NEWS TO USE

A newsletter for PERSI employers

PERSI

GASB RELEASES EXPOSURE DRAFT OF PROPOSED CHANGES

The Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) is proposing significant changes to its accounting and reporting standards for the pensions governments provide to their employees. The proposals are made in two Exposure Drafts — one relating to reporting by government employers providing pensions through a qualified plan such as PERSI, and the other relating to the reporting by the pension plans that administer those benefits.

PERSI strongly recommends employers review the GASB 27 Exposure Draft because the proposed changes will impact how net pension liabilities would be shown on the employer's financial statements, rather than as supplemental information. Employers have an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes until September 30, 2011.

The plan administered by PERSI is a cost-sharing, multiple-employer pension plan.

A plain language supplement of GASB 27 (see page 10) is on the GASB website following this link: http://www.gasb.org/cs/ContentServer?site=GASB&c=Document_C&pagename=GASB%2FDocument_C%2FGASBDocumentPage&cid=1176158723743

After reading the supplement and Exposure Draft, employers may want to consider submitting written comments to GASB by the September 30, 2011 deadline.

ONLINE TOOLS CAN HELP EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

Several online tools are available on the PERSI website to assist both employers and their employees. Some tools are meant to help employers with such things as reporting, transmittals, and answering employee questions; other tools aid employees with things like logging onto accounts and registering for workshops.

Employer Portal
The Employer Portal is a restricted section of the "Employer Information" page on the PERSI website. It has customized views, features, and security outside the website and can only be accessed by authorized employer personnel. It was designed to increase efficient communication between ESC staff and employers, and provide additional tools to help employers administer their responsibilities for PERSI.
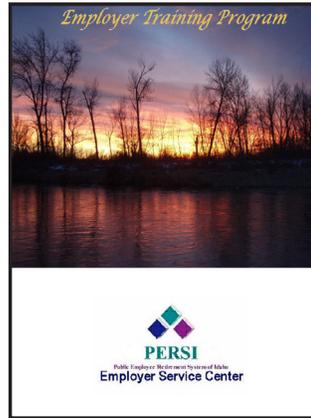
As a restricted site, only those who have registered on the PERSI website **AND** have been designated by their employer as an "authorized PERSI contact" can access the portal. Authorized contacts who have already registered on the PERSI website to view their personal account information don't need to register again to use the Employer Portal. They can use their current email address, existing password, and employer ID number to log in.

Employer Training Manual
Employers will also find a training manual on the "Employer information" page of the PERSI website. The manual was designed to help employers better understand the responsibilities associated

with PERSI membership. Eligibility, withholding employee contributions, and processing terminations are among the topics covered in the manual. Although the manual will not make anyone a PERSI "expert," it will help employers know how to obtain assistance from PERSI and where to direct employees who have questions the employer is unable to answer.

Added Bonus: Employer Visits

Starting in the fall of 2010, PERSI staff began visiting employers throughout the state. If you haven't been visited yet, it's only a matter of time. The PERSI trainers, several managers, and many ESC staff are making the rounds to answer questions and help employers prepare for when PERSI changes to a new pension administration system in a few years. It's important for employers to understand how the upgraded computer system and new-requirements will impact reporting and transmittals. If you have questions before or after a visit, contact ESC at 1-866-887-9525 or 287-9525 from Boise.

Employee Online Tools

PERSI makes it easy for your employees to access their retirement accounts. They simply go to the PERSI website -- which has been recently redesigned -- and click on the "myPERSI" button in the upper right corner of the homepage. The log-in screen will appear. At the top and bottom of the log-in page is a "Register Now" link for new users. When clicked, the member will be taken through the registration steps. Within 30 minutes they should receive an email confirming their registration.

PERSI Account Balances and Projections

Once a member has logged in to their Base Plan account they can choose to review a personal account balance and projections statement. This statement lists current account balances for both the Base Plan and Choice Plan, and shows the employee's average monthly salary, retirement benefit projections, personal information, and more.

Choice 401(k) Plan

Accessing a Choice 401(k) Plan account is also easy.

Once a member has logged in to their PERSI Base Plan account using the password they created, they simply scroll down to the "Your PERSI Retirement Plans" area and click on the "hot link" to exit to the Choice Plan site at ACS, the plan's record keeper. A separate log in is not needed. This single sign-on feature allows members to access their Base and Choice Plan accounts without using two passwords.

Web Tour

Members can take an online "tour" of the Choice 401(k) Plan to learn more about it. Simply click the rotating panel near the center of the PERSI website homepage.

Contribution Impact Calculator

This calculator can help your employees determine the potential impact a 401 (k) deferral will have on their take-home pay. The calculator, an external link to Bankrate.com, allows users to enter different scenarios to get an idea of the impact contributions to a Choice Plan account will have on their paychecks. The link is easily found by clicking on the 401(k) Choice Plan icon on the right side of the PERSI website homepage.

Online Workshop Registration

On the "Education" page of the PERSI website, your employees can view the workshop schedules and register to attend the seminar that's most convenient for them.

Viewing Annual Statements

Once your employees log onto their Base Plan account, they can review their annual statement by scrolling down to the bottom of the page and clicking on the year they want to review. At least 5 years of Base Plan statements are archived online, while Choice Plan statement are available on the Choice Plan website at ACS.

Purchase of Service Calculator

Employees who want to increase their service credit by purchasing service can use the online calculator to help them understand the costs. The variables can be changed so the member can see different scenarios before deciding what's best for them.

Designed With You in Mind

PERSI appreciates the challenges faced by employers, so you are encouraged to take advantage of the tools provided just for you...they will make your job easier. And you can help your employees by directing them to the online tools designed with them in mind.