FY27-04

EMPLOYER BULLETIN

RETURN TO TEACHING IN SUBJECT SHORTAGE AREA

August 2026

Overview

Public Act 103-0588 allows a TRS retiree to return to work without post-retirement limitations. The regional superintendent must designate the employment to be in a subject shortage area in order for a retiree to be able to return to teaching without limitation. The program is set to expire on June 30, 2027.

Certification procedure

An overview of the certification procedure follows. Please refer to the rest of the bulletin for program details.

1. The Regional Office of Education (ROE) fills out the Return to Teaching in Subject Shortage Area Regional Superintendent Certification certifying that the employer has a shortage area and the employer met the public act requirements. The ROE will provide the name of the retiree the employer is seeking approval to hire into the program. The form may be found on the TRS website at: www.trsil.org/Subject-Shortage-Regional-Superintendent-Certification-form. If an employer is applying for more than one subject shortage area, the ROE will complete a separate form for each subject.

2. After meeting the requirements of the public act, the ROE forwards the completed form to TRS certifying a subject shortage area. TRS will forward a Return to Teaching in Subject Shortage Area Certification to the employer. The employer and retiree complete this form to certify the intent to hire the retiree under the program.

3. TRS will notify the retiree and employer that the certification form was received and acknowledge the hiring of the retiree. **The retiree must not begin working in the subject shortage area until TRS has provided approvals to the retiree and the employer.**

Participation

The retiree returning to work must be in a subject shortage area and employers must comply with the program participation requirements.

Any qualified teacher who has been honorably dismissed within the calendar year preceding the school term in which employment is sought must be offered the position before a retiree can be hired. Preceding the beginning of either the fall or spring term, the requirements state that for a period of at least 90 days during the six months that the employer seeks to hire a retired teacher, the employer must on an ongoing basis:

- advertise its vacancies in employment bulletins published by college and university placement offices located near the school,

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- search for teachers legally qualified to fill those vacancies through the Illinois Education Job Bank, and
- post all vacancies on the employer's website and list the vacancy in an online job portal or database.

If the vacancies are not filled after complying with these requirements, the employer must submit documentation to the regional superintendent. The regional superintendent will certify the employer's compliance on the Return to Teaching in Subject Shortage Area Regional Superintendent Certification form and submit it to TRS.

Once hired, the retiree shall continue to be a retirement annuitant, but shall be deemed an active teacher for other purposes, such as inclusion in a collective bargaining unit, eligibility for group health benefits, and compliance with the laws governing the employment, regulation, certification, treatment and conduct of teachers.

Eligibility

A retiree receiving an annuity may teach in a subject shortage area without compromising his/her retirement status if:

- The employment does not begin within the school year service was terminated.
- The retiree has not received the TRS early retirement incentive.
- The retiree retired before age 60 and with less than 34 years of service and the eligible employment does not begin within the year following the effective date of the retirement annuity.
- The retiree retired at age 60 or above or with 34 or more years of service and the eligible employment does not begin within the 90 days following the effective date of the retirement annuity.
- Before the eligible employment begins, the employer and retiree notify TRS in writing of the retiree's desire to participate in the program. Employment cannot begin until after program participation approval is received from TRS.

Health insurance coverage

The retiree will participate in the group health benefits offered by the employer without limitations based on pre-existing conditions.

If the employer does not offer health insurance, the retiree may remain in TRIP.

The retiree should remain on employer insurance through summer breaks if he/she will be participating in the program the following year.

After the retiree stops teaching in a shortage area, the employer should notify TRS. The retiree should also notify TRS and request a TRIP Participation Election form. The retiree will have to fill out the form and obtain a termination letter from the employer's insurance plan. The retiree must submit the TRIP Participation Election form along with the employer's insurance termination letter to TRS within 60 days of the employment termination.

Notify TRS prior to hiring

Once a subject shortage area has been approved by the regional superintendent, TRS will send the Return to Teaching in Subject Shortage Area Certification to the employer for the employer and retiree to complete. The employer must return the form to TRS and must **not** hire the retiree for the subject shortage area until approval has been received from TRS.

Annual Certification required

Once a retiree is approved into the program, the retiree may continue in the approved subject shortage area through the expiration date of June 30, 2027. The employer does not need to recertify each year. However, the employer is required to annually certify if the retiree is continuing to teach in the subject shortage area.

The retiree is not allowed to work under the Retiree Return to Work Program and work under the post-retirement work limitation of 120 days or 600 hours for a different employer. Failure to comply with these rules may result in TRS terminating his/her retirement annuity and requiring payback of all retirement benefits received if in the year following retirement.

No service credit

No employer or employee contributions can be made to TRS and no additional service credit can be earned when a retiree is hired to work in a subject shortage area. Employment will not affect the retiree's final average salary or the annuity amount.

Post-retirement limitations

The retiree who returns to work in a subject shortage area is not required to comply with the 120-days/600-hours post-retirement limitations specified in the Illinois Pension Code. The retiree will receive a pension although he/she is employed by an employer beyond the post-retirement limitations.

Notify TRS when employment is terminated

TRS must be notified when a retiree terminates teaching in a subject shortage area.

Questions

If you have questions, please contact the Employer Services Department by calling (888) 678-3675 or by email at employers@trsil.org.

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