WAC 415-110-710 What are the return to work rules for SERS Plan 2 and Plan 3? (1) **How soon can I return to work after I retire without impacting my SERS retirement benefit?**

(a) You may begin working immediately after you retire without impacting your SERS retirement benefit if:

(i) You go to work for a private employer;

(ii) You are an independent contractor as defined in WAC 415-02-110; or

(iii) Your only employment is as an elected official and you end your SERS membership under RCW 41.35.030 (2)(b).

(b) If you retire and then return to work sooner than 30 consecutive calendar days from your accrual date (effective retirement date), your monthly retirement benefit will be reduced in accordance with RCW 41.35.060(1) until you remain absent for at least 30 consecutive calendar days.

(c) If you retire and remain absent at least 30 consecutive calendar days from your accrual date, if you meet the definition of separation in WAC 415-02-115, you may return to work in any position for any employer whose retirement plan is administered by the department of retirement systems (DRS) or a public institution of higher education, without impacting your SERS retirement benefit until you reach your applicable hour limit.

(d) If you worked prior to retirement in an ineligible position and continue to work beyond retirement, this will not be considered a violation of the 30 consecutive days in (b) and (c) of this subsection assuming that separation from your employer as defined in WAC 415-02-115 was satisfied.

Examples:

(i) Pat works for Evergreen School District and fully separates employment at the age of 60. Pat then moves to Spokane and begins employment with the Spokane Library District in a position that is not eligible for retirement benefits. This employment continues and the position remains ineligible for retirement benefits. At age 65 Pat is eligible to begin collecting the school employees' retirement system (SERS) retirement benefit earned while working at Evergreen School District, without terminating employment from Spokane Library District.

(ii) Skyler works for Odessa School District until age 65 in a retirement eligible position, then begins working part time for the same school in a position that is not eligible for retirement. Skyler is not eligible to begin receiving their retirement benefit because they have not yet separated from employment with the employer they participated in the retirement system with.

(iii) Parker works for Spokane Public Schools until age 63 at which point, they separate employment and have their name placed on the on-call substitute list at a number of local school districts. Parker substitutes occasionally for the Deer Park, Mead, and Cheney schools. At age 65 they are eligible to begin collecting the SERS benefit that was earned while working at the Spokane Public Schools without terminating employment from the substitute positions.

(iv) Taylor works for two different employers over the same period of time. The position with employer one is a retirement eligible position and the position with employer two does not meet the requirements for retirement eligibility. Prior to age 65 Taylor separates from employment with employer one but continues to work for employer two in the ineligible position. When Taylor reaches age 65 they are eligible to begin receiving their retirement benefit because they have

separated from employment with the employer they participated in the retirement system with.

(2) **What is the annual hour limit?** All retirees including those retired under the alternate early retirement factors after separating from employment and being absent at least 30 consecutive calendar days as described in subsection (1)(c) of this section, your annual hour limit will be based on the position you return to.

(a) **No limit.** You may work as many hours as you want without affecting your retirement benefit if you work:

(i) In a position that is not eligible for membership in a DRS or higher education retirement plan;

(ii) As an independent contractor;

(iii) For a private employer; or

(iv) If you end your SERS membership as an elected official under RCW 41.35.030 (2)(b).

(b) **Eight hundred sixty-seven-hour limit.** You may work up to 867 hours in a calendar year, in a position which is eligible for membership in a DRS or public institution of higher education retirement plan, before your retirement benefit is suspended.

(c) **One thousand forty-hour limit.** From March 23, 2022, through January 1, 2030, you may work up to 1,040 hours in a calendar year, at a school district in a nonadministrative position that is eligible for membership in a DRS retirement plan, before your retirement allowance is suspended.

(3) **What hours count toward the annual hour limit?**

(a) **Counted toward the annual hour limit:** All compensated hours that are worked in an eligible position covered by a DRS or higher education retirement plan, including the use of earned sick leave, vacation days, paid holidays, compensatory time, and cashouts of compensatory time.

(b) **Not counted toward the annual hour limit:** Cashouts of unused sick and vacation leave.

(4) **What happens if I work more than the annual hour limit?**

(a) If you work more than the annual hour limit, your retirement benefit will be suspended. The suspension will be effective the day after you exceed the hour limit. DRS will prorate your retirement benefit for the month in which you exceed the limit.

(b) Your retirement benefit will be restarted beginning the next calendar year (January) or the day after you terminate all eligible employment, whichever occurs first.

(c) DRS will recover any overpayments made to you for the month(s) in which you exceeded the annual hour limit and received a retirement benefit. See RCW 41.50.130.

(5) **Can I return to SERS membership?**

(a) If you retire from SERS, you have the option to return to membership if you are employed by a SERS employer and meet the eligibility criteria. The option to return to membership is prospective from the first day of the month following the month in which you request to return to membership. See RCW 41.35.030(3).

(b) If you reenter SERS membership and later choose to retire again, DRS will recalculate your retirement benefit under the applicable statutes and regulations. See WAC 415-110-830. You will be subject to the return to work rules in place at the time of your reretirement.

(c) If you are a retiree from another retirement system administered by DRS, you may choose to enter SERS membership if you are eligible. See WAC 415-110-725. The option to enter membership is prospec-

tive from the first day of the month following the month in which you request membership. See RCW 41.04.270 and 41.35.030.

(6) **What if I retired from SERS and another DRS retirement system?** If you return to work after retirement from SERS and another DRS retirement system, see WAC 415-113-300 to determine the effect of returning to work.

Note: You may have a choice of returning to membership. See the following WAC sections for more information: WAC 415-108-725, 415-110-725, 415-112-546, 415-106-725, and 415-104-111.

(7) **Terms used.**

(a) Accrual date - RCW 41.35.450, 41.35.640.

(b) Elected official - WAC 415-110-550.

(c) Eligible position - RCW 41.35.010; WAC 415-110-680 through 415-110-700.

(d) Ineligible position - RCW 41.35.010.

(e) Member - RCW 41.35.010.

(f) Month - Calendar month as defined in WAC 415-02-030.

(g) Nonadministrative position - WAC 415-02-030.

(h) Public institution of higher education - RCW 28B.10.400.

(i) SERS - School employees' retirement system.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 41.50.050 and 2025 c 284. WSR 25-19-015, s 415-110-710, filed 9/4/25, effective 9/5/25. Statutory Authority: RCW 41.50.050, 2022 c 110, 2023 c 99, and 2023 c 410. WSR 23-24-091, § 415-110-710, filed 12/5/23, effective 12/7/23. Statutory Authority: RCW 41.50.050. WSR 20-01-079, § 415-110-710, filed 12/11/19, effective 1/11/20. Statutory Authority: RCW 41.50.050(5). WSR 16-17-047, § 415-110-710, filed 8/11/16, effective 9/11/16. Statutory Authority: RCW 41.50.050(5), 41.40.010(42), 41.40.037. WSR 04-04-037, § 415-110-710, filed 1/29/04, effective 3/1/04. Statutory Authority: RCW 41.50.050(5), 41.04.270, 41.26.030, 41.32.010, 41.32.025, 41.32.480, 41.32.500, 41.32.570, 41.32.765, 41.32.795, 41.32.802, 41.32.855, 41.32.860, 41.32.862, 41.35.010, 41.35.030, 41.35.060, 41.35.450, 41.35.640, 41.40.010, 41.40.023, 41.40.037, 41.40.150, 41.40.193, 41.40.680, 41.40.750, 41.40.801. WSR 02-02-060, § 415-110-710, filed 12/28/01, effective 1/1/02. Statutory Authority: Chapters 41.32, 41.34, 41.35, 41.50 RCW. WSR 01-01-059, § 415-110-710, filed 12/12/00, effective 1/12/01.]