



# WELCOME TO SAMCERA

An Introduction to Plan Benefits and Services for  
General Plan 5 Members





# Welcome to SamCERA

This pamphlet is an introduction to General Plan 5 - which includes a monthly retirement benefit, survivor benefits, and disability retirement benefits.

Additional information about your plan benefits is available in the, "Guide to Your SamCERA Benefits."



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The information is general and is not considered a legally binding interpretation, enlargement or amendment of the applicable county and public employees' retirement law provisions contained in the California Government Code and the Internal Revenue Code and Treasury regulations, or the regulations of the SamCERA Board of Retirement. Should there be an inconsistency between this information and the governing law, the law will govern.

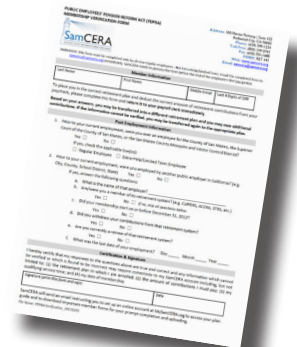
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# You've been placed in General Plan 5

SamCERA has more than one retirement plan available to members. The plan you are eligible for depends on your date of hire and other factors.

## VERIFICATION OF PLAN 5 ELIGIBILITY

Shortly after your first day of employment, you completed a Public Employees' Pension Reform Act (PEPRA) Membership Verification form. Based on your responses, SamCERA has initially placed you in General Plan 5, which is one of the two retirement plans available to new general member employees.



You were placed in Plan 5 because prior to your new regular employment you were either:

1. A SamCERA member on or before December 31, 2012, and you terminated employment and are returning to SamCERA membership; or
2. A member, on or before December 31, 2012, of another public retirement system that (a) has reciprocity with SamCERA and (b) there is less than a 6 month break in service between your employment with that agency and your current SamCERA membership, and (c) your funds are on deposit with that system.

**IMPORTANT:** For you to stay in General Plan 5, SamCERA must verify your eligibility, and SamCERA will notify you if you are being moved to a different plan. If you have questions regarding your plan placement, contact SamCERA.

# General Plan 5 - Basic Facts

## YOUR LIFETIME RETIREMENT BENEFIT

### Qualifying for Benefits

You will be eligible to collect a service retirement benefit when you meet at least one of the following:

- At least age 50 with 10 years of service credit;
- 30 years of service credit, regardless of your age;
- At least age 70, regardless of your service credit;
- Part-time or seasonal employee at least age 55 with 5 years of service credit and 10 years of employment;
- Vested member (at least 5 years of service credit) at least age 50 who has terminated employment, and you left your funds on deposit until you would have reached 10 years of service credit had you remained with your employer in a full-time position.

### Was your prior employer another public agency?

Service earned in a prior retirement system may be used to meet vesting and retirement eligibility requirements if you can establish **reciprocity**. See page 6 for more information.

### Calculating Your Retirement Benefit

The formula below is used to calculate your lifetime monthly retirement benefit.

$$\text{Service Credit} \times \text{Age Factor} \times \text{Monthly Final Average Compensation} = \text{Monthly Benefit}$$

- **Service Credit** Your service credit includes service earned each pay period from your date of entry into membership and ending with your termination date.

*Did you work as extra help? Or withdraw your SamCERA funds from an earlier SamCERA membership? Find out about purchasing this time and other service credit purchases on page 6.*

- **Age Factor** Your age factor is a percentage based on your age at retirement. The older you are, the higher the factor until you reach the formula maximum.
- **Final Average Compensation (FAC)** Your FAC is based on your highest 3 years of compensation earnable divided by 36. Not all earning types are included in compensation earnable. A list of pay codes included in compensation earnable can be found online: [www.samcera.org/administrative-policies-and-procedures](http://www.samcera.org/administrative-policies-and-procedures).

### Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA)

Plan 5 provides an annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) of up to 2% on your benefit.



### Want a quick estimate of your retirement benefit?

Use the estimator on MySamCERA online or the mobile app. Learn how to access your account online on page 7.



# CONTRIBUTIONS TO YOUR RETIREMENT BENEFIT

## Member Contributions

All members are required to contribute to the retirement plan to help pay for their benefits. Your employer will deduct a percentage of your **compensation earnable** from your gross pay (pre-tax), send it to SamCERA to place in your **member contribution account**.

Your member contribution rate is based on your age of entry, which is the age you were on your first day of employment. This rate is between six percent and ten percent for most members. (Members with a lower age of entry pay less, and employees with a higher age of entry pay more.) The current member contribution percentage rates can be found on the SamCERA website and are adjusted from time to time based on actuarial studies.

In addition to these rates, Plan 5 members pay a "COLA share" that is also based on age of entry. The COLA share helps fund future cost-of-living adjustments to your retirement benefits.

Your current bi-weekly contribution dollar amount can be found on MySamCERA or in Workday. District employees should check with their HR Department.

With reciprocity your lower age of entry from the prior system can be used for your member contribution rate.

To establish reciprocity, you must complete a Reciprocity Request form. See page 6 for more information.

*Do you want to know how much you are contributing each pay period to your SamCERA retirement benefit?*

Members with access to Workday can see their contribution amount listed in the Pre and Post Tax Deductions section of their pay information.

Pre and Post Tax Deductions 6 items		
Description	Amount	YTD
Retirement (Pre Tax)	355.76	5,336.40
Retirement General COLA (Pre Tax)	93.56	1,403.40

## Your Contribution Account

Your account will be credited with interest biannually at rates determined by the Board of Retirement. You can check your current balance by logging into MySamCERA. **You cannot borrow or withdraw funds from your account.** The only way to access your funds is to terminate employment and your SamCERA membership. You can find more information at [www.samcera.org](http://www.samcera.org) or in the "Leaving Employment" guide.

## Employer Contributions

Employers also contribute to the fund. Employer contributions are placed in an Employer Reserve Account and may only be used to pay for member benefits. **You may not withdraw employer contributions under any circumstances.**

## SURVIVORSHIP BENEFITS

Whether you die before or after retirement, certain benefits may be available for your survivor(s). Survivorship benefits for post-retirement death differ from an active member death. The chart below provides basic information about death benefits. For more information about survivorship benefits see the "Guide to Your SamCERA Benefits."

### What Your Spouse/Partner or Minor Children May Receive<sup>1</sup>

Lifetime survivor benefits if active member dies (non-duty death)	Yes, after five years of service credit <sup>1</sup>
Lifetime survivor benefits if active member dies (in the line of duty)	Yes, as of your first day on the job <sup>2</sup>
One-time survivor benefit if active member dies (non-duty death)	Yes, if member has less than five years of service credit
Lifetime survivor benefits if retired member dies	Yes, depending on the option chosen at retirement

### What Other Designated Beneficiaries May Receive

If you are not married, do not have a domestic partner, and do not have minor children and die as an active member, your designated beneficiary will get a lump sum payment based on your member account and other factors.

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

2 The monthly Duty Death Benefit is equal to 50% of your final average compensation (FAC). 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.

### Beneficiary Designation Form



It's important to complete and return a Beneficiary Designation form to SamCERA, and be sure to keep your beneficiary information current! Remember to submit a new form for life changes such as marriage, divorce, a new baby, or if you want to change your designated beneficiary for any other reason.

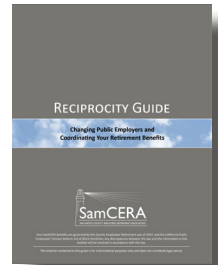
Find the form online at [www.samcera.org/forms](http://www.samcera.org/forms) or contact SamCERA to request a copy.



# Additional Important Plan Information

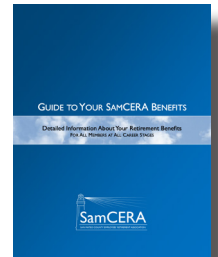
## Reciprocity

If you worked for another California public agency, you might be able to establish reciprocity, if you left active membership from that public retirement system, left your contributions on deposit, and then entered SamCERA membership within six months (180 days). Reciprocity allows you to link your previous service credit to your SamCERA service credit, which may provide additional benefits. Ask SamCERA to check if you are eligible for reciprocal benefits and how to establish reciprocity. You can find information in the **"Reciprocity Guide."**



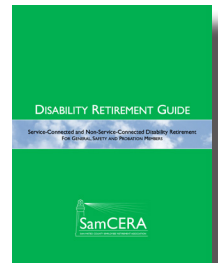
## Extra Help & Other Service Credit Purchases

If you worked for a SamCERA employer as Extra Help before membership, you may be eligible to purchase your Extra Help hours to add to your service credit. Please note that you are not allowed to buy credit for service provided for other public agencies. You can learn about service credit purchases in the **"Guide to Your SamCERA Benefits."**



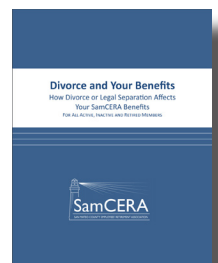
## Transferring into Plan 4

If you have 10 years of service in General Plan 5, you may transfer into General Plan 4 which has a benefit formula of 2% @ 55.5. Reciprocal service credit does not count toward the 10 year service requirement to be eligible to move into Plan 4. Since the benefits are higher in Plan 4 than Plan 5, you will pay an additional cost share and a higher COLA Rate. To transfer into Plan 4, you will need to pay all of the additional employee (including additional cost share and COLA contribution costs) and employer contributions that would have been required if you had been in Plan 4 since the date of employment, plus interest. You can learn about transferring to Plan 4 in the, **"Guide to Your SamCERA Benefits."**



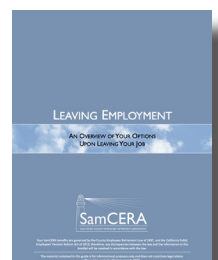
## Disability Benefits

If you become permanently disabled as an active member 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 to learn more about how to apply for a disability retirement. There's important information on this process in the **"Disability Retirement Guide."**



## Divorce

If you have a divorce or legal separation while you are a member of SamCERA, or if you are filing for a legal separation or dissolution of marriage or domestic partnership, you must contact SamCERA because your SamCERA account is subject to community property law and must be addressed. There is information and model orders available in the **"Divorce and Your Benefits"** guide.



## Leaving Before Retirement

If you terminate employment prior to retirement, SamCERA will mail you a description of the options available regarding your SamCERA benefits. You can find information in the **"Leaving Employment"** guide.

*The guides mentioned on this page and helpful forms can be found online at <https://www.samcera.org/forms-and-publications>.*

# SamCERA is Available Online - 24/7

## Website - [www.samcera.org](http://www.samcera.org)

Visit [www.samcera.org](http://www.samcera.org) to get helpful, up-to-date information throughout your career. On the website, you can learn more about:

- Reciprocity
- Disability
- Retirement Planning
- Divorce
- Service Purchases
- Contributions
- Benefit Limits
- and more!



In addition, you can also download forms and model orders. The website also provides important information about the Board of Retirement, the Board meeting calendar, SamCERA staff, as well as financial information regarding the retirement fund and investments.

## Member Portal - [www.mysamcera.org](http://www.mysamcera.org)

MySamCERA is a secure member portal that provides easy and convenient access to your SamCERA retirement account and plan information.



With MySamCERA, you can:

- Check your account information, such as which plan you are in, your service credit, contributions and interest, and if you established reciprocity or made a purchase.
- Get retirement benefit estimates.
- Print a current member statement (this is a summary of your contributions and interest.)
- Update contact information for your beneficiaries.
- Review documents in your member file and upload new documents.
- Send and receive secure messages with SamCERA staff.

To access MySamCERA for the first time, create an account online at [www.mysamcera.org](http://www.mysamcera.org). Once you have created a MySamCERA account, you can easily log into the MySamCERA mobile app using the same username and password.

## Create an Account:

1. Visit the secure MySamCERA website at: [www.mysamcera.org](http://www.mysamcera.org)
2. Click "Register" then read and accept the terms of service.
3. Verify your identity by entering your SSN, Last Name, Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY) and SamCERA ID.
4. The following screen will ask you to set up your account details – this is where you'll select a password, set up security questions, and provide your email.

To complete registration, you'll receive a verification email with a link to confirm that you want to create an account. Click on the link in your email & you'll be all set to explore MySamCERA.

### **YOUR SAMCERA ID**

To access MySamCERA for the first time, you'll need your SamCERA ID, which is a special number created for each member.

**If you don't have your SamCERA ID, contact SamCERA for help.**