

HR CONNECTION

Serving Employees of the Board of Commissioners

January 14, 2015

Policy Corner: Tuition Reimbursement

It is the desire of Delaware County to create an environment that stimulates, challenges and encourages employees to broaden their knowledge and skill by continuing their education. Reimbursement of primary expenses associated with a degree program or individual course work is available to those employees who meet the criteria and successfully complete the program or course.

4.0 Definitions

Employee: any full-time (working forty hours per week) individual who has completed at least one year of continuous active service with Delaware County.

Accredited: an institution that has been state certified and is registered with the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools or another accrediting agency recognized by the Committee on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation.

Reimbursable Expenses: Delaware County will reimburse the employee upon completion of the course(s), 90% of the costs for course tuition fees, lab fees and 50% of the total cost of **required** textbooks, which must be paid in full by the employee prior to reimbursement under this policy.

Statement of Justification: A written narrative that fully explains the relationship of the course to the applicant's career goals, and how the course may impact on the employee's knowledge and skill level. The applicant and his/her supervisor must submit a Statement of Justification attached to application for each request.

Non-reimbursable Items: Items such as recommended study guides/text books, notebooks, pens, paper, travel expenses, parking fees, student health insurance fees, deferred payment fees, enrollment and/or application fees, administration fees, general fees and graduate fees are considered non-reimbursable items.

5.0 Policy

Delaware County will reimburse an employee up to 90% for the actual course tuition and required lab fee costs and 50% of the required book costs, not to exceed \$2,500 in total reimbursable expenses annually, during the County's budget cycle (review Section 4.0 for specific items). The employee shall provide proof of payment in full before reimbursement will be processed.



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Policy Corner: Tuition Reimbursement Continued

Reimbursement Eligibility Requirements:

Courses must correspond or be applicable to the employee's current position or department within the county and must directly benefit the county. (For example: coursework in nursing would not be reimbursed because the County does not have a nursing department or similar position).

1. Employee eligibility is based on the job-related performance of the employee, which must be in good standing prior to and throughout the period for which the tuition assistance was approved. The employee should not have had any written warnings, suspensions or other disciplinary action filed, nor be subject to a performance improvement plan within one year of applying for tuition assistance. No employee on a paid or an unpaid leave of absence, unauthorized leave of absence, disability leave, workers' compensation leave, or injury leave may apply for tuition assistance.
2. The employee must have one (1) or more years of continuous full time (forty hours per week) active service with Delaware County prior to applying for tuition assistance.
3. The applicant's supervisor must provide a statement of justification explaining why it would be currently beneficial to the County to provide tuition assistance to the applicant.
4. It is the responsibility of the employee to obtain approval for tuition assistance from his/her supervisor/manager, the Department of Human Resources and his or her Appointing Authority **at least thirty (30) days prior to the start of the course(s) for each academic term.**
5. The employee must receive a grade of "B" or equivalent, or better to receive tuition assistance for each course that tuition assistance is requested.
6. The college or university must be an accredited institution as defined in Section 4.0.
7. If an employee is eligible to receive or is receiving financial assistance from any governmental (federal, state or local entity) or private agency for the academic term, whether or not applied for and regardless of when such assistance may be received, that amount shall be deducted from the County's tuition assistance allowance.



Read the complete policy and download the application at <http://www.co.delaware.oh.us/index.php/policies>

Questions? Contact HR at 740/833-2120.

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740/833-2120 • 740/833-2119 (Fax)

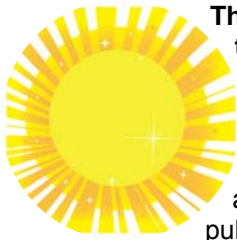
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Sunshine Laws Training



The Sunshine Laws Certification Training, provided by the Ohio Attorney General's Office, is a three-hour certification training session provided to all elected officials, and/or their appropriate designees, as well as members of the general public.

The training session is provided in order to enhance the knowledge of public offices regarding the duty to provide access to public records as required by Section 149.43 of the Ohio Revised Code. The session will include discussion on the Ohio Public Records Act and the Ohio Open Meetings Act.

Register: <https://sunshinelaw.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/>

Welcome

Welcome to **Commissioner Barb Lewis**, who was sworn to office on January 5, 2015.

Mrs. Lewis joins the Board of Commissioners following seven years of public service as a Genoa Township Trustee. She earned her Ph.D., M.A. and B.A. degrees from The Ohio State University, where she taught hundreds of OSU students the fundamentals of American government, including political participation and behavior.

We look forward to her leadership and guidance in addition to her knowledge of government and her real world experience.

Federal Tax Tip: Changing Your Withholding: If the event changes your withholding status or the number of allowances you are claiming, you must give your employer a new Form W-4 within 10 days after either of the following:

- Your divorce, if you have been claiming married status.
- Any event that decreases the number of withholding allowances you can claim.
- Generally, you can submit a new Form W-4 whenever you wish to change the number of your withholding allowances for any other reason.
- Changing your withholding for the current year: If events in the prior year will decrease the number of our withholding allowances for this year, you must give your employer a new Form W-4 by December 1 of the prior year. If the event occurs in December of the prior year, submit a new Form W-4 within 10 days.

Source: <http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/Employees/Tax-Withholding->

Human Resources Staff

- | | | |
|--|----------------------------|--------------|
| • Dawn Huston , Director of Administrative Services | dhuston@co.delaware.oh.us | 740/833-2122 |
| • Cindi Blair , Insurance, Risk & Wellness | cblair@co.delaware.oh.us | 740/833-2124 |
| • Brad Euans , Workers Compensation/FMLA/HR Coordinator | beuans@co.delaware.oh.us | 740/833-2127 |
| • Amanda Kreft , Insurance and Risk Assistant | akreft@co.delaware.oh.us | 740/833-2126 |
| • Jenny Downey , HR Technician | jdowney@co.delaware.oh.us | 740/833-2125 |
| • Mindy Owens , HR Manager | mowens@co.delaware.oh.us | 740/833-2129 |
| • Dana Bushong , HR Technician | dbushong@co.delaware.oh.us | 740/833-2123 |

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LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

How to Maintain an Organized Workspace

Getting organized will benefit you in many ways – by being more productive, feeling more confident, and maintaining a professional image. But getting organized is just half the battle. If you want to keep enjoying all those benefits, you must manage your workspace to keep it organized.

Handling items and filing

To maintain an organized workspace means to handle each item as it comes in or paper can quickly pile up. Don't put a paper in a pile to be dealt with later – handle each piece only once. Deciding what to do with it right away means you won't have to come back to it later.

Keeping your files up to date means you'll never have to search through piles of paper to find what you need.



Clearing your desk

Maintaining an organized workspace is developing a habit of organizing your desk every night. When the first thing you encounter upon entering your office is a messy desk, it is more difficult to be productive for the rest of the day.

Notes

Add notes where they belong, not on little pieces of paper. If you jot notes on pieces of paper, you still have to rewrite the information where it belongs, which doubles your work.

How to Manage Your Workspace

A productive workspace has several key features:

- ✓ A tidy workspace is minimalist. You should get rid of any extra items in your space as possible. Extra items mean clutter, which leads to distraction.
- ✓ Clean, usable desk space. You can't use your desk if it is covered in paper and files, so keep it clear to allow yourself room to work.
- ✓ When everything you use regularly is within reach, you will avoid having to retrieve them. This not only wastes time, but it interrupts your work.
- ✓ It is easy to be productive when you have organized shelves and filing systems. It is also helpful to organize your books in alphabetical order and use containers to organize smaller items.

Questions: Contact Dana Bushong @ 740/833-2123

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TAX IDENTITY THEFT AWARENESS WEEK

Tax Identity Theft Awareness Week Are You Ready? January 26-30, 2015

Tax identity theft happens when someone files a phony tax return using your personal information — like your Social Security number — to get a tax refund from the IRS. It also can happen when someone uses your Social Security number to get a job or claims your child as a dependent on a tax return. Tax identity theft has been the most common form of identity theft reported to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) for the past five years.

Tax identity thieves get your personal information in a number of ways. For example:

- someone goes through your trash or steals mail from your home or car.
- imposters send phony emails that look like they're from the IRS and ask for personal information.
- employees at hospitals, nursing homes, banks, and other businesses steal your information.
- phony or dishonest tax preparers misuse their clients' information or pass it along to identity thieves.

So what can you do about it? To lessen the chance you'll be a victim:

- file your tax return early in the tax season, if you can, before identity thieves do.
- use a secure internet connection if you file electronically. Don't use unsecure, publicly available Wi-Fi hotspots at places like coffee shops or a hotel lobby.
- mail your tax return directly from the post office.
- shred copies of your tax return, drafts, or calculation sheets you no longer need.
- respond to all mail from the IRS as soon as possible.
- know the IRS won't contact you by email, text, or social media. If the IRS needs information, it will first contact you by mail.
- don't give out your Social Security number (SSN) or Medicare number unless necessary. Ask why it's needed, how it's going to be used, and how it will be stored.
- get recommendations and research a tax preparer thoroughly before you hand over personal information.
- if your SSN has been compromised, contact the IRS ID Theft Protection Specialized Unit at 800-908-4490.
- check your credit report at least once a year for free at annualcreditreport.com to make sure no other accounts have been opened in your name.

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What if you are a victim? Tax identity theft victims typically find out about the crime when they get a letter from the IRS saying that more than one tax return was filed in their name, or IRS records show they received wages from an employer they don't know. If you get a letter like this, don't panic. Contact the IRS Identity Protection Specialized Unit at 800-908-4490.

More information about tax identity theft is available from the FTC at ftc.gov/taxidtheft and the IRS at irs.gov/identitytheft.

Unfortunately, tax identity theft isn't the only way scammers are targeting taxpayers. The FTC has gotten thousands of complaints about IRS imposters who claim people owe unpaid taxes and will be arrested if they don't pay up. They may know all or part of your Social Security number, and rig caller ID to make it look like it's really the IRS calling. Before you can investigate, you're told to put the money on a prepaid debit card and tell them the number — something no government agency would ask you to do.

If you owe — or think you owe — federal taxes, call the IRS at 800-829-1040 or go to irs.gov. IRS workers can help you with your payment questions. The IRS doesn't ask people to pay with prepaid debit cards or wire transfers, and doesn't ask for credit card numbers over the phone. When the IRS contacts people about unpaid taxes, they usually do it by postal mail, not by phone. Report IRS imposter scams to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) online or at 800-366-4484, and to the FTC at ftc.gov/complaint.

Dealing With Tax-Related Identity Theft

If you think someone used your SSN for a tax refund or a job — or the IRS sends you a notice or letter indicating a problem — contact the IRS immediately. Specialists will work with you to get your tax return filed, get you any refund you are due, and protect your IRS account from identity thieves in the future.

1. Contact the Internal Revenue Service. IRS Identity Protection Specialized Unit at <http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/Identity-Protection> or call 1-800-908-4490.
 - ✓ Report the fraud.
 - ✓ Send a copy of your police report or an [IRS ID Theft Affidavit Form 14039 \[PDF\]](#) and proof of your identity, such as a copy of your Social Security card, driver's license or passport.
2. Update your files.
 - ✓ Record the dates you made calls or sent letters.
 - ✓ Keep copies of letters in your files.

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Wellness

Cindi Blair,
Insurance Risk &
Wellness

Delaware County HR
740.833.2124
Mon – Fri; 8 am – 3 pm
cblair@co.delaware.oh.us

Visit us online:

[www.co.delaware.oh.us
/index.php/wellness](http://www.co.delaware.oh.us/index.php/wellness)

2015 Wellness Program

We are very excited to be partnering with **Staywell** this year to accomplish our Wellness Goals. Staywell is currently distributing mailers directly to homes. If you have not already received yours, please watch for it.

The 2015 program is similarly structured to the 2014 program. Employees are required to obtain a specific number of points to achieve the reward. Regular and routine services such as an annual exam, flu shot and blood work, etc. will earn points towards your reward. **The required number of points is 450 and the reward amount is \$200 paid as a stipend on the first pay in December, 2015.**

The program is available as an on line portal and is independently tracked by you! This portal is accessible on your phone or home computer at your convenience. You can see your progress as you complete and log activities throughout the year. **The deadline for completion of all goals is September 30, 2015**

To further assist employees in reaching their wellness goals and obtaining the reward, we will be conducting on site screenings during the months of February and March. Dates and times will be announced in the very near future.

Please take the time to invest in your health and log onto the Staywell site and get enrolled. There's no better investment that your health and well-being!

<https://cebcowellness.staywell.com>



An online web portal will be available. This is where every participant can track their activities and earn their reward.

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Visit us on the web at <http://www.co.delaware.oh.us/index.php/human-resources>



Hello Happy.

Simple changes. Start today.



GET HAPPY. GET REWARDED

Complete the health risk assessment (75 pts.), health screening (75 pts.), and any combination of the elective activities (300 pts.), totaling 450 points, and earn \$200 in the form of cash and/or gift card.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION	POINTS
Get a health screening	75
Complete a health risk assessment	75
Get support over the phone from a StayWell® health coach	200
Complete a community lifestyle management program	200
Enroll in or graduate from an Anthem 360 ConditionCare program	200
Enroll in or graduate from an Anthem 360 Future Moms program	200
Complete a StayWell online classroom	50
Complete a StayWell online Healthy Living Program	100
Participate in StayWell's Healthy by Design challenge	100
Work out 12 times per month	25
Participate in an educational session	25
Participate in a county/community event	25
Get age appropriate preventive exam(s)	25
Get an annual flu shot	25
Meet 2 of 4 health metrics from your health screening	100

Core Activities (required)

Earn 150 points from these two required activities.

Elective Activities

Earn 300 points from any combination of these activities

Start here:
<https://cebcowellness.staywell.com>

Complete all activities between Jan. 5, 2015 and Sept. 30, 2015.

This program is available in 2015 to all employees on the CEBCO medical plan. You'll find more detailed information at the link below beginning Jan. 5, 2015.
<https://cebcowellness.staywell.com>

PURSUE YOUR GOALS TO SET HAPPINESS IN MOTION

People who do new things are happier, so even simple changes can increase good feelings. Experiencing more joy is linked to living longer, an improved immune system and overall physical well-being.



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Beat the Winter Blues



Winter is here! The "winter blues" are defined by mild depression, lack of motivation, and low energy that many people experience during the cold season. Below are tips to prevent the winter blues or get yourself back to normal if they're already here.

1. Exercise

Exercise will give you more energy throughout the day, and your metabolism will stay elevated. Exercise also helps your mind by releasing "feel good chemicals" that improve your mood. One hour of aerobic exercise outside (even when it's cloudy) has the same therapeutic effects as 2.5 hours of light treatment indoors. This is because it raises serotonin levels, which tend to get low when you have the winter blues.

2. Eat a Healthy Diet

What and when you eat has a great effect on your mood and energy. Avoid refined and processed foods (like white breads, rice, and sugar). These foods zap your energy levels and can affect your mood by causing depression, lack of concentration, and mood swings. Instead, try to incorporate more complex carbohydrates such as whole wheat breads, brown rice, veggies, and fruit. Don't forget your daily 8 cups of water. Don't forget to limit **sugar**. Sugar might give you an initial rush of energy, but within an hour or so the blood sugar level can become low.

Don't forget to eat breakfast! Begin your breakfast with protein such as meat, eggs, peanut butter, nuts, and cheese. When you awaken, your body chemistry is ready to convert food, especially protein, into long lasting energy. To balance your most important meal of the day, add an orange or other fresh fruit and whole grain cereal or whole grain bread.

3. Get Some Sun

Sunlight provides us with Vitamin D and also improves your mood. With the cold weather we tend to spend less time outdoors. Lack of sunlight can cause many people to become depressed. Similar to exercise, sunlight exposure releases chemicals in the brain that affect our mood. So try to spend a more time outdoors, open your blinds to let more light in, sit near windows in restaurants.



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Safety and Risk Management

The Safety and Risk Management Office, part of the Human Resources Department, ensures that all County employees are provided a safe and healthful work environment as stated in the Public Employment Risk Reduction Program Act (PERRP).

Brad Euans, Workers Compensation/FMLA/HR Coordinator

Delaware County HR
740.833.2127
Mon – Fri; 8 am – 5 pm
beuans@co.delaware.oh.us

Winter Safety

The Ohio Committee for Severe Weather Awareness offers these safety tips to help Ohio families reduce their risks of suffering winter hazards and emergencies:

ALTERNATIVE HEATING/POWER SOURCES

- ✓ Use kerosene heaters and space heaters according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- ✓ Alternative heaters need space. Keep anything combustible at least three feet away.
- ✓ Ensure your alternative heaters have 'tip switches.' These switches are designed to automatically turn the heater off, in the event it tips over.
- ✓ Do not use the kitchen oven or stove to heat your home. In addition to being a fire hazard, it can be a source of toxic fumes, such as carbon monoxide.
- ✓ Never refuel a space heater while it is operating or still hot. Refuel outdoors, only.
- ✓ When using power generators, follow the manufacturer's instructions and guidelines.
- ✓ Never use a generator inside enclosed areas such as the home, garage, crawlspace, shed, or similar area, even if using fans or opening doors and windows for ventilation. Deadly levels of carbon monoxide can quickly build up and linger for hours, even after the generator has been shut off.
- ✓ Install battery-operated CO alarms in the home. Test batteries monthly.



FIRE SAFETY

- ✓ Check/test your smoke detectors monthly.
- ✓ Replace the batteries in your smoke detectors twice a year. When you change the time on your clocks for Daylight Savings, change your smoke detector batteries.
- ✓ Have a fire escape plan. Each room should have two ways out. Practice fire drills with family members. Have a meeting place outside of the home.
- ✓ Ensure house guests are aware of your fire escape plan.
- ✓ If a fire occurs in your home, GET OUT, STAY OUT and CALL 911 for help.



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Winter Safety Continued

Build Emergency Supply Kits

Part of being prepared is being equipped with the proper supplies you may need in case of an emergency or disaster. Keep your supplies in an easy-to-carry emergency preparedness kit that you can use at home or take with you, in case you need to evacuate.

Basic supplies for kits are as follows:

- ✓ Bottled Water – 1 gallon per person, per day (3-day supply for evacuation; 2-week supply for home, if possible)
- ✓ Food – Non-perishable, easy-to-prepare items (minimum, 3-day supply)
- ✓ Flashlights or Battery-Operated Lanterns
- ✓ Battery-Powered NOAA Weather Radio
- ✓ Extra Batteries
- ✓ First Aid Kit, Extra Prescribed Medications
- ✓ Multi-Purpose Tool
- ✓ Sanitation and Personal Hygiene Items
- ✓ Copies of Personal Documents (medication lists, medical information, proof of address, deed/lease to home, passports, birth certificates, insurance policies)
- ✓ Cell Phones, Chargers, Extra Batteries
- ✓ Family and Emergency Contact Information/Communication Plan
- ✓ Extra Cash (if extended power outage, ATMs may not operate)
- ✓ Extra Blankets, Sleeping Bags
- ✓ Cold Weather Clothing (sweaters, jackets, hats, gloves, etc.)
- ✓ Food, Water, Supplies for Pets



Space Heaters (*We do not endorse the use of space heaters.*)

- ✓ Choose models that have automatic safety switches that turn off the unit if it is tipped over accidentally or overheats.
- ✓ Always look for a label or tag indicating the heater has been tested/approved by a recognized independent testing lab.
- ✓ Check the cord before plugging in the heater; if frayed, worn or broken, do not use it. Have an electrician replace the cord or replace the heater. Simply putting tape on the cord is not enough to prevent overheating and fire.
- ✓ Never use an extension cord with a portable heater.
- ✓ Keep portable electric heaters away from sinks, tubs and other wet or damp places to avoid deadly electric shocks.
- ✓ Keep an electric heater, or any portable heater for that matter, **at least three feet** away from curtains, newspapers or anything that might burn.
- ✓ Never leave the heater unattended and never leave the house, office, or go to bed without turning off the heater.
- ✓ Do not hang items to dry above the heater.
- ✓ Keep all heaters out of high traffic and exit areas



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Winter Safety Continued

Survive the Drive

- ✓ Skidding: If you go into a skid, act quickly by taking your foot off the accelerator. Keep your foot off the brake and steer in the direction the rear of the vehicle is skidding. Use a light touch.
- ✓ Braking: For front-and-rear wheel-drive vehicles with disc or drum brakes, the National Safety Council recommends squeezing the brakes with a slow, steady pressure until just before they lock. When you feel them start to lock, ease off until your wheels are rolling; then squeeze again. Brake SMOOTHLY!
- ✓ Deer: When you see deer or other animals ahead, slow down. Avoid animals if possible, but do not swerve into the on-coming lane and risk a head-on collision or run off the road and risk hitting another object.
- ✓ Dead batteries: When jumping batteries connect one cable to the (+) terminal of each battery. Then connect one end of the second cable to the (-) terminal of the booster battery and the other end to a nut or bolt on the engine. Do not connect it to the (-) of the discharge battery. Start the engine of the helper vehicle and let it run a few minutes, and then start the disabled vehicle engine. Remove cables in the exact REVERSE order.
- ✓ Stay clear of plows and sanders: Slow down. Plows and sanders will pull over periodically to let traffic pass. It's risky to pass on the left of a snow plow because of blowing snow. Never pass on the right. Flying rock can damage your car if you pass a sander. The best advice is to stay three car lengths behind plows and sanders.
- ✓ Stay in line when traveling to or from a snow zone. Don't blaze your own trail, especially going downhill.
- ✓ Safety belts and child safety seats will keep you and your child from being thrown around inside your vehicle should you go into a skid or hit an object.
- ✓ Clear all windows, headlights and taillights of snow, ice or fog before starting out. Also clear any snow off the hood -- it comes loose when driving.
- ✓ Turn on your low beam headlights -- and check to make sure they are on low beam. Dirty headlights can cut visibility by 50 percent or more. Keep all lenses free of dirt. Don't forget the directional lights, taillights and rotating lights.
- ✓ Tires need adequate tread for traction in snow and to reduce the risk of hydroplaning in rain or puddles on the road.
- ✓ Following distance: Maintain at least three times the normal following distance on snow or ice. If you are being followed too closely, maintain an extra distance behind the vehicle ahead so that you can slow down or brake gradually.



For additional information on winter safety and preparedness, visit the Ohio Committee for Severe Weather website at www.weathersafety.ohio.gov.

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Map out your retirement pension income and health care



Learn

Learn: Health care program changes may impact you. Know what you need to qualify for health care. OPERS provides retirement information online, in seminars and with publications—all available to members.

Plan

Plan: Make strategic choices. Use the OPERS-provided retirement planner (online), the health care calculator (online), access counseling and checklists before you make important retirement decisions.

Act

Act: Decision made? Take action. Remember, some applications for pension benefits take longer than others and you'll need specific documents.

Go online or call OPERS to LEARN what you need, PLAN to find your documents so that you can ACT on retirement when you know it's the right time for you.



www.opers.org • 1-800-222-PERS (7377)

OPERS Tidbits

New Allowance Calculation

Beginning in 2015, new calculations will be used to determine the allowance amount provided for monthly premiums. The calculations will be based on a participant's age at first enrollment in the OPERS plan and years of qualifying service at retirement. Those contemplating retirement need to understand that, because of the change, health care costs could be impacted.

1. Access the online Retirement Planner at www.opers.org;
2. Sign in to online account to generate health care cost estimates;

About Online Account Access

Individuals who have contributed to their own account and those who are receiving a monthly benefit from Ohio PERS can view their personal account information at their leisure by logging in to their account online. Separate from OPERS.org, this feature provides a secure environment for accessing sensitive information, making secure transactions and using interactive tools, like pension calculators. Specifically, members who have contributed to their own account can:

- View their current account value and service credit
- Print a statement of account value
- View their most recent Annual Statement
- Update their address
- Perform retirement benefit calculations
- Perform health care coverage cost estimates

Plus, both active members and benefit recipients will be able to use the online message center to ask specific questions about their account in a manner more secure than email.

To Register

To access your account information online, you'll first need to register. To do so, click the "Need an Account?" button on the [Account Login page](#). After registering, your temporary Password will be emailed instantly to the email address that you entered during the initial registration. Once you receive it, you can log in and begin enjoying the many features listed above.

Source: OPERS

Delaware County Human Resources • 10 Court Street, 2nd Floor • Delaware, OH 43015
740/833-2120 • 740/833-2119 (Fax)

Visit us on the web at <http://www.co.delaware.oh.us/index.php/human-resources>