

YOUR RETIREMENT

12th ISSUE 2020

Director's Message by Paul Matson, ASRS Director



As we continue to adapt and adjust to our pandemic and post-pandemic lives, I would like to take a moment to address a

question that I have been asked by our members multiple times during the past several months.

Since the outbreak of the coronavirus, and the subsequent impact on the overall economy and investment markets, I have received several inquiries from retirees with respect to the safety of their pensions. As such, I would like to take this additional opportunity to assure you that the ASRS will of course continue to pay all monthly benefits to our

retired and disabled members, in addition to providing all of the ASRS services – such as retiree health insurance coverage, forfeitures, and new retirement processing – which our members rely upon.

For those who receive an ASRS monthly benefit, your pension and LTD payments will continue to be paid on time, every time, irrespective of investment market conditions or our workforce's telework status. From the time of your first payroll contribution to the ASRS, you are vested in the pension plan. Your pension payments from the ASRS are supported by Arizona statutes, Article 29 of the Arizona Constitution, a history of judicial precedents, future contributions, and the approximately \$40 billion ASRS investment portfolio.

With respect to ASRS investments specifically, we have developed a highly diversified investment portfolio which includes stocks, bonds, real estate and other assets which is designed to generate high rates of return, while providing significant liquidity when investment markets are in distress such as they have been recently. As with prior financial crises, the investment markets and the economy will likely continue to recover, and the ASRS and most other longer term investors will participate in that recovery.

On behalf of the ASRS - thank you each for all that you have done, and continue to do, for our state, our counties, our municipalities, our schools, and our communities. |

Thinking of Returning to Work?

Here's Some Direction. By Sara Orozco, Strategic Planning

Have you ever considered returning to work? If you are receiving an ASRS benefit and the answer is 'yes,' there are a few things to consider. Do you plan to suspend your retirement benefit and resume earning service credit? Or, do you want to work while also earning a pension?

Working and Receiving a Pension

Many retirees prefer to work while also receiving a pension. If you want to exercise this option, there are a couple of ways to go about it.

First, there are no restrictions if you return to work for a non-ASRS employer. This would not need to be reported to the ASRS and is the easiest, most straightforward option.

If you are planning on returning to work for an ASRS employer, it is very important that you understand the rules. Ask yourself these questions:

- Did you retire as an 'early' retiree (with a reduced benefit), or as a 'normal' retiree (with an unreduced benefit)?
- Has it been more or less than 365 days since your termination date? (Note that the last day you worked is defined as your "termination date.")

The answers to the questions above could determine whether or not

there's a restriction on the number of hours you're able to resume working with an ASRS employer within the first 365 days of your termination without effecting your pension benefit. For instance, a person with a normal retirement who is more than 365 days out from their termination date would have no restrictions on the number of hours or weeks a year they can work. Someone with a normal retirement whose termination date is less than 365 days ago, on the other hand, would need to be mindful of working no more than 20 hours a week for no more than 20 weeks a fiscal year, or risk their pension being suspended and having to re-retire. For those who retired early, the rules differ still. For more information on how the rules apply to each situation, and specifics of the 20/20 Rule, visit **AzASRS.gov** and click on the "Return To Work" page, found in the Retiree section.

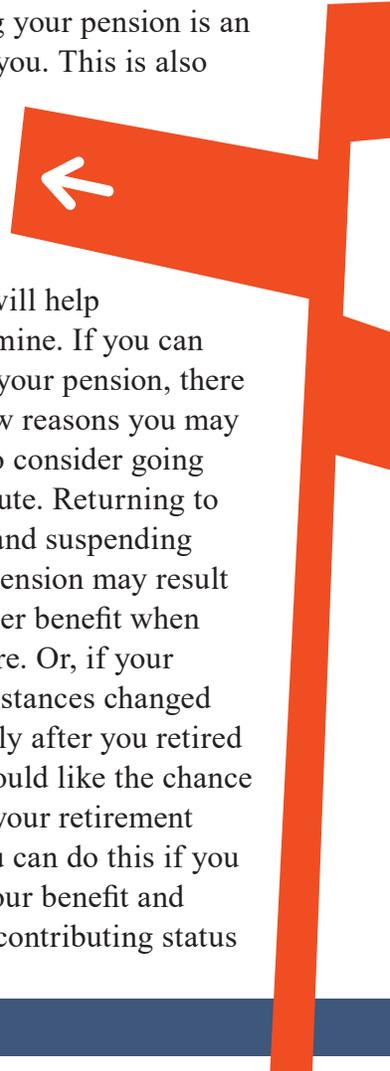
Because returning to work for an ASRS employer can be very situation-specific, The ASRS has also developed an interactive return to work

form within the myASRS website that will assist you in understanding how the return to work statute applies to your specific situation. Once you have decided to return to work for an ASRS employer, you are required to complete and submit this form.

Suspending Your Pension to Resume Earning Service Credit

Are you perhaps thinking of suspending your retirement benefit to resume earning service credit? First off, you need to make sure suspending your pension is an option for you. This is also something the interactive form within myASRS will help

you determine. If you can suspend your pension, there are a few reasons you may want to consider going this route. Returning to work and suspending your pension may result in a bigger benefit when you re-retire. Or, if your life circumstances changed substantially after you retired and you would like the chance to change your retirement option, you can do this if you suspend your benefit and return to contributing status



for five years or more.

Before exercising this option here are a few things to consider:

- Your retirement benefit is based on salary and service. If you suspend your benefit and return to work in a position with a lower salary, it might not have the result you intended. In rare cases, pension benefits can be reduced.
- Be sure to calculate the return on investment of having a ‘bigger benefit’ when you re-retire. The bigger benefit you receive later might be outweighed by the amount you could have collected during those years if you worked and collected a pension.



No matter your situation or which route you’d like to go, we encourage you to visit the Return To Work portion of **AzASRS.gov**, found in the “Retirees” tab for



more comprehensive details on the ins and outs of returning to work. There you’ll find situation-specific information, statute language, and a link to log in to your account.

There are plenty of avenues to enjoy a successful and happy next career after retirement – just be sure you do your research and are aware of the rules! |

By Nathaniel Brengle, Strategic Communications

While the annual ASRS open enrollment period doesn’t start until November 1st, when can you expect to start receiving information about the 2021 plan year? And what can you do now to prepare for open enrollment?

Typically, the ASRS begins communicating initial details and reminders about the open enrollment period in September, while full details of the 2021 plan offerings will be available in late October. In the meantime, teams of ASRS employees will be busy finalizing print materials, loading new information to our website, and training staff so they’re well suited to assist retirees this fall.

The majority of the September communications will be delivered via email, where we’ll make sure to let you know if there are any changes in store for 2021, remind you of important upcoming dates, and generally get you prepared for the start of open enrollment. This will be the first opportunity for the ASRS to communicate open enrollment information.

In late October, retirees eligible for coverage through the ASRS will receive their open enrollment packets. These packets will contain a coverage guide book with

This Fall’s Medical & Dental Open Enrollment: A Quick Timeline

information for both Medicare and non-Medicare retirees, and a newsletter highlighting other especially important information.

As a reminder, the timeframe for retirees to make changes to their 2021

medical or dental coverage – or to sign up for new coverage - will be November 1 through November 30. Before November 1, retirees will be unable to enroll in 2021 plans. After November 30, retirees will need to refer to the list of ASRS-recognized Qualifying Life Events, available online, to evaluate when or if they’re able to enroll or make changes to their coverage.

One important thing you can do now? Make sure your contact information with the ASRS is up-to-date!

Keeping your contact information such as your mailing address, email address, and phone number up-to-date is an important step in making sure you don’t miss any communications from

the ASRS as we head into an important time of year for many folks. To check that your information on file with the ASRS is correct and current, just

head over to **AzASRS.gov** and click on the myASRS link in the upper right corner. From there, you can log into your secure account where you’ll be able to check and update your contact information. |

Sept:

Initial details & reminders communicated

Late Oct:

Open Enrollment packets mailed with detailed 2021 plan information

Nov 1:

Open Enrollment begins for 2021 healthcare plans

A personal brush with

IDENTITY THEFT.

What you can do to recognize it and try to avoid it.

By Michael Moreno,
Member Education

According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) identity theft occurs when someone uses a Social Security Number or other personal identifiable information (PII) that isn't their own to open new accounts, make purchases, or get a tax refund.

Unfortunately, identity theft is becoming all too common these days. I have witnessed it firsthand with my grandparents. Being the only tech-savvy person in my family, I receive weekly calls from them looking for assistance with any number of things. The problems are usually minor, however, one call in particular startled me: my grandma called concerned that my grandpa had just given his social security number and bank account information over the phone. A person pretending to work for a company my grandparents had a contract with for computer antivirus software was calling to notify them that the organization was going out of business, and they had to issue them a monetary credit for the remaining months left on their service contract. They just needed to get my grandfather's social security number and bank account information to make the deposit. None of these

things were true, of course - they just wanted my grandpa's PII.

My ever-frugal grandpa, the same man who used to make me bring home the little plastic baggies my sandwich was placed in when I took my lunch to school so we could reuse them the next day, was only too eager to provide it. After he hung up my grandma started to become worried. Something didn't sit right with her about the whole exchange she had just observed, and that's what triggered the call to me. Infuriated by this stranger's actions and their attempt to swindle my grandparent's hard-earned money, I composed myself and calmly instructed them to immediately call the bank to change their bank account number. Fortunately, they were able to make the necessary changes before any money had been withdrawn.

There are several social engineering techniques fraudsters can utilize in

“ ...MY GRANDMA CALLED CONCERNED THAT MY GRANDPA HAD JUST GIVEN HIS SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER AND BANK ACCOUNT INFORMATION OVER THE PHONE. ”

an attempt to gain a person's personal identifiable information (PII). The most common method, and the one used against my grandparents, is called phishing. Phishing is when a perpetrator disguises themselves as being from a trusted source - i.e., a bank, a service provider, etc. - with the hope they'll be able to extract

personal information. This can happen over the phone, as it did with my grandparents, or via email. Often phishing-attempt emails will look like they're from reputable companies but will take you to fake websites where they'll ask you to enter personal information. According to the security company ADT, phishing scams have grown by more than 7% over the past three years with 20,000 reported cases in 2018 alone.

Another common social engineering practice is called pretexting. Pretexting is the act of creating and using an invented scenario in an attempt to get the intended target to divulge PII or perform actions that they would not ordinarily do. Whereas the motivating factor of the caller in my grandparent's situation was monetary, pretexting is not just limited to financial gain - it can also be used to get information. For instance, someone calling their parent's life insurance provider and impersonating their mother or father to try and see who they have listed as their beneficiary would also be considered pretexting.

What can you do? Never under any circumstances give your social security number or any other PII out to someone who is calling you. If the caller is stating they are from a government agency or place of business and they are asking for your PII, politely advise them that you do not feel comfortable giving it out to an inbound caller (someone who is calling you). Then go to that company's website look for their CONTACT US page, get their phone number and call them back directly. If there is a business need to contact

you, the person answering the phone should have the reason noted on your account. Be wary anytime you receive an unsolicited email asking you to enter your password or bank PIN. Banks or social media websites will never ask you to confirm your password unless you initiated the request via their password reset process. Any documents that contain PII should be shredded before throwing away. Also be sure to monitor your bank accounts regularly for any suspicious activity.

Here at the ASRS, we take our member's PII very seriously, doing everything in our power to protect it. Anytime you call our Member Advisory Center you are asked to verify several pieces of information on your account before any account-specific information is released. In the event a member cannot verify their information we send them a Data Verification form to update it. This form, like many of our other forms, has to be notarized to legally verify the identity of the person signing it. If you should ever receive a call or electronic notification from someone claiming to be with the ASRS asking for PII and you didn't initiate the request, please call us to immediately report it. |

REPORTING ID THEFT & LEARNING ABOUT CURRENT SCAMS

Identify Theft can be a frustrating and stressful experience to go through. But once the shock of finding out someone was using your information for their financial benefit has subsided there are resources available to help guide you through the recovery process.

The Federal Trade Commission has descriptions of recently identified scams at their website:

Consumer.ftc.gov

and has also established a website specifically for identity theft:

IdentityTheft.gov

that allows you to report your theft, along with step-by-step advice of what to do next, should you need it. |

Diet Suggestions for Prediabetes

If you have been diagnosed with prediabetes, the situation may seem overwhelming. The good news is The American Diabetes Association claims there are changes you can make to your diet to help take back control and work to prevent your prediabetes from becoming Type 2 diabetes.

The first goal of this new diet, like many other diets, should be to lose some weight if you are overweight. One study has shown that participants who lost about 7 percent of their starting body weight and exercised regularly reduced their risk of developing diabetes by almost 60 percent. There are additional benefits to weight loss which can also help in your prevention of developing diabetes.

Losing weight can:

- Lower your blood pressure
- Improve your blood fats

- Lighten the stress on your legs
- Help you move easier

The American Diabetes Association recommends cutting your carbohydrate levels as a good way to get more flexibility when planning prediabetes-friendly meals. They recommend eating non-starchy vegetables like lettuce, cucumbers, broccoli, and cauliflower as a low-carb alternative, and a good way to keep your blood sugar low.

If you do eat starchy food, it is recommended that you reach for whole-grain alternatives, as they are the most nutritious, and are rich in vitamins and fiber. Fiber in particular can be very helpful in managing your prediabetes since studies

suggest high-fiber diets may improve carbohydrate metabolism and lower total cholesterol, two features that can help reel in your blood sugar levels.

If you are looking for one specific change you can make to create a more prediabetes-friendly diet, one thing you could try is cutting down the number of sugary drinks you have every week. Considering a 12-ounce can of regular soda has the same amount of carbs as 10 teaspoons of sugar, the American Diabetes Association recommends drinking water, or perhaps tea instead.

Preventing diabetes can seem challenging, but by following simple changes in your diet, it doesn't have to lead to any huge changes. |



Understanding Blood Pressure

What is **blood pressure**? Blood pressure is the force of blood against the artery walls as it moves through your body. Blood pressure normally rises and falls throughout the day, but if it stays high for a long time it can damage your heart and lead to health problems. High blood pressure raises your risk for heart disease and stroke, which are leading causes of death in the United States.

Managing Blood Pressure. High blood pressure has no warning signs

or symptoms. The only way to know if you have high blood pressure is to check it routinely. Your doctor should provide blood pressure checks during your appointments. You can also measure it on your own with an at-home blood pressure monitor or at some local pharmacies.

By monitoring your blood pressure, you can take steps to help control it if it is too high. This may help improve your heart health and prevent more serious health events.

Did you know?

- High blood pressure is often referred to as “hypertension.”
- 1 in 3 people has high blood pressure
- Of those with high blood pressure, only ½ have their blood pressure under control.
- Reducing average salt or sodium intake may reduce high blood pressure in 11 million people and save \$18 billion in health care costs every year.

Tips to help control blood pressure



Get active. Try to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity, like walking, dancing or gardening 3–5 days a week. Talk with your doctor before beginning or changing your exercise program.



Avoid tobacco. If you use tobacco, talk with your doctor about how to get help quitting.



Limit alcohol. Limit yourself to no more than one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men. One drink is a 12-ounce beer, 5 ounces of wine or 1 shot of liquor.



Maintain a healthy weight. To find out if you're at a healthy weight, ask your doctor about your body mass index (BMI).



Eat healthy. Eat healthy meals that are low in sodium (salt), total fat, saturated fat and cholesterol, and high in fresh fruits and vegetables.



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Comments?

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