description of the options you will have in regards to your SamCERA benefits. After you have reviewed your options, you will be able to make the decision that is best for you.

If you leave **after** you have earned 5 years of SamCERA service credit or you establish reciprocity, you may elect a **deferred service retirement**. In this case, once you meet the minimum eligibility requirements to retire, you will be able to apply for and collect a monthly benefit for life.

If you leave **before** you have earned 5 years of SamCERA service credit and you do not establish reciprocity, you will not be eligible for SamCERA retirement benefits. However, you may:

- leave your funds on deposit with SamCERA, or
- roll your contributions and interest over to an IRA or other qualified tax-deferred account, or
- withdraw your contributions and interest (your withdrawal is subject to federal and state taxation).

### What if you terminate employment and then come back?

If you selected a deferred retirement, when you return to County employment you will be automatically returned to active membership in the plan you were in when you left, and you will also retain your age of entry for member contributions.

You may withdraw your contributions in the event you terminate your service before you retire. Should you do this, you would lose your service credit. If you ever returned to SamCERA-covered employment, you would have the right to redeposit your previously withdrawn contributions plus interest to reinstate your service credit—although your age of entry would be calculated at your age upon returning.

## DIVORCE OR TERMINATION OF DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP

Your *SamCERA* service credit, member contributions and interest earned during a marriage or a registered domestic partnership prior to the date of separation are community property under the laws of the State of California.

### What should you do if you get a divorce or terminate your domestic partnership?

It's important to contact *SamCERA* if you commence divorce or domestic partner termination proceedings (before or after your retirement), because *SamCERA* has model court orders which should be used to address the division of your *SamCERA* benefits. Additionally, please read the **Dissolution of Marriage** instructions on our website ([www.samcera.org](http://www.samcera.org)), and get in touch with a *SamCERA* retirement analyst, since there are a number of things you and your attorney will need to know before your proceedings.

If you have gotten a divorce, legal separation or termination of domestic partnership while you were an active member of *SamCERA*, you cannot receive retirement benefits until *SamCERA* receives a court order or appropriate Secretary of State termination documents settling your *SamCERA* account.

If you are separated, but do not have a judgment of legal separation or dissolution or a terminated domestic partnership, your spouse or domestic partner is still entitled to survivor benefits until you name a new beneficiary.

ON THE WEB

### Read more about it...

For more information on divorce, please read our '**Divorce**' Question and Answer page, which can be found on our website at: [www.samcera.org](http://www.samcera.org) under 'Communications.'

[www.samcera.org](http://www.samcera.org)

## PURCHASING SERVICE CREDIT

### Additional Retirement Credit (ARC)

Additional Retirement Credit (ARC) is credit you can purchase to increase your total retirement service credit. You may be interested in purchasing ARC because adding years of service credit can increase your monthly retirement allowance.

If you are an active member with 5 years of *SamCERA* service credit, you are eligible to purchase ARC. You can read more about ARC and calculate the cost of your ARC purchase using the **ARC Estimator**, on the *SamCERA* website ([www.samcera.org](http://www.samcera.org)) under 'Member Services'.

ARC differs from other purchases of prior County service because this additional service credit is not based on your actual employment with San Mateo County.

### Extra Help Service Credit

If you worked for the County as Extra Help before you accepted your permanent position, you may be eligible to purchase service credit for the hours you worked as Extra Help. Contact *SamCERA* at (650) 599-1234 to learn more.

Please note that you are not allowed to buy service credit earned at other public agencies.

## DISABILITY

### Does *SamCERA* provide disability benefits?

If you become permanently disabled due to an injury or illness on or off the job, you may be eligible for a disability retirement benefit. If this occurs, schedule an appointment with *SamCERA*'s staff to learn more about how to apply for disability retirement.

# WORKSHEET: HOW TO ESTIMATE YOUR BENEFIT

## Easy as 1, 2, 3...

It's easy to calculate your *SamCERA* retirement benefit. Your *SamCERA* retirement benefit is based on a simple 3-Step formula that multiplies your **Years of Service** times your monthly **Final Average Compensation (FAC)** times a **Benefit Factor** for your age at retirement.

<b>Step 1</b>	Your Years of Service	<input style="width: 100px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
	<i>Multiplied by</i>	X
<b>Step 2</b>	Your Final Average Compensation (FAC)*	<input style="width: 100px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
	<i>Multiplied by</i>	X
<b>Step 3</b>	Benefit Factor for Your Age at Retirement (from the charts at right)	<input style="width: 100px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
	<i>Equals</i>	=
	Your Estimated Monthly <i>SamCERA</i> Benefit	<input style="width: 100px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>

## Examples of How to Calculate Your Benefit

Example 1: Plan 5 retirement for a 55 year old member with 25 years of service, and \$6,000 FAC.

Your Years of Service	<input style="width: 50px; text-align: center;" type="text" value="25"/>
	X
Your Final Average Compensation (FAC)*	<input style="width: 50px; text-align: center;" type="text" value="\$6,000"/>
	X
Benefit Factor	<input style="width: 50px; text-align: center;" type="text" value=".03000"/>
	=
Your Estimated Monthly <i>SamCERA</i> Benefit	<input style="width: 50px; text-align: center;" type="text" value="\$4,500"/>

Example 2: Plan 5 retirement for a 50 year old member with 20 years of service, and \$6,000 FAC.

Your Years of Service	<input style="width: 50px; text-align: center;" type="text" value="20"/>
	X
Your Final Average Compensation (FAC)*	<input style="width: 50px; text-align: center;" type="text" value="\$6,000"/>
	X
Benefit Factor	<input style="width: 50px; text-align: center;" type="text" value=".02290"/>
	=
Your Estimated Monthly <i>SamCERA</i> Benefit	<input style="width: 50px; text-align: center;" type="text" value="\$2,748"/>

## PLAN 5

Your Age at Retirement	Benefit Factor*
41	0.01433
42	0.01517
43	0.01604
44	0.01694
45	0.01787
46	0.01884
47	0.01988
48	0.02081
49	0.02181
50	0.02290
51	0.02408
52	0.02537
53	0.02678
54	0.02825
55+	0.03000

\*The **Benefit Factor** increases every three months after your 41st birthday and stops increasing at age 55.

Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) of up to 2% are granted to members retired as of April 1st of each year. Member COLAs are based on the Federal Consumer Price Index for the Bay Area.

COLAs can be negative if deflation occurs, but no member will ever receive less than their original benefit amount.

## GLOSSARY OF RETIREMENT TERMS

**Additional Retirement Credit (ARC)** Credit you can purchase to increase your total retirement service credit.

**Basic Member Rate** The base percentage of your salary deducted to pay for benefits, before adding any COLA Rate and any applicable Cost Share rate.

**Benefit Factor** A number based on your retirement age and used to determine your benefits. Your benefits are determined by multiplying your years of service times your Final Average Compensation (FAC), times your Benefit Factor.

**Benefits** This includes all payments members may be entitled to, including pension benefits, death benefits and benefits due on termination of employment.

**Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)** An annual adjustment in benefits to offset changes in inflation. Plan 5 offers protection against inflation with an annual COLA. COLAs are based on the Federal Consumer Price Index for the Bay Area, and COLAs of up to 2% are granted to members retired as of April 1st of each year. COLAs can be negative if deflation occurs, but no member will ever receive less than their original benefit amount.

**COLA Rate** A percentage each member pays in addition to the basic member rate, used to pay for a portion of the COLA applied to member benefits.

**Cost Share** A percentage of member salary, separate from the basic member rate, that is deducted each pay period to pay for benefits. Sheriff's Safety Plan 5 currently charges members a cost share.

**Defined Benefit Plan** A retirement plan that defines an amount of pension benefit to be provided, based on factors such as age, years of service and compensation. For this type of plan, the benefits are defined, but the contribution amount may change. *SamCERA* is a defined benefit plan.

**Defined Contribution Plan** A retirement plan that defines how contributions to the individual's account are to be determined, instead of specifying the amount of benefits the individual is to receive. For this type of plan, the benefits depend on the amount contributed and the returns earned on investment of those contributions. A 457 account and a 401(k) account are defined contribution plans.

**Entry Age** Your age when you joined *SamCERA* or a reciprocal retirement system. Your Entry Age determines the Total Member Rate that you will pay as a *SamCERA* member.

**Final Average Compensation (FAC)** This is roughly equal to your final monthly salary. The FAC is based on a calculation of your highest 3 years of compensation earnings (three sets of 2,080 consecutive hours) divided by 36.

**Member Contribution** This is the *total* amount of pre-tax money that will be withheld from your gross salary to pay for your benefits.

**Pickup** Any amount of your Basic Member Rate *employee* contribution that is paid for by your employer.

**Reciprocity** An arrangement between public retirement systems for employees who move from one public employer to another public employer and encourages careers in public service. *SamCERA* has reciprocity with most California public retirement systems.

**Total Member Rate** This is the total percentage of your salary deducted to pay for benefits. The Total Member Rate is determined by the Basic Member rate, plus the COLA Rate and any applicable Cost Share, and is based on your age when you joined *SamCERA* or a reciprocal retirement system (see **Entry Age**).

## VIEWING YOUR BENEFITS ONLINE

<https://retweb.co.sanmateo.ca.us/>



### Web Member Services

You can get an **up-to-date benefits estimate** by using Web Member Services, located at the web address above.

To use Web Member Services, you must have access to the San Mateo County *Intranet*, through the private San Mateo County computer network. This helps ensure that your personal information remains secure. The first time you use Web Member Services, you will need to call *SamCERA* at (650) 599-1234 to get a PIN code required to login.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### When can I retire?

To receive retirement benefits, you must meet the minimum eligibility criteria, which are based on your age and years of service. *For more information, see page 1.*

### What happens if I leave my job before retirement?

Your options will depend on your years of service. *For more information, see page 8.*

### Does *SamCERA* provide disability benefits?

Yes, in some cases. *For more information, see page 10.*

### Can I borrow money from my account?

No. The only way you can withdraw money from *SamCERA* before retirement is to terminate employment and take a refund of your payroll contributions and interest.

### Do I pay into Social Security?

No. As a member of *SamCERA* employed by the Sheriff's Department, you will not pay into Social Security retirement.

### Are there other retirement fund options available to me?

In addition to your mandatory membership in *SamCERA*, the County offers membership in a 457 deferred compensation retirement plan. The 457 plan is not administered by *SamCERA*, so contact your employer for more details.

### Am I eligible for Plan 4 or Plan 6? I've heard about them from my co-workers.

No. Plan 4 is only offered to Sheriff's Safety employees hired before January 8, 2012, and Plan 6 is not offered to employees who are subject to the provisions of the Deputy Sheriff's Association Memorandum of Understanding.

[www.samcera.org](http://www.samcera.org)

**VISIT US ONLINE**



You can find out more about your retirement options, access Web Member Services, and read detailed plan information on *SamCERA's* website.