



HIGHWAY PATROL RETIREMENT SYSTEM

July 2021

Contact Us: 614.431.0781



"Our History Is Our Pride"

Update on Medicare Connector Project

The update on the Medicare Connector Project will include the pertinent information communicated in previous newsletters, as well as many other updates on the project. To help avoid unnecessary review, the topics are covered through frequently asked questions.

As a reminder, this transition to the Medicare Exchange primarily impacts our retirees and dependents that are age 65 and older. The pre-Medicare population will remain with the health care provided through Medical Mutual of Ohio for 2022. For the small number of retirees and dependents that are currently age 65 and older, who are on our Medical Mutual of Ohio plan because they do not qualify for premium-free Medicare A, we will contact you soon to let you know how this will impact you.

Understandably, many of our retirees and spouses that are going to be impacted by this change are anxiously awaiting information. Although the communication plan has been slightly delayed, the contract with Willis Towers Watson (WTW) is in place and we are on schedule without any concerns. Moreover, the Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) is complete, which outlines the way the benefit will be administered.

The timeline for the project is as follows:

Late August – Official letter mailed from HPRS outlining the change in health care benefit.

Early September – Getting Started Guide will be mailed to all affected.

September – Retiree Meetings will be held at various locations throughout Ohio, and details will be communicated in the August Newsletter, and posted to our website.

September 22nd and 24th – Two virtual meetings will be held (at 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.) on each of these dates that will allow members to ask questions. Members can participate by computer or by phone. Details on these meetings will be mailed, added to our website, and published in the August Newsletter.

October 1, 2021 – Open Enrollment begins

The annual amount of the Health Reimbursement Arrangement will be \$2,200 for retirees, and \$1,100 for surviving spouses. This annual amount translates to a monthly amount of \$183.33 for a retiree, and \$91.67 per month for a surviving spouse. Based on these levels, the actuaries from Willis Towers Watson (WTW) project that 99% of our members will save money on their annual health care expenses. The average amount of annual savings for these members is estimated to be \$2,170.

A married Medicare-eligible couple currently pays \$3,060 annually in premiums (\$255 per month). Rather than paying that amount in premiums to HPRS, the member will be provided with \$183.33 per month to purchase the plan that makes the most sense for the member and his/her spouse. This is a swing of \$438/month to the member's favor to go toward their premiums and other eligible expenses.

Although HPRS has been sending information about the change, the official education period as part of the partnership with WTW will begin August 31st. A Pre-season Getting Started Guide will be mailed to all affected, and a co-branded website will be available to help those get started that may have access to a computer. In addition to virtual retiree meetings, there will be several opportunities to attend in-person events prior to the enrollment period, which starts October 1st.

The contracted vendor that you will have contact with as part of this process is called Via Benefits. Via Benefits Insurance Services, owned by WTW and founded in 2004, has helped more than 2 million people evaluate and enroll in individual health insurance. Via Benefits is a resource offering personal service to help retirees understand coverage options through a customer service team. It operates the first and largest Medicare marketplace in the country. **Until you have selected a plan, it is advised that you only discuss your health care options with Via Benefits so that you do not inadvertently enroll in a plan outside of our contracted vendor, which would disqualify you from the HRA allowance.**

Medicare Connector Project Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Why does HPRS need to make changes to the current Medicare health care benefit?

HPRS health care benefits have been modified many times over the last decade in an effort to provide a sustainable benefit. The changes resulted in some benefits being reduced, and increases to copays, deductibles, etc. Although these changes resulted in the cost savings targeted, the rising costs of health care, especially prescription costs, continue to threaten the sustainability of our health care fund. Projections indicate that without significant changes, the health care fund will be depleted in approximately ten years. By switching from a group medical plan to a Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA), HPRS will be able to continue offering current and future retirees assistance with the cost of health care coverage.

Who is the contracted vendor that HPRS has selected?

Willis Towers Watson (WTW) is the vendor that HPRS contracted with to accomplish this transition of Medicare eligible members and dependents to the Medicare Exchange.

Via Benefits, an insurance service owned by WTW, is the service that our members will be using to pick their health care plan. Via Benefits has licensed agents (benefit advisors) that are skilled in helping Medicare eligible retirees select the plan that best meets their individual needs. A member or friend can be involved to help with the process. Via Benefits currently experiences a 94% first call resolution for retirees selecting health care plans. Should there be any difficulty in the plan selection process, HPRS staff will be prepared to assist.

What is the Medicare Exchange?

The Medicare Exchange refers to the health care marketplace where individual Medicare plans are available. The Medicare plans are accessed through a marketplace vendor who enrolls Medicare-eligible retirees into individual Medicare plans. The marketplace vendor is not an insurance provider; the marketplace vendor contracts with multiple insurance carriers to provide a variety of plans. The marketplace vendor also manages the reimbursement of eligible expenses such as premiums to the retiree through an HRA.

Medicare Connector FAQs Continued:

What is a Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA)?

An HRA is an account funded by HPRS that provides tax-free reimbursement for qualified medical expenses, such as monthly insurance premiums, deductibles, co-insurance, and copays, incurred by eligible retirees and their dependents. Only HPRS can contribute funds to the HRA; retirees cannot add their own funds. Retirees must submit a request for reimbursement, including supporting documentation. Expenses are deemed eligible for reimbursement based on IRS guidelines.

Will my new plan be as good as my current plan?

You will find plans that offer benefits similar to your current health plan, and you may also find plans that provide a better match for your needs. Because multiple options are offered, you'll be able to find a plan that closely matches your specific medical and financial requirements.

Do my dependent and I need to enroll in the same plans?

No. You and your Medicare-eligible covered dependent can choose to enroll in different plans.

Are my options and rates affected by my current or past health?

No, not if you enroll in an individual plan during your enrollment period and before your current health coverage expires. During this time, insurers cannot deny your application or charge you more because a doctor has treated you for a health condition.

What can I expect to pay for my new plan?

Your rates for your new plan will depend on the coverage you select. Your benefit advisor at Via Benefits will assist you in selecting plans based on your medical and financial needs.

How long does enrollment take?

Most people are able to complete their enrollment in one call, and most calls average slightly more than one hour. Your call may be shorter if you complete your personal profile in advance. The "Enrollment Guide" you will receive shortly will give you information on the online tools available through Via Benefits.

Medicare Connector FAQs Continued:

[Can I continue to see my current doctor\(s\)?](#)

If you want to continue to see your current doctor(s), before you call to enroll, ask your doctor(s) which insurance plans they accept. And, when you enroll, have each doctor's name and address to share with the Via Benefits advisor.

[What can I do to prepare for this transition?](#)

Gather the following information to help you find and choose the right plan: Your Medicare number; Prescription information – names, dosages and frequency you take medication; Provider information – names and addresses for all doctors and hospitals/outpatient facilities you wish to continue using.

[Can I choose to remain in HPRS-sponsored retiree medical coverage?](#)

No. HPRS retiree medical coverage for Medicare-eligible retirees and Medicare-eligible covered dependents will end on December 31, 2021.

[Will Medicare-eligible retirees and surviving spouses be required to select a new health care plan through the Medicare Connector that HPRS has partnered with to be eligible for any reimbursement?](#)

Yes, Medicare-eligible retirees and surviving spouses will be required to access their health care through Via Benefits (an insurance service owned by WTW) to be eligible for an HRA. Not only is this the most cost-effective method for providing the benefits, Via Benefits provides education, support and other resources that helps retirees understand and navigate health plan options.

[Will retirees receive an HRA allowance for spouses or dependent children?](#)

No. Only the retiree will receive an allowance, however, retirees will be able to use HRA dollars to be reimbursed for qualified medical expenses incurred by an eligible spouse or dependent.

[Will there be assistance for retirees in choosing a health care plan?](#)

Yes. Via Benefits has licensed agents (benefit advisors) that are skilled in helping Medicare-eligible individuals select the plan that best meets their needs. A trusted family member or friend can be involved to help with the process. Via Benefits experiences a 94% first call resolution for selecting health care plans. Should there be any difficulty in the plan selection process, HPRS staff will be prepared to assist.

Medicare Connector FAQs Continued:

[Will I receive a tax credit, as I have in the past, for the health care premiums paid?](#)

No. Once the Medicare population is transitioned to the exchange, the tax deduction made available by the Pension Protection Act will no longer be applicable for those premiums. However, this will not likely result in any real loss for the member. Reimbursements made after this transition will come from tax-free dollars provided to you in a stipend.

PURCHASE OF MILITARY CREDIT

Service credit is important to all our members, because it determines when you can retire and how much of a pension you receive. Basically, you receive a day of service credit for every day you work. But there are other ways you can purchase service credit, the most common of which is military service. You can also transfer service from other Ohio retirement systems such as OP&F. These can become complex and not all service with other systems is eligible for purchase. The following are some of the basics on military service credit.



Two types of active military time can be purchased. You can purchase up to seven years of service that occurs while you are an employee of the Patrol (most commonly a Reservist that is called-up) and up to five years of service that occurred prior to your employment with the Patrol (up to ten if you were a POW). The process for the purchase is: (1) call HPRS to request an estimate of the cost; (2) find or request your DD-214 (this is the only form we can accept); (3) complete a short application and make the payment and you will receive your credit. Simple enough. But there are a few points you should remember.

First, your duty as a Reservist (and with the National Guard) is usually eligible for purchase, but your collective time cannot be more than can normally be earned. For example, you cannot earn more than one year of service credit within that same year. So, if you work for the Patrol the entire year, you cannot also purchase your weekends with the Reserve or Guard and get over a year. Second, the longer you wait, the more expensive your purchase. The cost of your service is based on the member contribution rate at the time, plus interest. The current active member contribution rate is 14%. The applicable interest rate is currently 7.25% and it compounds annually, so as you can see, the sooner you make the purchase the better.

For example, assume you serve for a year and your salary is around \$50,000, the cost for a year of service credit, without interest, would be \$7,000 (assuming the current 14% rate). You have several options to make this payment. You can write a check if that is feasible, or you can pay with funds from your tax deferred accounts such as deferred compensation. You can also have deductions made from your pay. You must complete the purchase before you retire or enter DROP. We would be happy to discuss these options with you, so please give us a call and, most importantly, thank you for your service.



2022 Health Care Premiums / Plan Co-Pays



Non-Medicare Medical / Prescription (Medical Mutual of Ohio / Express Scripts)

Premium amount changes take effect the month following your birthday.

Retiree or Surviving Spouse Age	Monthly Premium	Spouse Age	Monthly Premium
60 +	\$175	60 +	\$235
56 – 59	\$248	56 – 59	\$309
52 – 55	\$484	52 – 55	\$545
< 52	\$760	< 52	\$820

The chart above represents premiums for HPRS health care coverage whether HPRS is primary or secondary.

	Monthly Premium
Dependent* or Surviving Children	\$152 each
Tobacco Surcharge	\$50 each user

* Dependent children 18 and over must take coverage through employment, parent or stepparent employment, spouse employment, military service or a college or university if it is available.

Disability Retirees: In-the-line-of-duty are charged at the 60+ rate. Not-in-the-line-of-duty (off-duty) are charged at the rate based on actual age. Once a retirant / spouse turns 52, 56 and 60, the lower premiums become effective.

Dental & Vision

	Monthly Retiree Premium	Monthly Spouse Premium	Monthly Dependent Child Premium*	Monthly Surviving Spouse Premium	Monthly Surviving Children Premium
Dental	\$5	\$20	\$20	\$5	\$5
Vision	\$5	\$5	\$5	\$5	\$5

*A single Dental & Vision premium provides coverage for all dependent children regardless of number.

Coverage Overview / Co-Pay Information

Medical	Non-Medicare (Medical Mutual of Ohio)
General	\$20
Specialist	\$45*; 20% after deductible
Chiropractor	20% after deductible
Emergency Room	\$200
Urgent Care	\$60
Deductible (per person)	\$1,500
Out of Pocket Maximum (per person)	\$4,000

*\$45 copay at time of service; patient responsible for 100% until deductible is met.

Prescription Drug	Retail (up to 34-day supply)	Home Delivery (90-day supply)
Generic	\$15	\$30
Brand / Formulary	\$30	\$60
Brand / Non-Formulary	Not covered	Not covered

TRANSFER OF SERVICE CREDIT

Not everyone begins or ends his/her career with the Patrol, and many of those jobs before and after the Patrol are covered by OP&F, OPERS, STRS or SERS. The good news is that most of the time, service can be transferred among the systems. For example, some of our troopers were dispatchers before they entered the Academy. As a dispatcher they are a member of OPERS, but once they enter the Academy, they become a member of HPRS, and that OPERS service is eligible for transfer to HPRS.

If you leave the Highway Patrol and want to transfer your service to OPERS, there is one important exception to this rule. OPERS rule does not allow for a transfer of your HPRS service to OPERS until you are within 90 days of retirement. Also, you can only transfer service to OPERS if you have more service at OPERS than HPRS. So, if you worked at HPRS for nine years, leave the Patrol and become a member of OPERS, you will not be able to transfer that service until you work in that OPERS position for nine years. This is a very basic explanation for a scenario with a lot of moving parts. Therefore, we ask that you call us before you decide to leave the Patrol so we can discuss your options.

Although all service credit is valuable and likely increases your pension, it is important to note that not all service credit goes toward the minimum years necessary to earn a benefit. In addition to actual HPRS service credit, only military and OP&F service credit can be used to meet the minimum requirement. For those hired on or after January 1, 2020, the minimum retirement age is 52 with 20 years of qualifying service. Members hired prior to January 1, 2020, can start receiving a pension at 48 if they have 25 years of qualifying service, or at age 52 with 20 years of qualifying service.

Upcoming Events

There are several retiree gatherings taking place on a regular basis. The details of these gatherings can be found on our website. I encourage you to check with the contact person to ensure they are being held as scheduled prior to traveling to the event. The Ohio State Highway Patrol Retiree's Association has scheduled two of their main events for the year:

The Sunbird Reunion will take place Saturday, August 21, 2021, at the All Occasions Banquet Facility in Waldo, Ohio. Lunch will be served at 12 Noon. Reservations are due by August 7th and are currently limited to the first 120. The cost is \$12 per person, and you can download a reservation form from their website at www.oshpretiree.org/Index.html.

The Snowbird Reunion will be March 23-26, 2022, at the Orlando Marriott Lake Mary, in Lake Mary, Florida. The hotel is now accepting reservations at a special group rate of \$139.00. You are encouraged to take advantage of the early room reservation opportunity. Please continue to check the OSHPRRA website for more details as they are finalized.

Retiree Qualification

As a reminder, your qualification under the LEOSA rules is only good for one year from the date of qualification.

The scheduled retiree qualifications at the Academy are:

- Wednesday, August 11, 2021, at 1300 hours
- Wednesday, October 13, 2021, at 1300 hours

As a reminder, you must complete a Weapons Qualification Record (HP-15C), that includes your personal weapon information, and submit it no less than 14 days prior to the qualification date. Retirees must bring their Division-issued ID Card with them to the qualification, and the retiree must supply weapon(s) and ammunition. If you have any questions, please call the Academy, at 614.466.4896.

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