

Scheduling a Counseling Session with SURS

The following information should help employees schedule an appointment for an individual retirement counseling session with a retirement counselor from the State Universities Retirement System (SURS).

Eligibility:

Employee must be within four years of retirement eligibility; therefore, the employee must meet any of the following minimum requirements (depending on Tier) within four years.

Note: If the employee has participated in one of the Illinois reciprocal systems and plans to retire under the Reciprocal Act, the reciprocal service may apply to meet the minimum qualification requirements.

Tier I Participant prior to 01/01/11	Tier II Participant on or after 01/01/11	
Traditional, Portable & SMP	Traditional & Portable	SMP
5 years at age 62	10 years at age 67	5 years at age 62
8 years at age 55 (with age reduction, if applicable)	10 years at age 62 (with age reduction)	8 years at age 55
30 years at any age		30 years at any age

Other Important Facts:

Employees are limited to one appointment (counseling session via phone or in person with a SURS counselor) or a written estimate every 12 months. While eligible employees are allowed to meet with a counselor every 12 months, it is not necessary to schedule an appointment every 12 months unless the previous estimate information has changed significantly.

If the employee has had a counseling appointment or retirement estimate prepared by SURS within the last 12 months, the employee must wait to request another appointment until one year after the last appointment or estimate.

Employees may request up to two different dates for their retirement estimate with starting dates within the next four years. SURS cannot project a retirement benefit amount beyond the next four years.

Self-Managed Plan members (SMP) meeting with a counselor at the SURS Champaign office may receive illustrations showing projected monthly benefit amounts if they are within one-two years of retirement. However, SMP members meeting with a SURS Counselor on campus will not receive illustrations. They will receive an overview of the retirement process and insurance eligibility information, but will need to contact the plan providers for projected benefit amounts. For this reason, SMP members may prefer to schedule a Champaign office appointment or a phone appointment.

Everything discussed in the session is held in the strictest confidence and is not shared with the employer.

These appointments are set on a very tight half-hour schedule. To maintain this schedule, SURS requests employees to be on time for the 30-minute appointment. Employees are welcome to bring a guest, if desired.

If the appointment must be cancelled, the employee is encouraged to cancel the appointment as soon as possible.

IMPORTANT REMINDER:

A retirement estimate in no way commits the employee to retire on a specific date—it is merely a projection to help the employee make a determination for a future retirement date. An application for retirement must be submitted to SURS to initiate a retirement claim.

Scheduling a Counseling Session with SURS

If the employee meets the criteria to receive a retirement counseling session with a SURS counselor, please follow the procedures below:

Procedures: Eligible employees must complete a retirement estimate request form unless they are in the Self-Managed Plan. Members who are in the Self-Managed Plan can skip this step and immediately schedule an appointment.

1. Traditional and Portable members proceed as follows:
 - a. Visit www.surs.org and click on Member Login to gain access to their home page. The retirement estimate request form is listed in the menu on the left as Retirement Counseling. Once this form is completed and submitted electronically, the employee will be prompted to follow a link to schedule an appointment at SURS office, a phone appointment, or an on-campus appointment (if applicable). Or,
 - b. Call SURS at (800) 275-7877 to request a form. SURS will send a retirement estimate request form via U.S. mail to the member's home address or fax. Once the completed form is returned (via U.S. mail or fax), SURS will immediately notify the employee via U.S. mail or electronic notice on the employee's Member Website home page. Once the employee receives this notification, they can contact SURS by phone to schedule an appointment. They can also log in to the Retirement Counseling section of their home page and be directed to the scheduling site.
2. The employee must complete the estimate request form prior to scheduling. This form asks the employee to provide:
 - a. Anticipated retirement dates
 - b. Current salary
 - c. Future expected annual salary increases
 - d. Sick and vacation accumulations - The employee must provide SURS with sick leave/vacation information on the request form if it is to be included in the projections. SURS does not have access to employer records of sick leave and vacation accumulations. If there are payments expected from sick leave that are included in the salary average, based on a union contract, the employee should provide the amount of the payment and the date(s) the payment will be made.
 - e. Other credits such as eligible purchases or reciprocal service

IMPORTANT: The accuracy of retirement annuity estimates depends on the information provided to SURS. The actual retirement annuity may vary from the estimates provided. Final benefit determination is pursuant to verified date and to the provisions of Chapter 40, Articles 1, 15, and 20 of the Illinois Compiled Statutes. An estimate request is **not** an application for retirement. Employees must submit a retirement application to SURS to initiate a retirement claim.

3. After the appointment has been scheduled, the employee should immediately receive an email confirming the appointment. If an email is not received that day, please contact SURS to confirm that the appointment was scheduled. It is important to make sure that email addresses on file are current. The confirmation email includes a link to the scheduling site. If it is necessary to cancel or reschedule an appointment, this link can be used up until 48 hours in advance. If the appointment needs to be rescheduled or cancelled within 48 hours prior to the appointment, the employee will need to contact SURS at (800) 275-7877.