

# Tier 2 Plan Summary



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Stanislaus County Employees' Retirement Association (StanCERA) is an independent association established by the County Employees' Retirement Law of 1937 (CERL). StanCERA provides retirement and associated benefits for eligible employees for Stanislaus County, City of Ceres, Stanislaus Superior Courts, and other participating public employers. StanCERA's responsibilities include collecting retirement contributions, depositing and investing earnings, and managing the retirement fund with direction from the Board of Retirement.

Membership with StanCERA is mandatory for all eligible employees beginning with the first day of employment.

## Contributions

Membership contributions are based upon earliest age (to nearest birthday) of entry into StanCERA or another reciprocal system. Contribution rate charts and calculators are available at [www.stancera.org](http://www.stancera.org). StanCERA benefits are integrated with Social Security. This means contributions will be made into both StanCERA and Social Security. StanCERA will reduce its plan benefits and contributions due to coverage under both systems.

StanCERA will provide member statements on a semi-annual basis, January and July. Member statements will contain information regarding contributions, refundable interest, and general account information.

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*Once vesting and eligibility requirements are met – you are eligible to receive a lifetime retirement benefit.*

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## Membership Classifications

StanCERA has two membership classifications: general and safety. Per the CERL, a safety member is classified as any employee whose principal duties consist of active law enforcement, active fire suppression, probation officers, juvenile hall (detention), or juvenile hall group supervisors.

## Effective Dates

Effective dates for Tier 2 vary. Any deferred members who were hired on or after July 1, 1980 and deferred retirement prior to March 9, 2002 are members of Tier 2. Stanislaus County reopened Tier 2 to all new employees hired on or after January 1, 2011 through December 31, 2012. Tier 2 is currently closed to all new members.

If you have previous public employment service, you may be eligible for Tier 2 membership. Contact a Member and Employer Services Specialist for information.

## Reciprocity

Reciprocity is an agreement between most California public retirement systems. This agreement allows members to move from one public employer to another, within a specific timeframe, and retain certain benefit rights. It is important to note that not all retirement systems have reciprocity agreements in place. Additional information may be obtained by visiting StanCERA's website or contacting a Member and Employer Services Specialist.

## Vesting

A member becomes vested to receive a retirement benefit once five years (10,400 hours) of StanCERA retirement service credit has been reached and has been a member of StanCERA and/or any other reciprocal system(s) combined for a period of at least 10 years.

## Service Credit

Service credit is the amount of time a member has participated in the retirement plan. One year of StanCERA service credit is equal to 2,080 service hours. Service credit is one of the factors used to determine benefits payable.

To earn a full year of service credit, StanCERA members must work 2,080 hours in a one (1) 12-month consecutive period. One (1) year of service credit shall reflect the regular, full-time hours worked in a year. Service credit cannot exceed one (1) year in any 12-month consecutive period. Overtime hours and part-time/extra-help positions are excluded from service credit.

## Excess Sick and Vacation Leave

A member may be eligible to cash out a percentage of used sick and/or vacation leave depending on the employer and/or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Excess sick leave may be converted to service credit which may add to total years of service. Vacation time cashed out in the final year of service may increase the monthly retirement benefit. Contact a Member and Employer Services Specialist for specific details.

## Leaving StanCERA Employment

Any member leaving StanCERA employment may choose to leave their contributions on deposit which will accrue interest. A member who is vested upon termination has the option of applying for retirement on a future date.

Alternatively, a refund of member contributions and refundable interest may be requested upon termination (employer contributions are not refundable).

## Retirement Eligibility

- Age 50 with 10 Years of Membership and 5 Years of Service; or
- Age 70 Regardless of Service; or
- General Members with 30 Years of Service, Regardless of Age; or
- Safety Members with 20 Years of Service, Regardless of Age

## Service Retirement Benefit

The StanCERA retirement benefit formula uses the age at retirement, total service credit, and final average monthly compensation. Benefits increase up to age 65 for General Members and up to age 55 for Safety Members.

The Tier 2 benefit formula, per year of service credit, is approximately:

- General: 1 2/3% at age 57
- Safety: 2% at age 50

The maximum benefit available for all members is 100% of the highest final average compensation received. Visit [www.stancera.org](http://www.stancera.org) and utilize the Retirement Calculator to determine a retirement benefit estimate.

## Disability Retirement Benefit

Should a member become permanently incapacitated due to an illness, injury, or disease, and is unable to perform the duties of their job, the member may be eligible to apply for a disability retirement benefit. StanCERA offers two type of disability retirement benefits: service-connected and non-service connected. There is no minimum age requirement that must be met for either type of disability retirement.

### Service-Connected Disability Retirement

A service-connected disability retirement relates to a permanent incapacity caused in the course of employment. The benefit formula for a service-connected disability retirement is 50% of a member's final average monthly compensation and there is no minimum service credit requirement.

### Non-Service Connected Disability Retirement

A non-service connected disability relates to a permanent incapacity not caused in the course of employment. The benefit formula for a non-service connected-disability retirement is up to 1/3 of your final average monthly compensation per year of service credit. To be eligible for this benefit, a member must have at least five years of service credit.

## Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)

Eligible retired members and survivors, who are receiving a monthly benefit, are eligible for an annual cost of living adjustment (COLA). The COLA is based on the change in the Consumer Price Index for the San Francisco Bay Area. While not guaranteed, increases may be up to 3% annually.

## Survivor Benefits

### Active Members

Should an active member die, eligible survivor benefits may be available. These benefits may include a lump-sum payment and/or a monthly survivor benefit to an eligible beneficiary(ies).

### Retired Members

Should a retired member die, benefits paid to an eligible survivor is a percentage based on the retirement benefit option chosen at the time of retirement. The general employer paid survivor

benefit is 60% however, survivor benefits vary from 50% to 100% and is paid for by taking a slightly reduced benefit, depending on the specific circumstances.

Contact a StanCERA Member and Employer Services Specialist for further details.

## Community Property

StanCERA benefits are considered community property. Any member who is married or in a registered domestic partnership should be aware that StanCERA and California law requires that StanCERA must be notified and joined in any pending dissolution of marriage/registered domestic partnership before any benefits are paid.

For information regarding legal separation or divorce and how it may affect your StanCERA benefits visit [www.stancera.org](http://www.stancera.org).

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This document provides disclosure information of StanCERA membership and information available to its members. This document is designed to provide information only and is accurate as of the date of publication. StanCERA is governed by the County Employees' Retirement Law of 1937 (Government Code Section 31450 et. seq. and Sections 7522 – 7522.74) as it has been adopted by the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors and the StanCERA Board of Retirement. Any inconsistencies between found this document and the governing law, the governing law will prevail. Decisions relating to StanCERA will be made after reference to the statues and any resolutions, regulations, and policies governing administration of StanCERA as they exist at the same time of the decisions.



[www.stancera.org](http://www.stancera.org)