

Preparing for Disability Retirement

from the Fairfax County

Employees'
Retirement System

County

A Guide For:
Service-Connected Disability Retirees
and
Ordinary Disability Retirees



Preparing for Disability Retirement

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APPENDIX

This booklet is a summary of information for Fairfax County Employees retiring on an ordinary disability or service-connected disability retirement. You can find more detailed information about these subjects in the Employees' Retirement System Handbook and County Personnel Regulations and Policies. (The Fairfax County Code will govern in the event of any error in this booklet.)

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Retirement Administration Agency**

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**This Retirement Handbook is for Members of
Fairfax County Employees' Retirement System Plans A & B
Who are Pursuing Disability Retirement Benefits**

Disability Retirement – Employees’ Retirement System

I’m Almost Ready To Retire . . . Is Retirement Counseling Available?

If you have not already received a personalized estimate of your retirement benefits, call the Retirement Administration Agency at 703-279-8200. Employees with additional questions or concerns beyond what is covered in this handbook may choose to schedule an appointment with a retirement counselor.

When Can I Retire? What Kind of Retirement Will I Be Eligible For?

To understand how your benefit is calculated, you need to understand the definition of the following terms:

Final Average Salary (FAS): is the average of the highest consecutive 78 bi-weekly pay periods any time in your career with the County. Periods of Leave Without Pay (LWOP) for approved Family and Medical Leave will be ignored when calculating highest consecutive pay periods.

Service-Connected Disability: an injury or illness that makes it impossible for you to continue to perform the job for which you were hired. The injury or illness must be determined to be job-related.

Ordinary Disability: an injury or illness that makes it impossible for you to continue to perform the job for which you were hired. The injury or illness is determined not to be job-related.

• **Service-Connected Disability Retirement:** A Service-Connected Disability Retirement may be awarded if you are unable to do the job for which you were hired due to a job-related injury or illness, regardless of your length of service. You or your agency may initiate the application process. To be eligible for this benefit you must apply for Workers' Compensation and Social Security benefits and the System's Board of Trustees (with a recommendation from the Medical Examining Board) must find that you are medically disabled and that the injury or illness was job-related. Your benefit with a service-connected disability retirement is $66\frac{2}{3}$ of your FAS. This tax-free benefit is reduced by payments you receive from Workers' Compensation and 15% of your Social Security disability or age 62 retirement benefits (*see note below*). In addition, your retirement benefit will be reduced if you have outside earnings so that the total of your retirement benefits and outside earnings do not exceed what you would have earned if you were still working.

Service-Connected Disability retirees must accept medical services, vocational rehabilitation, or other employment under the Workers' Compensation Act or face suspension of their Workers' Compensation benefits. If those benefits are suspended, the Board of Trustees has the option to continue calculating the retirement benefit as though the retiree was still receiving those benefits.

Between the member's disability retirement and age 65, a medical examination is required once a year for the first five years of disability retirement, and once every three

years thereafter. Refusal to submit to a medical exam may result in the termination of disability retirement benefits. Disability benefits may start again if the member submits to a medical exam – but only if the member agrees to take the exam within one year of the day he or she was first requested to do so. The Board of Trustees may require the member to apply for positions with Fairfax County or Fairfax County Public Schools for which he or she is qualified. Failure to accept a position offered may result in a reduction or termination of benefits.

When Workers' Compensation benefits have ceased, Service-Connected Disability retirees must undergo periodic medical re-evaluations as required by the System's Board of Trustees. Service-Connected Disability retirees who have not yet reached age 65 (or their normal retirement date) must also send in a copy of their tax returns and W-2 forms each year to verify their outside earnings.

There is also a Service-Connected Accidental Death Benefit payable to your survivor if your death is directly related to your service-connected disability.

NOTE: The offset for Social Security benefits is based on the first benefit you become eligible to receive. When you reach age 62, if you are not already receiving Social Security Disability benefits, you will be required to contact the Social Security Administration for an estimate of your retirement benefit at age 62. Your Service-Connected Disability retirement benefit will be reduced by 15% of this amount, beginning when you turn 62, regardless of whether or not you elect to begin receiving the Social Security benefits at that time.

• **Ordinary Disability Retirement:** Plan A & B Members of the System with at least five years of service may apply for Ordinary Disability Retirement. The System's Board of Trustees will approve this retirement if it determines (with a recommendation from the Medical Examining Board) that the member is unable to do the job for which he or she was hired, and that the injury or illness was not job-related.

Benefits are calculated at 2% times FAS times the member's service. The total is then increased by 3%. Unused sick leave may be credited as service at the rate of 172 hours of sick leave per month of service for full-time employees (or pro-rated for part-time employees). LWOP does not count as service. If you are a part-time employee, your FAS and service are annualized (see the Employees' Retirement System Handbook or call the Retirement Agency for more information). Benefits are taxable. Between the member's disability retirement and age 65, a medical examination is required once a year for the first five years of disability retirement, and once every three years thereafter. Refusal to submit to a medical exam may result in the termination of disability retirement benefits. Benefits may start again if the member submits to a medical exam but only if the member agrees to take the exam within one year of the day he or she was first requested to do so. The Board of Trustees may require the member to apply for positions with Fairfax County or Fairfax County Public Schools for which he or she is qualified. Failure to accept a position offered may result in a reduction or termination of benefits. Benefits cease if the member returns to work with Fairfax County before his or her normal retirement date.

- **Optional Spouse's Benefit:** If you should die before retiring with at least five years of service and you have named your spouse as your beneficiary, your spouse may elect, within 180 days of your death, to receive 50% of the regular service retirement you would be eligible for on the date of your death. This does not include any Pre-Social Security Benefit. If your spouse does not elect this option, your designated beneficiary (or your estate) will receive a refund of your accumulated contributions and interest. Surviving spouses should contact the Retirement Agency for the necessary application.

Applications for disability retirements must generally be made within one year of your termination from Fairfax County. The application forms for disability retirement are included at the end of this booklet including forms to be completed by you and by your physician. Once they have been completed and returned and the Medical Exam Unit has made its recommendation, the Board of Trustees will make a determination if you are medically disabled and if the disability was job-related. To appeal a decision of the Board of Trustees, send a request in writing to the Retirement Agency within 30 days of the Board's decision.

Decisions You Must Make at Retirement

- **When Should I Go?** If you are disabled, you may be able to use your annual, sick or injury leave (if available) or compensatory time (if available) until your retirement is approved. However, once you decide to retire, there are several things that you should consider while deciding when in the year you wish your retirement to become effective.

Market Adjustments and Pay Increases: You may wish to wait until after the effective date of a market adjustment or salary increase in order to have your FAS and annual leave/compensatory time payoff calculated at the highest possible salary or choose a date that will provide you with the highest possible prorated first year adjustment on your retirement benefit.

Leave Implications: You may wish to retire before your excess annual leave is converted to sick leave or excess compensatory time is lost in January or, you may choose to wait until after the excess annual leave is converted to sick leave which counts as service.

Tax Implications: You may wish to choose a retirement date that allows your annual leave/compensatory time payoff to be paid after January 1 so that it will not be included as part of your taxable salary for your last year of employment.

- **Deductions/Taxes:** You will have to make decisions about any deductions or, if you are retiring on an Ordinary Disability Retirement, any tax withholding you may wish to have taken from your retirement check.

Deductions: You may request that deductions for County group term life, dental and health insurance premiums, as well as contributions (if any) to your credit union be taken from your retirement benefits. In addition, federal and Virginia state income tax will be withheld at your request. If you are liable for another state's taxes you will have to file estimated tax forms with that state.

Other Questions

• **Can My Benefits Be Assigned, Attached or Garnished?** No, except to the extent permitted by Virginia law for spousal and/or child support or for Internal Revenue Service (IRS) tax levy or Chapter 13 bankruptcy court orders.

• **Will I Receive Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLAs) as a Retiree?** Yes. Retirees receive COLAs based on the lower of 4% or the Consumer Price Index increase for the Washington, D.C. area each year on July 1. COLAs are pro-rated in your first year of retirement. For Service-Connected Disability retirees, COLAs are paid on the net benefit after offsets (if any) for Workers' Compensation and Social Security.

• **Are My Benefits Taxed?** Service-Connected Disability Retirement benefits are not taxable while Ordinary Disability Retirement benefits are generally taxable. Contributions you made prior to January 1, 1985, have already been taxed and are not taxable again. According to IRS regulations, a small portion of these already-taxed contributions will be included in each of your Ordinary Disability Retirement checks. At the end of each year, you will be sent a IRS Form 1099-R showing the taxable and previously taxed benefits paid to you that year along with the amount of any taxes you have had withheld. Service-Connected Disability retirees do not receive a 1099-R.

• **What Information Will I Need to Retire?** A completed retirement application and statement of disability from you and your physician (see the Appendix for blank forms) along with any relevant medical records relating to your claim. If you are applying for Service-Connected Disability retirement you will also be required to provide documentation showing you have applied for Workers' Compensation and Social Security benefits.

• **What Happens If I Return to Work For Fairfax County After I Retire?**

—*Service -Connected Disability Retiree:* If you are a Service-Connected Disability retiree and are hired again to a position covered by the Retirement System from which you are retired, your retirement benefits will cease and you will again become a contributing member of the System. In essence, you will "unretire." When you later retire, you will receive credit for the time when you were retired and your new retirement benefit will be calculated as though you had never left. If you are hired to any other position covered by one of the other Fairfax County Retirement Systems, you will retain your annuity but are barred from joining the new System. In addition, your combined monthly salary and retirement benefits may not exceed 115% of the then current maximum monthly salary for a Deputy County Executive in the County's Compensation Plan. If you exceed that cap, your retirement benefit will be reduced.

—*Ordinary Disability Retiree:* If you are an Ordinary Disability retiree and are hired to any retirement eligible position by the same appointing authority for which you were employed prior to retirement, your retirement benefits will cease.

Your First Retirement Payment

Retirement benefits are paid once a month on the last business day of the month. Since your first payment will include all retirement benefits earned from your date of retirement, it is often larger than subsequent payments. For instance, if you retire September 10, you will receive your first retirement payment the last working day of October. The payment, however, will include your retirement annuity for October and the portion of September after you retired. Monthly benefit payment information can be found in Web Member Services on the Retirement Agency website by clicking on Benefit Payroll History. Your current month's payment displays upon entry to that link.

Direct Deposit

Direct Deposit is required for the payment of benefits. You may have your funds deposited in nearly any bank, savings and loan or credit union. To sign up for Direct Deposit, complete the Retirement Administration Agency Direct Deposit Authorization Agreement. To change banks or account numbers, call the Retirement Agency at 703-279-8200 or 1-800-333-1633.

Workers' Compensation

If you have questions about your Workers' Compensation benefits, Cost-of-Living Adjustments to those benefits, or medical/rehabilitative services provided under the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act you may contact Risk Management at 703-324-3040 or 1-800-999-0709.

Other Information

It is important for you to keep abreast of changes in the laws and provisions that could affect your retirement and other benefits. All information affecting your benefits can be found on the Retirement Agency's website at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/retirement. Notice the "Announcements" field in RED towards the bottom of the home page for any current notifications. Click on "News" under the "Retired Employees" drop-down menu for updates to items like Board appointments, COLAs, and Open Enrollment Information. Find specific information by category for things like "Forms", "Questions", and "Portfolio Information".

By creating an account within Web Member Services, retirees can view their benefit payroll history, tax withholding, deductions and more. Retiree information in WMS is updated once each month, on the last business day. In addition, WMS provides a link to fairfaxNET so retirees can access Fairfax County news articles as well as Benefits and Open Enrollment information. Information in fairfaxNET is CURRENT.

To visit Web Member Services, go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/retirement and click on *Member Area: Secure Log In* in the left navigation bar. Establish an account by choosing a Username and Password. Log In and proceed. You will see a link to fairfaxNET at the bottom of the left navigation bar.

Benefits Considerations (County)

Leave Payoff

When you retire, you are paid for your accumulated annual and compensatory leave. Sick leave is not paid but is used in the calculation of your retirement benefit. Employees retiring from the county may elect to defer their annual leave and compensatory time payoff up to the annual limits into the deferred compensation plan. Please see Deferred Compensation Plans on page 11 for more information.

There are several things to consider with regard to your leave payoff.

- Social Security Benefits – If you are eligible to receive Social Security benefits, your leave payoff could affect those benefits. This is because Social Security benefits are subject to an earnings cap and your leave payoff is considered earnings.

We recommend that you contact the Department of Human Resources, Payroll Division regarding this matter.

- Federal and State Tax Withholding – Federal tax withholding is 25% on leave payoffs. State tax withholding is 5.75%.

- Social Security and Medicare Tax Withholding – If you receive your leave payoff before the end of the tax year in which you retire, and you have reached the maximum earnings subject to Social Security earnings for that tax year, you will not have Social Security tax withheld from your leave payoff. Medicare tax will be withheld because there is no limit on the earnings that are subject to Medicare tax. **FYI:** Beginning January 2013, changes to Medicare may affect the percentage of Medicare tax that will be withheld from your final check.

- Timing – Routinely, your leave payoff is processed in the next applicable payroll period after all remaining base/normal/regular pay has been processed.

For information and assistance with regards to leave payoff, call the Department of Human Resources, Payroll Division at 703-324-3412.

Health Insurance

If you are enrolled in one of the County's health insurance plans when you retire, you and your dependents are eligible to continue to be covered by one of the County's health insurance plans. If you are not enrolled in one of the County's health insurance plans at retirement, or if you ever drop your coverage after retirement, you will be asked to sign a form acknowledging that you will **NOT** be able to enroll in one of the County's retiree health insurance plans in the future.

At retirement, you may remove dependents from your coverage and you may change plans.

If you are enrolled in Kaiser at retirement and live outside of their service area or are eligible for Medicare, you must change to a plan in which you are eligible for coverage.

After you retire you may drop dependents at any time but you may only add dependents or change plans during Open Enrollment for Retirees (*generally held in Oct/Nov each year*). If, however, you move beyond the boundaries of Kaiser's service area, you will be ineligible to continue with that plan. You may enroll in another health plan for which you are eligible if you make the request to the Department of Human Resources Benefits Division within 30 days of when you become ineligible.

When you or your spouse become eligible for Medicare after retirement (*see section on Medicare, page 12*), you are required to sign up for both Part A and Part B.

If you do not provide proof of Medicare coverage within 30 days of the date you become eligible for Medicare, your coverage will be cancelled. It will be reinstated within the next 60 days if you provide the proof of Medicare coverage. If the proof is not supplied by the end of that period you will never be eligible for County health insurance in the future.

***Note:** If you already HAVE Medicare when you retire, and plan to keep your County health insurance, you must submit a copy of your Medicare card along with your application for health insurance coverage. Also, in order for your claims to be processed correctly, Medicare must be informed of the date you stopped being covered by an active employee group health plan. You may obtain the necessary form from the Department of Human Resources, Benefits Division or from Social Security.*

If you are enrolled in Kaiser as a retiree, you will be ineligible to continue Kaiser coverage after you or your spouse turn age 65, and become eligible for Medicare. At this point, **both you and your spouse** must change to another available plan or cancel your coverage. Current rates for the health plans available to retirees are available from the Retirement Agency or from the Department of Human Resources, Benefits Division. As a retiree, you pay the full cost of your health insurance.

If you keep your health insurance coverage through Fairfax County, the County will pay a subsidy toward the cost of your County health insurance premium. The health insurance subsidy is calculated according to age and years of service. The subsidy amounts can be found on the Retirement Agency website under the "Retired Employees" drop-down menu under "Open Enrollment", and are also attached to the rate charts.

If you retire with an ordinary disability, your subsidy will be effective at the time of retirement and will be calculated based on your age and years of service. Service-connected disability retirees are eligible to receive the maximum subsidy at the time of retirement.

If you should die after retirement, and have retired on a regular service retirement, your surviving spouse and/or dependents may continue to be covered by County health insurance only if they were covered by County health insurance at the time of your death. If your surviving spouse receives a survivor's benefit (see section on Joint and

Last Survivor's Benefit), the premiums will be deducted from your surviving spouse's retirement check. If you were receiving a subsidy at your death, your surviving spouse will continue to receive it if he/she is over age 55. If you were not yet eligible, or if your spouse is under age 55, your widow/widower will begin to receive your subsidy amount when he or she turns age 55.

If your surviving spouse does not receive survivor benefits from the County, he or she may continue to be enrolled in the health insurance plan by sending a check for the premium (payable to **County of Fairfax**) to the Retirement Administration Agency each month. These surviving spouses are not eligible to receive the health subsidy. Surviving dependents may also continue to be enrolled in the health insurance plan by sending in a monthly check for the premium until they turn age 26 or lose their status as an eligible dependent.

If you have questions or problems with your health insurance, call the plan's customer service representatives directly. If you want to make changes to your coverage, contact Department of Human Resources Benefits Division at 703-324-3311.

Please note: Soon after your retirement, you will receive a COBRA notice from the Department of Human Resources, Benefits Division. This letter is a federally-mandated COBRA notice that advises all terminated employees of their rights with regards to continuing their County health insurance according to COBRA guidelines. If you had health or dental insurance as an active employee, you will receive this notice, **even if you already made an election to continue your insurance** through a deduction from your annuity payment. In this situation, the federally-mandated COBRA notice does **NOT** apply to you unless you wish to continue your medical flexible spending account.

Dental Insurance

Retirees, who are covered by dental insurance when they retire, may continue to have dental insurance premiums deducted from their checks. Rules for breaks in coverage and surviving spouses and dependents are the same as for health insurance. Retirees pay the full cost of dental insurance in retirement.

Please Note: The County reserves the right to make changes in the health, dental, and life insurance benefits, so they may not continue at the same level that exists when you retire. Make sure to watch your mail and the Retirement Agency website for Open Enrollment information each year, to keep apprised of any changes that may affect your insurance benefits.

If you have questions or problems with your insurance, call the plan's customer service representatives directly. If you want to make changes to your coverage, contact the Department of Human Resources, Benefits Division at 703-324-3311.

Group Term Life Insurance

If you are covered by the County's Group Term Life Insurance when you retire, you may continue to be covered as a retiree. Your share of the premiums will be deducted from your retirement check and the County will continue to pay a portion of the premium.

The first of the month following retirement, your basic and, if applicable, optional term life shall reduce to 65% of the amount that was in effect immediately prior to the date of your retirement if it has not already been reduced due to attainment of age 65 as an active employee. The month following your attainment of age 70, the value of your coverage is reduced to 30% of the amount that was in effect on your retirement date. You also have the option of reducing your coverage at retirement or anytime thereafter, to a coverage amount of \$12,500. If your reduced coverage amount at age 65 or 70 would be lower than \$12,500, your maximum coverage will be limited to the reduced amount.

Once you elect reduced coverage, there will be no future reduction in coverage due to age. The accidental death and dismemberment provision of the policy terminates at your retirement.

You will be given several options regarding your life insurance when you retire. The options available to you depend on the coverage you have as an employee. In all options, retirees may discontinue coverage altogether.

At retirement, you may elect any Life Insurance option from those listed below that is equal to or less than your current coverage level.

- Reduce coverage to \$12,500 – Retiree will pay for ½ of the coverage at age banded rates
- Basic coverage – Retiree will pay for ½ of the coverage at age banded rates
- Basic + 1 x salary optional – Retiree will pay for optional coverage at age banded rates
- Basic + 2 x salary optional – Retiree will pay for optional coverage at age banded rates
- Basic + 3 x salary optional – Retiree will pay for optional coverage at age banded rates
- Basic + 4 x salary optional – Retiree will pay for optional coverage at age banded rates

Note: Any retiree age 80 or older with total coverage of \$12,500 or less will have the group term life premium fully paid by the County.

Premiums per \$1,000 of life insurance coverage effective for retirees after January 1, 2005 are:

<u>AGE RATE per \$1,000</u>	
30-49	\$ 0.15
50-59	\$ 0.29
60-79	\$ 0.47
80-84	\$ 4.02
85-89	\$ 6.81
90-94	\$19.99

For information about premiums, call the Department of Human Resources, Benefits Division at 703-324-3311. To change your life insurance beneficiary, submit the Beneficiary Change Form included in your Retirement Application Packet or available

on the HR Benefits website available through fairfaxNET. If you have questions about your coverage, please call the Department of Human Resources at 703-324-3311.

Long Term Disability (Salary) Insurance

If you have had Long Term Disability Insurance, your coverage will terminate on your retirement date. If you have further questions, you may call the Department of Human Resources, Benefits Division at 703-324-3311.

Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA)

Dependent Care Assistance and Medical Spending Accounts:

Your FSA coverage ceases at the end of the month of termination of employment. The grace period within which you may submit eligible FSA expenses incurred during your period of coverage within a plan year is 90 days after the end of the calendar year or from your termination/retirement date, if earlier, to submit claims. If you do not have sufficient claims incurred to completely exhaust your account, the remaining balance will be forfeited unless you make arrangements to continue this account under COBRA. If you are participating in the Medical Spending Account at the time of a COBRA qualifying event (such as retirement), you may continue to pay into your Medical Spending Account by sending a check, payable to the "County of Fairfax," to the Benefits Division for the amount of your monthly contribution plus a two percent administration fee. These are not pre-tax contributions. Eligible expenses incurred while you are contributing continue to be eligible for reimbursement.

However, if the amount you could still be reimbursed for future expenses is less than the amount you would have to pay into the plan, COBRA need not be offered to you. COBRA is not available after the year in which the qualifying event occurs and is **not available for Dependent Care Accounts**. If you have further questions, you may call the Department of Human Resources, Benefits Division at 703-324-3311. FSA claims questions should be directed to WageWorks at 1-855-428-0446.

Deferred Compensation Plans

As a retiree, you may not contribute to the Deferred Compensation Plan. Your Deferred Compensation account will continue to accumulate earnings based on the investments you choose and you will continue to receive quarterly statements. You may continue to transfer your money among funds.

Currently, employees retiring from the county may elect to defer their annual leave and compensatory time payoff up to the annual limits into the deferred compensation plan. To do so, the employee must have a deferred compensation account and submit the proper form available from the Financial Benefits Help Desk at 703-324-4995. The completed form must be submitted to the Department of Human Resources, Benefits Division in the month prior to the month that the leave payoff will be processed. Employees who do not submit a form for the leave payoff check will have the amount on record in FOCUS taken from their leave payoff. If you have questions about deferring

your leave payoff amount to the plan, contact the Financial Benefits Help Desk at 703-324-4995, TTY 703-222-7314.

When you retire, you will receive a letter from the Department of Human Resources explaining your payout options. For more information, contact the Department of Human Resources, Benefits Division at 703-324-3311.

Beneficiary and Address Changes

When you retire, you will be asked to name a beneficiary to receive the balance of your contributions should you die before they are exhausted. If you do not elect a spousal option, and want to change your beneficiary in the first few years after retirement, you must complete a *Retirement System Change Request Form*. This form can be found at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/retirement/pdfs/ben_change.pdf on the RAA website, or you can request one be mailed to you by calling the Retirement Agency at 703-279-8200 or 1-800-333-1633.

PLEASE NOTE: All beneficiary requests must be made in writing. Notifying the Retirement Administration Agency will not change your beneficiary for *any other benefits*. To change OTHER beneficiary information, contact the Department of Human Resources, Benefits Division or the company providing the benefit directly.

Miscellaneous Notes

- If you plan to move when you retire, remember to notify your payroll clerk of your new address so your W-2 Form will not be delayed.
- All employees must complete the Employee Clearance Record before retiring. Ask your payroll clerk about this.

Additional Information

Credit Union

You may continue to be a member of the Fairfax County Employees Credit Union or Apple Credit Union (for school employees) after you retire. Deductions to the Credit Union may be taken from your retirement check and you may elect to have your retirement benefit directly deposited into your Credit Union account. If you have a loan with the Credit Union and are making payments from your paycheck, you must contact the Credit Union and let them know to begin taking the payments from your retirement check instead. For more information, contact the Fairfax County Employees Credit Union at 4201 Members Way, Fairfax, VA 22030 or call 703-218-9900 or the Apple Credit Union at P.O. Box 1200, Fairfax, VA 22030 or call 703-323-2046.

Fitness Center

Retirees are eligible to use the exercise equipment in the Fitness Center in the Government Center. Hours and cost are the same as for active employees.

In addition, there are aerobics and other exercise classes offered at the Fitness Center for minimal fees. For more information stop by the Fitness Center.

Prohibition Regarding Future Employment Activities

For one year after your employment with Fairfax County ends, you may not be involved in certain activities in your subsequent employment. You may not assist anyone (other than another governmental agency) with respect to any matter you participated in while in County service, if your participation as a County employee involved a decision, approval, or recommendation with respect to the matter. For more information or a copy of the policy, contact the Department of Human Resources.

Social Security and Medicare

- **Social Security:** If you are totally disabled and cannot do any kind of work for at least one year or have a condition that will result in your death, you and your family members may be eligible to receive disability benefits through Social Security. These benefits are based on your lifetime earnings. If you are not eligible for disability benefits you will probably be eligible to receive reduced Social Security retirement benefits as early as age 62. Unreduced benefits are available at age 65-67 (depending on your year of birth). You may be eligible to receive those benefits based on your own earnings or on the earnings of your current or former spouse. In addition, Social Security provides benefits for your surviving spouses and children when you die. Surviving spouses (including divorced spouses) may be eligible to receive survivor benefits as early as age 60 or earlier if they are disabled or caring for eligible children. Social Security also provides Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for those with low incomes and limited assets who are blind, disabled or over age 65.

For information or to apply for benefits, call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213. For retirement benefits, its best to call up to three months before the month you plan to begin receiving benefits.

During the first calendar year in which you collect Social Security benefits you will be paid for each month in which your earnings do not exceed a limit based on your age. After the first year, if your *annual* earnings exceed certain limits, your benefits will be reduced. Therefore, if you retire late in one calendar year and you receive payment for your annual leave and compensatory time in the next calendar year, your benefits could be affected since your leave payoff may cause you to exceed your annual earnings cap. In that case you may request a letter from the Department of Human Resources, Payroll Division at 703-324-3339 that informs the Social Security Administration that the leave was earned in a prior year (*see section on Leave Payoff*).

- **Medicare:** If you are age 65 or receive Social Security disability benefits you may be eligible for Medicare. (*Fairfax County retirees covered by one of the County's health insurance plans are not covered by an employer's health plan but are in a retiree's health plan.*) Medicare has two parts. Part A is premium-free for most County retirees and pays for covered inpatient hospital care. Part B costs \$104.90 each month for most people in 2014. Please check with Medicare directly for your expected cost as there are higher premiums for *recipients in higher income brackets – i.e. \$85,000 or more*

(or \$170,000 or more for joint filers). The Part B amount is deducted from your Social Security check **if you receive Social Security benefits**, and covers doctors' services, outpatient hospital care and other medical services. Those enrolled in one of the County health insurance plans as a retiree are required to sign up for both Part A and Part B Medicare when first eligible.

If you receive Social Security benefits, you will automatically be enrolled in Medicare when you become eligible. If you are not receiving Social Security benefits, you must contact the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213 up to three months before the month in which you turn age 65 to sign up for Medicare. If you do not sign up for Medicare Part B when first eligible you may be assessed a penalty for each year that you are not enrolled. However, **if you are over age 65 when you retire**, you can avoid the penalty by requesting a form from Social Security Administration to be filled out by the Department of Human Resources, Benefits Division which informs Medicare that you were enrolled in an "employer's" health plan until the date of your retirement.

Medicare Part A pays most costs for inpatient hospital, skilled nursing facilities, home health and hospice care. Part B pays many of the costs for doctors' services; outpatient hospital services; home health visits; diagnostic X-rays, laboratory and other tests; certain ambulance services; and some other medical services and supplies. Both Part A and B require you to pay deductibles and some portion of the cost of covered services. Currently, Medicare provides no coverage for prescription drugs, dental care, and long-term custodial or nursing home care.

Many companies offer supplemental "Medigap" policies to cover some or all of your "out-of-pocket" expenses that Medicare does not pay. Most provide little or no coverage for prescription drugs. Medicare Part D provides prescription coverage but you pay a premium for this type of coverage as well. Make sure you research any plans you consider participating with.

The County's health insurance plans are not Medigap plans but still pay many of your out-of-pocket and prescription drug expenses. Generally, you will still be required to pay the same deductibles and co-payments for your medical care that you paid before you had Medicare but in most cases, your monthly premium costs are reduced significantly. Also, if you are covered by a County health insurance plan you may not be eligible to be covered by a Medigap plan.

Rules, premiums and information regarding Medicare and Social Security change yearly so please make sure to review current information directly from Medicare and Social Security. For additional information, you may want to contact Medicare for the publication entitled *Medicare and You 2013 Handbook* available from Medicare Publications, 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) or visit the Medicare website to review that publication and other resources they have available. You can access Social Security and Medicare information by visiting their websites at www.socialsecurity.gov and www.medicare.gov respectively.

Note: Medicare should not be confused with Medicaid. Medicaid is the health plan for low-income individuals with limited assets and is usually operated by State welfare or human service agencies.

Services for Older Adults and Volunteer Opportunities

Fairfax County has a reputation of being one of the best places in the country to find any type of service for the elderly. These include senior centers throughout the County where classes and activities are held; many publications geared to the needs of the elderly; home based care programs providing meals, regular visits and other care for the homebound; help with housing, medical forms, and other needs; as well as many opportunities for volunteering and recreation tailored to seniors.

The Fairfax Area Agency on Aging, publishes *The Golden Gazette*, a FREE 24-page monthly newspaper covering *news to use* for older adults in the Fairfax area. Each month, the Golden Gazette features senior center highlights, a community calendar, a gardening column and articles on important and timely health, legal, financial and consumer issues. The Golden Gazette is available in print, large print and electronic format. Visit <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/olderadultservices/goldengazette.htm> for information on how to subscribe.

The volunteer programs operated by the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) encompass many distinct aspects of service to the older population in the Fairfax area. Many of these programs involve volunteers over the age of 18 in direct service with clients 60 years old and over. A wish list of volunteer opportunities working with older adults is available by calling the Volunteer Solutions Intake number at 703-324-5406; TTY 711.

Most communities are served by their own Area Agencies on Aging or other government agency providing similar services. Consult your phone directory for more information.

The Fairfax County Department of Family Services has a Division that provides services to older adults and adults with disabilities. Information can be found at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/olderadultservices/>. Family Services also offers a wide array of volunteer opportunities that provide you with the opportunity to make a difference in your community. You can find additional information at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/About/VolOps.htm>.

Fairfax County Retired Employees Association (FCREA)

Any retired Fairfax County employee or surviving spouse is eligible for membership in the Fairfax County Retired Employees Association. The FCREA is **not** affiliated with Fairfax County Government or the Retirement Agency.

Besides being a voice on issues of interest and importance to County retirees, the group tries to schedule a variety of recreational activities throughout the year.

Annual Membership is \$5.00 to join and a renewal fee of \$5.00 each July 1, or Lifetime Membership for \$50.00. For more information or to join the Association, contact Bobbie Deegan, Treasurer, 301-937-7070. FCREA publishes a bimonthly newsletter for its membership called *Hot Flashes*.

Appendix

Health Insurance Rates and Subsidy Information

Retirement Application

Retiree Association Information