



# WELCOME TO SAMCERA

An Introduction to Plan Benefits and Services for  
General, Safety and Probation Plan 7 Members





# Welcome to SamCERA

This pamphlet is an introduction to Plan 7 - 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 Plan 7

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.

### **DO ANY OF THESE FACTORS APPLY TO YOU?**

Prior to your new regular employment:

1. You were a SamCERA member on or before December 31, 2012, and you terminated employment and are returning to SamCERA membership; or
2. You (a) were a member, on or before December 31, 2012, of another public retirement system that has reciprocity with SamCERA; (b) you established membership with SamCERA within six months of leaving employment with your prior reciprocal retirement system; and (c) your funds are on deposit with that system.

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**IF ANY OF THE ABOVE APPLY TO YOU, CONTACT SAMCERA  
RIGHT AWAY FOR A POSSIBLE PLAN TRANSFER.**

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If you don't act now and instead do so later, you may be required to pay any arrears contributions and interest required by any applicable plan transfer.

# Plan 7 - Basic Facts

## YOUR LIFETIME RETIREMENT BENEFIT

### Qualifying for Benefits

You are eligible for a service retirement benefit when you meet the minimum age and service requirements listed below:

- For General Members: At least age 52 with 5 years of service credit
- For Safety and Probation Members: At least age 50 with 5 years of service credit
- General, Safety and Probation members can retire at age 70 with any amount of service credit

After 5 years of credited service, you are vested, which means if you leave active membership before you are ready to retire, you can defer your retirement until you meet the minimum eligibility age.

### 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 monthly average of pensionable compensation earned during any 36-consecutive-month period. Not all earning types are included in pensionable compensation.

**Cap on Pensionable Compensation** Your annual pensionable compensation counted toward your pension is capped. The cap is indexed to inflation and adjusted each year on January 1. For information about your current cap, visit [www.samcera.org](http://www.samcera.org) or contact SamCERA.

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

Plan 7 provides an annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) of up to 2% on your benefit.



## 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 **pensionable compensation** from your gross pay (pre-tax), send it to SamCERA, and the funds will be placed in your **member contribution account**.

Plan 7 members pay a flat percentage rate based on classification: General, Safety and Probation members each pay separate rates. The rate is adjusted periodically based on actuarial studies. You can find your current rate at [www.samcera.org](http://www.samcera.org).

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

### What is pensionable compensation?

Not all earning types are included in pensionable compensation. Your base salary is "pensionable compensation," but pay items such as uniform allowance, overtime, and travel allowance are not counted. A listing of pay codes included in pensionable compensation can be found online:

[www.samcera.org/administrative-policies-and-procedures](http://www.samcera.org/administrative-policies-and-procedures).

*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.

Description	Amount	YTD
Retirement (Pre Tax)	355.76	4,980.64
Total:		

### Pensionable Compensation Cap

Plan 7 members are subject to an **annual cap on the amount of pensionable compensation** which can be used to calculate your pension (see page 3). Because of this, there is also a cap on the amount of annual contributions you'll have to make. Once this cap is reached, you will stop making contributions until the end of the calendar year. The contributions will restart the first pay-period in the following January. These caps are subject to annual adjustments based on inflation. For information about your current cap, visit [www.samcera.org](http://www.samcera.org) or contact SamCERA.

### 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 on 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 registered 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.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

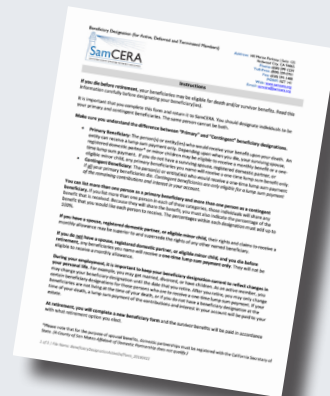
<sup>2</sup> The monthly Duty Death Benefit is equal to 50% of your final average compensation (FAC). If you do not have an eligible spouse/partner, your minor children will receive the monthly benefit until they reach the age of 18, or age 22 if they are unmarried full-time students.

### 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.

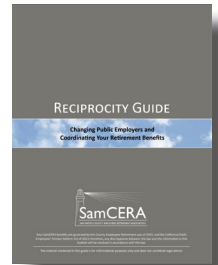


# Additional Important Plan Information

## Reciprocity

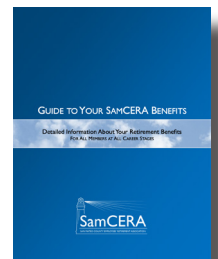
If you worked for another California public agency, you might be able to establish reciprocity, if you left active membership from that public retirement system, left your contributions on deposit, and then entered SamCERA membership within six months. Reciprocity allows you to link your previous service credit to your SamCERA service credit, which may provide additional benefits. (Contributions from your prior system do not transfer to SamCERA, they remain on deposit with your prior retirement plan.)

Ask SamCERA to check if you are eligible for reciprocal benefits and how to establish reciprocity. You can find more information at [www.samcera.org](http://www.samcera.org) or in the **"Reciprocity Guide."**



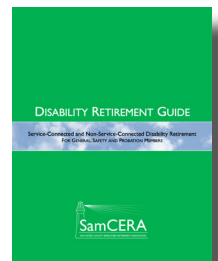
## Extra Help & Other Service Credit Purchases

If you worked for a SamCERA employer as Extra Help before you accepted your permanent position, 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 more about service credit purchases at [www.samcera.org](http://www.samcera.org) and in the **"Guide to Your SamCERA Benefits."**



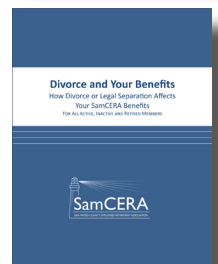
## Disability Benefits

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 at [www.samcera.org](http://www.samcera.org) and in the **"Disability Retirement Guide."**



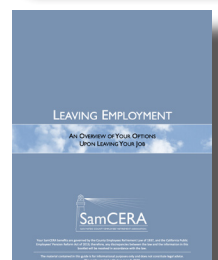
## Divorce

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 at [www.samcera.org](http://www.samcera.org) and 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 more information at [www.samcera.org](http://www.samcera.org) or 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.

## Set-up Your 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.

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.**