

CHAPTER 21  
IOWA PUBLIC EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM

[Prior to 5/6/87, Employment Security[370]Ch 8]

**581—21.1(97B) Organization.** The Iowa public employees' retirement system was created by Iowa Code chapter 97B.

**21.1(1) Definitions.** Unless otherwise prescribed by federal or state regulations, the terms used in this chapter shall have the following meanings:

“*Board*” means the investment board of IPERS established in Iowa Code section 97B.8.

“*Chief benefits officer*” means the person employed by the director to administer the benefits programs of the retirement system.

“*Chief investment officer*” means the person employed by the director to administer the investment program of the retirement system.

“*Department*” means the Iowa department of personnel.

“*Director*” means the director of the Iowa department of personnel.

“*Internal Revenue Code*” means the Internal Revenue Code as defined in Iowa Code section 422.3.

“*IPERS*” means the Iowa public employees' retirement system.

**21.1(2) Administration.** The director, through the chief investment officer and the chief benefits officer, shall administer Iowa Code chapters 97, 97B, and 97C, shall execute contracts on behalf of IPERS, shall make expenditures, reports, and investigations as necessary to carry out the powers and duties created in Iowa Code chapter 97B, and may obtain as necessary the specialized services of individuals or organizations on a contract-for-services basis.

**21.1(3) Location.** IPERS' business address is 600 East Court Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa. General correspondence, inquiries, requests for information or assistance, complaints, or petitions shall be addressed to: Iowa Public Employees' Retirement System, P.O. Box 9117, Des Moines, Iowa 50306-9117.

**21.1(4) Business hours.** Business hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding legal holidays.

**21.1(5) Investment board.**

*a.* The board shall meet annually, and may meet more often, to review its investment policies. Future meeting dates shall be set by members of the board at the end of each meeting.

*b.* At the first meeting in each fiscal year, the voting members shall elect a chair and vice-chair.

*c.* The principal place of business of the investment board is located at 600 East Court Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa.

*d.* Advance notice of time, date, tentative agenda, and place of each meeting shall be given in compliance with Iowa Code chapter 21.

*e.* Parties wishing to present items for the board's agenda for its next meeting shall file a written request with IPERS at least five workdays prior to the meeting. The board may take up matters not included on its agenda.

*f.* Quorum. Five members eligible to vote shall constitute a quorum. A simple majority vote of the full voting membership shall be the vote of the board.

*g.* In the event that it should become necessary to fill the chief investment officer position, the board may consult with, and make hiring recommendations to, the director.

**581—21.2(97B) Records to be kept by the employer.**

**21.2(1) Definition.** Each employing unit shall maintain records to show the information hereinafter indicated. Records shall be kept in the form and manner prescribed by IPERS. Records shall be open to inspection and may be copied by IPERS and its authorized representatives at any reasonable time.

**21.2(2)** *Records shall show with respect to each employee:* the employee's name, address and social security account number; each date the employee was paid wages or other wage equivalent (e.g., room, board); the total amount of wages paid on each date including noncash wage equivalents; the total amount of wages including wage equivalents on which IPERS contributions are payable; and the amount withheld from wages or wage equivalents for the employee's share of IPERS contributions.

Effective January 1, 1995, records will show, with respect to each employee, member contributions picked up by the employer.

**21.2(3)** *Reports.* Each employing unit shall make reports as IPERS may require, and shall comply with the instructions printed upon any report form issued by IPERS pertaining to the preparation and return of the report. Effective July 1, 1991, employers must report all terminating employees to IPERS within seven working days following the employee's termination date. This report to IPERS shall contain the employee's last-known mailing address and such other information as IPERS might require.

**21.2(4)** *Fees.* IPERS may assess to an employer a fee based on IPERS' cost accrued in correcting an employer's errors if an employer fails to file required documents and remittances accurately.

This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code sections 97B.11, 97B.14 and 97B.53A.

### **581—21.3(97B) Liable employers.**

**21.3(1)** *Definition.* All public employers in the state of Iowa, its cities, counties, townships, agencies, political subdivisions, instrumentalities and public schools are required to participate in IPERS. For the purposes of these rules, the following more specific definitions also apply:

*a. "Political subdivision"* means a geographic area or territorial division of the state which has responsibility for certain governmental functions. Political subdivisions are characterized by public election of officers and taxing powers. The following examples are representative: municipalities, counties, school districts, drainage districts, and utilities.

*b. "Instrumentality of the state or a political subdivision"* means an independent entity that is organized to carry on some specific function of government. Public instrumentalities are created by some form of governmental body, including federal and state statutes and regulations, and are characterized by being under the control of a governmental body. Such control may include final budgetary authorization, general policy development, appointment of a board by a governmental body, and allocation of funds.

*c. "Public agency"* means state agencies and agencies of political subdivisions. Representative examples include an executive board, commission, bureau, division, office, or department of the state or a political subdivision.

*d.* Effective July 1, 1994, the definition of employer includes an area agency on aging that does not offer an alternative plan to all of its employees that is qualified under the federal Internal Revenue Code.

Some employers included are: the state of Iowa and its administrative agencies; counties, including their hospitals and county homes; cities, including their hospitals, park boards and commissions; recreation commissions; townships; public libraries; cemetery associations; municipal utilities including waterworks, gasworks, electric light and power; school districts including their lunch and activity programs; state colleges and universities; and state hospitals and institutions. Any employing unit not already reporting to IPERS which fulfills the conditions with respect to becoming an employer shall immediately give notice to IPERS of that fact. Such notice shall set forth the name and address of the employing unit.

**21.3(2)** *Name change.* Any employing unit which has a change of name, address, title of the unit, its reporting official or any other identifying information shall immediately give notice in writing to IPERS. The notice shall include the former name, address and IPERS account number of the employing unit, the new name and address of the employing unit and the reason for the change if other than a change of reporting official.

**21.3(3) Termination.** Any employing unit which terminates for any reason shall provide IPERS with the following:

- a. Complete name and address of the dissolved entity;
- b. Assigned IPERS account number;
- c. Last date on which wages were paid;
- d. Date on which the entity dissolved;
- e. Reason for the dissolution;
- f. Whether or not the entity expects to pay wages in the future; and
- g. Name and address of absorbed employing unit if applicable.

**21.3(4) Reports of dissolved or absorbed employers.** An employing unit that has been dissolved or entirely absorbed by another employing unit is required to file a quarterly or monthly report with IPERS through the last date on which it legally existed. Any wages paid after the legal date of dissolution are reported under the account number assigned to the new or successor employing unit, if any.

**21.3(5) IPERS account number.** Each reporting unit is assigned an IPERS account number. This number should be used on all correspondence and reporting forms directed to IPERS.

This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code sections 97B.5, 97B.9 to 97B.12, 97B.15 and 97B.41(8) "a."

**581—21.4(97B) Definition of wages for employment during the calendar quarter—other definitions.** Unless the context otherwise requires, terms used in these rules, regulations, interpretations, forms and other official pronouncements issued by IPERS shall have the following meaning:

**21.4(1) "Wages"** means all compensation earned by employees, including vacation pay; sick pay; bonus payments; back pay; dismissal pay; amounts deducted from employee's pay at the employee's discretion for tax-sheltered annuities, dependent care and cafeteria plans; and the cash value of wage equivalents.

- a. *Vacation pay.* The amount paid an employee during a period of vacation.
- b. *Sick pay.* Payments made for sick leave which are a continuation of salary payments.
- c. *Workers' compensation, unemployment, short-term and long-term disability payments.*

Wages do not include workers' compensation payments, unemployment payments, or short-term and long-term disability payments made by an insurance company or third-party payer, such as a trust. Wages include payments for sick leave which are a continuation of salary payments if paid from the employer's general assets, regardless of whether the employer labels the payments as sick leave, short-term disability, or long-term disability.

d. *Compensatory time.* Wages include amounts paid for compensatory time taken in lieu of regular work hours and when paid as a lump sum. However, compensatory time paid in a lump sum shall not exceed 240 hours per employee per year or any lesser number of hours set by the employer. Each employer shall determine whether to use the calendar year or a fiscal year other than the calendar year when setting its compensatory time policy.

e. *Banked holiday pay.* If an employer codes banked holiday time as holiday or vacation pay, the banked holiday pay will be treated as vacation pay when calculating covered wages. If an employer codes banked holiday pay as compensatory time, it will be combined with other compensatory time and subject to the time limits set forth in paragraph "d" above.

f. *Special lump sum payments.* Wages do not include special lump sum payments made during or at the end of service as a payoff of unused accrued sick leave or of unused accrued vacation. Wages do not include special lump sum payments made during or at the end of service as an incentive to retire early or as payments made upon dismissal, severance, or a special bonus payment intended as an early retirement incentive. The foregoing items are excluded whether paid in a lump sum or in a series of installment payments. Wages do not include catastrophic leave paid in a lump sum.

*g. Other special payment arrangements.* Wages do not include amounts paid pursuant to special arrangements between an employer and employee whereby the employer pays increased wages and the employee reimburses the employer or a third-party obligor for all or part of the wage increase. This includes, but is not limited to, the practice of increasing an employee's wages by the employer's share of health care costs and having the employee reimburse the employer or a third-party provider for such health care costs. Wages do not include amounts paid pursuant to a special arrangement between an employer and employee whereby wages in excess of the covered wage ceiling for a particular year are deferred to one or more subsequent years. Wages do not include employer contributions (excluding employee contributions) to a plan, program, or arrangement whereby the amounts contributed are not included in the member's federal taxable income.

Employers and employees that knowingly and willfully enter into the types of arrangements described in this subrule without making the appropriate wage adjustments, thereby causing an impermissible increase in the payments authorized under Iowa Code chapter 97B, may be prosecuted under Iowa Code section 97B.40 for engaging in a fraudulent practice. If IPERS determines that its calculation of a member's monthly benefit includes amounts paid under an arrangement described in this subrule, IPERS shall recalculate the member's monthly benefit, after making the appropriate wage adjustments. IPERS may recover the amount of overpayments caused by the inclusion of the payments described in this subrule from the monthly amounts payable to the member or amounts payable to the member's successor(s) in interest, regardless of whether or not IPERS chooses to prosecute the employers and employees under Iowa Code section 97B.40.

*h. Wage equivalents.* Items such as food, lodging and travel pay which are includable as employee income, if they are paid as compensation for employment. The basic test is whether or not such wage equivalent was given for the convenience of the employee or employing unit. Wage equivalents are not reportable under IPERS if given for the convenience of the employing unit or are not reasonably quantifiable. Wage equivalents that are not included in the member's federal taxable income shall be deemed to be for the convenience of the employer. A wage equivalent is not reportable if the employer certifies that there was a substantial business reason for providing the wage equivalent, even if the wage equivalent is included in the employee's federal taxable income. Wages paid in any other form than money are measured by the fair market value of the meals, lodging, travel or other wage equivalents.

*i. Members of the general assembly.* Wages for a member of the general assembly means the total compensation received by a member of the general assembly, whether paid in the form of per diem or annual salary. Wages include per diem payments paid to members of the general assembly during interim periods between sessions of the general assembly. Wages do not include expense payments except that, effective July 1, 1990, wages include daily allowances to members of the general assembly for nontravel expenses of office during a session of the general assembly. Such nontravel expenses of office during a session of the general assembly shall not exceed the maximum established by law for members from Polk County. A member of the general assembly who has elected to participate in IPERS shall receive four quarters of service credit for each calendar year during the member's term of office, even if no wages are reported in one or more quarters during a calendar year.

*j. Wages for certain testing purposes.* Wages for testing purposes to ensure compliance with Internal Revenue Code Section 415 shall include a member's gross wages, excluding nontaxable fringe benefits and all amounts placed in tax-deferred vehicles including, but not limited to, plans established pursuant to Internal Revenue Code Sections 125, 401(k), 403, and 457, and excluding IPERS contributions paid after December 31, 1994, by employers on behalf of employees. Effective January 1, 1996, the annual wages of a member taken into account for testing purposes under any of the applicable sections of Internal Revenue Code shall not exceed the applicable amount set forth in Internal Revenue Code Section 401(a)(17), and any regulations promulgated pursuant to that section. The foregoing sentence shall not be deemed to permit the maximum amount of wages of a member taken into account for any other purpose under Iowa Code chapter 97B to exceed the maximum covered wage ceiling under Iowa Code section 97B.1A(25). Effective January 1, 1998, wages for testing purposes to ensure compliance with Internal Revenue Code Section 415 shall include elective deferrals placed in tax-deferred plans established pursuant to Internal Revenue Code Sections 125, 401(k), 403, and 457 by employers on behalf of employees.

**21.4(2)** Wages are reportable in the quarter in which they are actually paid to the employee, except in cases where employees are awarded lump sum payments of back wages, whether as a result of litigation or otherwise, in which case the employer shall file wage adjustment reporting forms with IPERS allocating said wages to the periods of service for which such payments are awarded. Employers shall forward the required employer and employee contributions and interest to IPERS.

Wages received by employees who have the right to accelerate or defer the receipt of wages (e.g., by shifting from a 12-month to a 10-month wage payment schedule, or vice versa) must be reported in the quarter the wages otherwise would normally have been received, if such rights are offered primarily for purposes of increasing a member's three-year average covered wage (e.g., by offering the right to shift from a 12-month to a 10-month wage payment schedule only to employees who are retiring or terminating employment).

An employer cannot report wages as having been paid to employees as of a quarterly reporting date if the employee has not actually or constructively received the payments in question. For example, wages that are mailed, transmitted via electronic funds transfer for direct deposit, or handed to an employee on June 30 would be reported as second quarter wages, but wages that are mailed, transmitted via electronic funds transfer for direct deposit, or handed to an employee on July 3 would be reported as third quarter wages.

IPERS contributions must be calculated on the gross amount of a back pay settlement before the settlement is reduced for taxes, interim wages, unemployment compensation, and similar mitigation of damages adjustments. IPERS contributions must be calculated by reducing the gross amount of a back pay settlement by any amounts not considered covered wages such as, but not limited to, lump sum payments for medical expenses.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, a back pay settlement that does not require the reinstatement of a terminated employee and payment of the amount of wages that would have been paid during the period of severance (before adjustments) shall be treated by IPERS as a "special lump sum payment" under subrule 21.4(1) above and shall not be covered.

**21.4(3)** One quarter of service will be credited for each quarter in which a member is paid covered wages.

*a.* "Covered wages" means wages of a member during periods of service that do not exceed the annual covered wage maximum. Effective January 1, 1997, and for each subsequent calendar year, covered wages shall not exceed \$160,000 or the amount permitted for that year under Section 401(a)(17) of the Internal Revenue Code.

*b.* Effective January 1, 1988, covered wages shall include wages paid a member regardless of age. (From July 1, 1978, until January 1, 1988, covered wages did not include wages paid a member on or after the first day of the month in which the member reached the age of 70.)

c. If a member is employed by more than one employer during the calendar year, the total amount of wages paid shall be included in determining the annual covered wage maximum. If the amount of wages paid to a member by several employers during a calendar year exceeds the covered wage limit, the amount of the excess shall not be subject to contributions required by Iowa Code section 97B.11. See subrule 21.8(1), paragraph “h.”

This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code section 97B.1A(25).

## **581—21.5(97B) Identification of employees covered by the IPERS retirement law.**

### **21.5(1) Definition of employee.**

a. A person is in employment as defined by Iowa Code chapter 97B if the person and the covered employer enter into a relationship which both recognize to be that of employer/employee. A person is not in employment if the person volunteers services to a covered employer for which the person receives no remuneration. An employee is an individual who is subject to control by the agency for whom the individual performs services for wages. The term control refers only to employment and includes control over the way the employee works, where the employee works and the hours the employee works. The control need not be actually exercised for an employer/employee relationship to exist; the right to exercise control is sufficient. A public official may be an “employee” as defined in the agreement between the state of Iowa and the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, without the element of direction and control.

Effective July 1, 1994, a person who is employed in a position which allows IPERS coverage to be elected as specified in Iowa Code section 97B.1A(8) must file a one-time election form with IPERS for coverage. If the person was employed before July 1, 1994, the election must be postmarked on or before July 1, 1995. If the person was employed on or after July 1, 1994, the election must be postmarked within 60 days from the date the person was employed. Coverage will be prospective from the date the election is approved by IPERS. The election, once filed, is irrevocable and membership continues until the member terminates covered employment. The election window does not allow members who had been in coverage to elect out.

Effective July 1, 1994, members employed before that date as a gaming enforcement officer, a fire prevention inspector peace officer, or an employee of the division of capitol police (except clerical workers), may elect coverage under Iowa Code chapter 97A in lieu of IPERS. The election must be directed to the board of trustees established in Iowa Code section 97A.5 and postmarked on or before July 1, 1995. Coverage under IPERS will terminate when the board of trustees approves the election. The election, once received by the board of trustees, is irrevocable. If no election is filed by that date, the member will remain covered by IPERS until termination of covered employment. The election window does not allow a member who previously elected out of IPERS to reverse the decision and become covered under IPERS.

Effective January 1, 1999, new hires who may elect out of IPERS coverage shall be covered on the date of hire and shall have 60 days to elect out of coverage in writing using IPERS’ forms. Notwithstanding the foregoing, employees who had the right to elect IPERS coverage prior to January 1, 1999, but did not do so, shall be covered as of January 1, 1999, and shall have until December 31, 1999, to elect out of coverage.

Employment as defined in Iowa Code chapter 97B is not synonymous with IPERS membership. Some classes of employees are excluded under Iowa Code section 97B.1A(8) “b” from membership by their nature. The following subparagraphs are designed to clarify the status of certain employee positions.

(1) Effective January 1, 1999, elected officials in positions for which the compensation is on a fee basis, elected officials of school districts, elected officials of townships, and elected officials of other political subdivisions who are in part-time positions are covered by IPERS unless they elect out of coverage. An elected official who becomes covered under this chapter may later terminate membership by informing IPERS in writing of the expiration of the member's term of office, or if a member of the general assembly, of the intention to terminate coverage. An elected official does not terminate covered employment with the end of each term of office if the official has been reelected for the same position. If elected for another position, the official shall be covered unless the official elects out of coverage.