ESS Enhancements for AASIS Employers

Act 91 of 2015 mandated that APERS-participating employers comply with two requirements by July 1, 2017: Report contributions electronically and pay contributions by electronic transfer. State agencies that use AASIS for their human resources and payroll functions were already in compliance with the requirements; and as a result, there were no process changes required.

The focus of our first phase of the employer self service project was to bring the other non-AASIS entities to the same level of compliance that AASIS agencies already have. As we move into the second phase of the project, our focus will be to offer AASIS agencies enhancements that have naturally occurred due to the technology requirements necessary for other non-state, participating employers and APERS to comply with the act.

Task / Feature	Before ESS...	With ESS...
Verify prior membership for prospective employees	Employers used the Membership Verification Tool (MVT) to receive general guidelines on return-to-work provisions.	Employers use the Prior Membership Verification in ESS to obtain specific information about a member's prior membership, plan eligibility, and return to work restrictions.
Enroll employees	Employers submitted the Employee Enrollment Request form to enroll employees.	We receive daily demographic import files from AASIS with employment actions. When the file reports hires, rehires, and transfers, APERS will send an enrollment confirmation to the member and the employer. The member confirmation includes information about how they can designate a beneficiary.
Update employees' demographic information	Members or employers submitted the Enrollment Change Request form to make name, address, or beneficiary changes.	We receive daily demographic import files from AASIS with name and address changes. Members must designate or change beneficiaries through the portal or by contacting APERS for a form.
Acknowledge DROP application	Employers signed the employer acknowledgement on the *DROP Application*.	ESS notifies employers about the member's enrollment through a secure message. The acknowledgement is no longer required.
Verify termination date	Employers completed a *Employer Verification of Termination* form to verify the termination date and final earnings.	Termination dates are provided in the daily demographic import files from AASIS. However, if an active member is retiring, employers must enter the termination date in ESS by the 15th of the month before the retirement date for the member to receive their first payment on time. APERS no longer projects final earnings in benefit calculations.

APERS Call Center and Member Forms

Member forms were removed from the website because member responsibilities or requests can be completed in MSS or on forms provided by the Call Center. Member responsibilities now include new beneficiary designations at enrollment or beneficiary changes any time afterward. When a member contacts APERS for a form the Call Center generates the form for them. The generated form is pre-populated with the member's demographic information, including their APERS ID, and is bar-coded. The pre-populated form allows a member to provide less information and reduces the challenges of a form filled out by hand.

The bar-code found on the form has encoded information that identifies the member and the document type. This information allows us to process incoming documents more quickly and efficiently.

> **Beginning in July, APERS will only accept <u>member forms</u> that were generated by the Call Center.**

EMPLOYER TRAINING 2018

APERS has scheduled a series of classroom training sessions for employers in 2018.   The sessions cover the laws and regulations governing enrollment and reporting with topics including membership eligibility, return to work provisions, contributory provisions, contribution rates, compensation eligibility, and reporting deadlines. In addition, the sessions provide an overview of how to perform these functions in the Employer Self-Service (ESS) portal.

All sessions will be held at APERS' offices in Little Rock on the 2nd floor of the Union Plaza Building at 124 W. Capitol Ave. (unless otherwise noted). Schedule of classes and links to registration can be found on the Employer page of the APERS website.

Communicating through ESS

The ESS portal has in many ways made the exchange of information between APERS and employers much easier, simpler, and faster. Instead of having to rely on phone calls, postal mail, fax, and email, employers will be able to exchange documents, get news and alerts, request assistance, and send and receive messages through the ESS.

For example, your ESS home page will include a news panel where you will find the latest communications from APERS. Here we can post general notices like changes in contribution rates or personalized information specifically for your agency. We will also post links to useful publications, like our current employer newsletter, and to other documents.

Your ESS portal also provides a way for you to communicate your needs to APERS. Another feature of your home is a message center. From here you can send messages to us and tag them with a specific topic or enter your own subject. In either case, your message will be routed to the APERS staff members best suited to answer your questions or address your concerns.

We're striving to make your communication choices easier and to eliminate unnecessary expense, effort and time. We're confident that as you get more familiar and comfortable with your ESS portal it will become your preferred way to interact with APERS.