

# Spotlight on retirement

LOS ANGELES COUNTY EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT ASSOCIATION • MARCH 2015 • VOL. 26, NO. 1



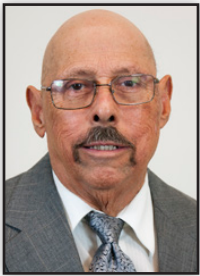
## LACERA ACCOMPLISHMENTS

LOS ANGELES COUNTY EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT ASSOCIATION

## LACERA Welcomes Newly Appointed Board Members

**W**e welcome those newly appointed by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to seats on LACERA's Board of Retirement and Board of Investments.

**Anthony Bravo** comes to the Board of Retirement with more than 32



other union and community service activities. Recently retired,

years of service to L.A. County as a Department of Children and Family Services Social Worker and former treasurer of SEIU 721, among

Mr. Bravo continues to volunteer in the community, providing mentorship to at-risk youth who are currently in continuation schools. An alumnus of California State University at Los Angeles, he has a Bachelor of Applied Science in Social Welfare.



business leader. Among her previous professional roles, she was a member

**Valerie Rose Villarreal** joins the Board of Investments with private sector experience as a management consultant and

of the Obama-Biden Presidential Transition Team, an Engagement Manager at McKinsey & Company, and a Special Assistant at the U.S. Small Business Administration. Ms. Villarreal has served clients in high-tech, media, and consumer industries on strategic and financial issues. She holds a Master of Business Administration and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Stanford University.

### IN THIS ISSUE:

- 2 From the Executive Desk
- 3 Attention: LACERA Anthem Blue Cross Members
- 4 COLA
- 6 Staying Healthy Together: Reducing Cancer Risk
- 8 Retirement Lifestyle: Volunteer
- 9 Customer Service: Call Centers
- 10 Anthem Blue Cross Prescriptions
- 10 Generic Drugs
- 11 Inside My LACERA: Your Profile Page
- 11 New Checks - Added Security

## Board of Retirement Approves COLA Increase for 2015

Check out the details inside on pg. 4

*Sorry We're*  
**CLOSED**

### Upcoming Holidays

**LACERA will be closed on:**

- Monday, May 25,  
In observance of Memorial Day.

Los Angeles County Employees  
Retirement Association

**Board of Retirement:**

**SHAWN R. KEHOE**

Chair  
Elected by Safety Members

**ALAN J. BERNSTEIN**

Vice Chair  
Appointed by Board of Supervisors

**WILLIAM DE LA GARZA**

Secretary  
Elected by Retired Members

**ANTHONY BRAVO**

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

**YVES CHERY**

Elected by General Members

**VIVIAN H. GRAY**

Elected by General Members

**JOSEPH KELLY**

County Treasurer & Tax Collector  
Ex-Officio Member

**DAVID L. MUIR**

Alternate Retired Member  
Elected by Retired Members

**RONALD A. OKUM**

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

**WILLIAM R. PRYOR**

Alternate Member  
Elected by Safety Members

**LES ROBBINS**

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

**Board of Investments:**

**JOHN M. BARGER**

Chair  
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**SHAWN R. KEHOE**

Elected by Safety Members

**DIANE A. SANDOVAL**

Elected by Retired Members

**HERMAN B. SANTOS**

Elected by General Members

**MICHAEL S. SCHNEIDER**

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

**ESTEVAN R. VALENZUELA**

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

**VALERIE ROSE VILLARREAL**

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

Chief Executive Officer

**GREGG RADEMACHER**

Assistant Executive Officer

**ROBERT HILL**

Assistant Executive Officer

**JJ Popowich**

From the  
**Executive Desk**

Gregg Rademacher – CEO, LACERA



# Mindful of Tomorrow, Ready for Today

As I write this, LACERA is in the midst of processing retirement applications for the period we call March Madness. It is the time of year when many of our members choose to retire and begin receiving the promised benefit that LACERA dedicates itself to producing, protecting and providing. But, how do we do it?

At the risk of giving away the secret sauce that has kept us successfully in business for the last 77 years, much of it comes down to planning. And while not as complex as a moon launch, our planning is done in phases.

As each new year approaches, we prepare for the board offsite meeting. The Board Offsite is an important three-day event focused on reflection, evaluation, education, sharing information, and developing the strategic plan for the next fiscal year. Held in January, the offsite provides a forum for our Board of Retirement and Board of Investments to meet with executive and management staff, outside consultants, and subject-matter experts from a variety of fields.

## Each Year Brings New Directions

LACERA develops a strategic plan every year. The plan serves as a map, setting priorities for the next three years and the initiatives necessary to accomplish these priorities. Our strategic plan is the product of discussion and debate among

our boards, executive team, and management.

This work begins in October at the Managers' Offsite, where our executive team meets with division managers to discuss the current state of LACERA and share ideas about what has worked well in the past, what challenges lie ahead, and most importantly, what can we do today to ensure our members continue to receive the services and benefits we promised. The executive team refines the objectives and prepares

**“In 2014 alone, the Los Angeles County population experienced a 5.5 percent increase.”**

a plan for presentation at the Board Offsite. This is followed by the annual budget meeting, where board members approve both the budget and strategic plan. Our executive team then finalizes the strategic plan and puts it into action across the divisions.

## 2015 Board Offsite Highlights

On the first day, LACERA's strategic plan for the coming year is introduced to our Boards. This provides an opportunity to highlight and measure our successes, and share the challenges of the prior year. We recognize the strategic plan is a living document, and our priorities sometimes require

## From the Executive Desk cont'd

immediate course correction or change. For example, in 2012, when PEPPRA was passed, the priorities of staff were realigned to assure a smooth and successful implementation.

Other topics on the first day included a discussion of our quality assurance practices and a presentation on practical ways to protect our members in the digital world. There was also an educational session on carpal tunnel syndrome, which is sometimes an issue in disability determinations. The day closed with a review of last year's legislative session and a projection of what we may expect from Sacramento this year.

Day two was dedicated to topics related to LACERA's Retiree Healthcare Program. Highlights included: presentations on membership demographics and methods of targeting communications and sharing resources with our retired members; a discussion of LACERA's 1982 healthcare agreement; and a distinguished panel discussion on palliative and end-of-life care issues.

The final day was devoted to LACERA's investments and current funding status. Our Chief Investment Officer, David Kushner, offered his perspective on what the Investment Office should look like over the next five years to accomplish our objectives. Other highlights included educational sessions on asset allocation and strategy initiatives for the Fund and for each asset class.

### Strategic Initiatives

Our strategic initiatives for fiscal year 2015-2016 and the next three years involve anticipating an increase in membership and expanding our internal technology systems across our divisions.

We're mindful of a growing membership base. In 2014, the Los Angeles County population experienced a 5.5 percent increase. This represents an increased need for the essential services L.A. County provides – everything from firefighting to helping to rehabilitate patients – and a potential corresponding increase in public employment to meet those

needs. We're preparing to serve more members in the coming years.

We also look forward to implementing customized computer programs, like those we use in our Member Services and Claims Processing divisions, in our Retiree Healthcare and Disability Retirement divisions. This technology, which will increase staff's accessibility to members' information, will help to expedite processes like filing a disability claim or enrolling in a medical plan.

### We Look to the Future

LACERA is a forward-thinking association. Our boards, management, and staff strive to enhance the quality and expand the scope of services we offer to our members. We remain committed in fulfilling our mission to produce, protect, and provide the promised benefits.

Have a great year, everyone!



## Attention: Members Enrolled in LACERA - Administered Anthem Blue Cross Plans

You may have seen in the news that Anthem, the parent company of one of our retiree health insurance providers, was the victim of a sophisticated cyber attack. Anthem informed us that its member data was indeed accessed, and LACERA is working closely with them to better understand the impact on our members.

If you are a current or former Anthem subscriber who already provided consent for email communication, **you will receive an email concerning 24 months of complimentary identity protection and credit-**

**monitoring services.** Anthem is required to send this email because of state laws concerning breach notifications.

The subject line of the email will read "Important Message from Anthem, Inc.," and it will direct members to visit AnthemFacts.com to sign up for credit-protection services. The email will not ask for personal information. We encourage you to read the email and sign up for the services provided by Anthem.

### Online Fraud

When consumers are seen as vulnerable after a cyber attack like this

one, the likelihood of additional scams may increase. We advise you to be aware of second-party phishing, which is when Internet fraudsters impersonate another business to trick consumers into disclosing personal information.

Use these guidelines to help prevent further fraud:

- Don't reply to emails, texts, or pop-up messages that ask for personal or financial information such as credit card information,

cont'd on pg. 7

# Board of Retirement Approves COLA Increase for 2015

At its February 12, 2015 meeting, the Board of Retirement approved a **+0.5 percent 2015 cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) increase** for retirees and eligible survivors, beneficiaries, and alternate payees, effective April 1, 2015. This increase will be reflected in your **April 30 allowance**.

The increase is based on the change in the cost of living from December 2013 to December 2014, given in the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index (CPI) for all Urban Consumers in the Los Angeles-Riverside-Orange County metro area. The calendar year-to-date change is +0.73 percent. Rounded to the nearest one-half of one percent, as prescribed by law, the result is +0.5 percent.

**+0.5 percent  
2015 COLA increase for all Plans**

## COLA Accumulation May Supplement COLA

According to the provisions of LACERA retirement plans, in years in which the COLA percentage has exceeded the maximum allowable, the excess amount is accumulated. This amount may be used to supplement COLA benefits in future years. This accumulated percentage carryover is called the COLA Accumulation. The longer you have been retired (or receiving an allowance as a survivor, beneficiary, or alternate payee), the more COLA carryover you will have accumulated.

LACERA uses the COLA Accumulation to fund the maximum increase allowable under each Plan. Members of LACERA General and Safety Plan A, depending upon the date of retirement, may receive up to 3.0 percent. The maximum allowable increase for members of Plans B, C, D, E, and G, is up to 2.0 percent.\*

The +0.5 percent COLA approved for 2015 is less than the maximum allowable increase for all members. Qualified retirees and eligible survivors in Plans B, C, D, E, and G, with sufficient COLA Accumulations will draw from them to supplement this year's +0.5 percent adjustment.\*

### EXAMPLE: HOW COLA ACCUMULATION WORKS

COLA Increase	+	COLA Accumulation	=	Total Increase for Plan D Member
0.5%		1.5%		2.0%

If the COLA Accumulation for a specific Plan is less than the maximum allowable percentage, the member will not receive the maximum percentage.

For more information on COLA and COLA Accumulation, visit [lacera.com](http://lacera.com), Benefits, Retired Member section.

*\*Plan E COLA increases apply only to service credit earned after June 4, 2002 and any purchased Plan E Elective COLA. Plan E members who retired after June 4, 2002 may receive up to a 2 percent COLA increase. The portion of the 2 percent COLA is based upon a ratio of the months of service earned after June 4, 2002, plus any purchased Plan E Elective COLA, divided by the total months of service.*

## AAAIM Presents LACERA Chief Investment Officer with Champion Award



The Association for Asian American Investment Managers (AAAIM), a national nonprofit organization founded in 2006, is dedicated to the advancement of Asian Americans in asset management. In recognition of David Kushner's efforts in supporting diversity in the investment industry, AAAIM presented him with its

Champion Award at the 2014 national conference, held this year in Palo Alto. The award, given last year to CalSTRS, highlights excellence in support of greater diversity and inclusion in investment management.

Mr. Kushner, who previously served as deputy director of investments at the City & County of San Francisco Employees' Retirement System, joined LACERA in 2011 as LACERA's Chief Investment Officer.



**LACERA  
ACCOMPLISHMENTS**  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT ASSOCIATION

# 2015 COLA Accumulation Chart

The chart shows the COLA adjustment percentages for all retirees and eligible survivors as of April 1, 2015.

Retirement Dates	Plan	Maximum Cost of Living	CPI Change	As of April '14	April '15 Withdrawals	As of April '15
Prior to 4/1/81	A	3.0%	0.5%	10.5%	2.5%	8.0%
4/1/81 – 3/31/82	A	3.0%	0.5%	4.2%	2.5%	1.7%
4/1/82 – 3/31/83	A	3.0%	0.5%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
4/1/83 – 3/31/15	A	3.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
4/1/77 – 3/31/90	B, C, D	2.0%	0.5%	16.5%	1.5%	15.0%
4/1/90 – 3/31/91	B, C, D	2.0%	0.5%	13.9%	1.5%	12.4%
4/1/91 – 3/31/92	B, C, D	2.0%	0.5%	9.3%	1.5%	7.8%
4/1/92 – 3/31/00	B, C, D	2.0%	0.5%	8.7%	1.5%	7.2%
4/1/00 – 3/31/01	B, C, D	2.0%	0.5%	8.4%	1.5%	6.9%
4/1/01 – 3/31/02	B, C, D	2.0%	0.5%	6.7%	1.5%	5.2%
4/1/02 – 3/31/03	B, C, D	2.0%	0.5%	6.6%	1.5%	5.1%
4/1/03 – 3/31/05	B, C, D	2.0%	0.5%	4.9%	1.5%	3.4%
4/1/05 – 3/31/06	B, C, D	2.0%	0.5%	2.5%	1.5%	1.0%
4/1/06 – 3/31/15	B, C, D	2.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
1/1/13 – 3/31/15	PEPRA Plans: G and Safety C	2.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
6/4/02 – 3/31/03	E*	2.0%	0.5%	6.6%	1.5%	5.1%
4/1/03 – 3/31/05	E*	2.0%	0.5%	4.9%	1.5%	3.4%
4/1/05 – 3/31/06	E*	2.0%	0.5%	2.5%	1.5%	1.0%
4/1/06 – 3/31/15	E*	2.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

## EXAMPLE: Using COLA Accumulation to Receive Maximum Allowable COLA

Maximum allowable COLA increase in Plans B, C, D, E, G	=	2.0%	➔	COLA Accumulation	=	5.0%
CPI Change	-	0.5%		Withdrawal from COLA Accumulation to fund increase and provide the maximum allowed	-	1.5%
Leaving a difference of...	=	1.5%		Remaining balance of COLA Accumulation	=	3.5%

## 2015 Payday Calendar

**March**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	<b>M</b>	<b>D</b>				

**April**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	<b>M</b>	<b>D</b>		

**May**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	<b>H</b>	26	27	28	<b>B</b>	30
31						

**M** = Check Mailing Date

**D** = Direct Deposit Date

**H** = Holiday

**B** = Both Mailing and Direct Deposit Date

# STAYING HEALTHY TOGETHER

## Reducing Your Cancer Risk

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**S**tress is a normal and often healthy part of our lives. But too much or chronic stress can have a negative effect on our lives and our health. It's well known that stress plays a role in health conditions ranging from heart disease to anxiety. And now there is mounting evidence that suggests a link between stress and developing certain kinds of cancer.

### The Link Between Stress and Cancer

Every day, our bodies are exposed to cancer-causing agents in the air we breathe, the food we eat, and the water we drink. These agents create abnormal cells in our bodies. When our bodies are working well, our natural defenses expel these elements (our immune system helps to keep abnormal cells from invading). If they do get through, our T-cells destroy them, and our DNA can even repair abnormal cells.

However, stress can keep our bodies from running well, lowering our ability to fight off diseases like cancer. While it's still not known exactly what role stress plays in the development of cancer, we do know that unlike genetics, stress is a contributing factor we can control.

Stress, or the fight or flight response, floods the body with hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones come in handy if you're chased by a wild animal, but they do little to help with life's everyday stressors. These hormones cause physical responses including:

1. Shutting down the immune system.
2. Diverting blood to the limbs and major muscles, which inhibits the body's ability to repair and replace cells and makes tissues vulnerable to infection from parasites and bacteria.
3. Redirecting blood from the forebrain (intelligence) to the hindbrain (reflex reaction) causes rational thought and long-term planning to shut down. Sticking to a healthy eating program becomes very difficult, which affects the immune system and overall health.

As the body's stress response continues, waste products from muscles build up, causing inflammation and widespread pain and/or headaches.

### Meditation Can Help

Meditation is a mind-body process that uses concentration to relax the body and calm the mind. The National Institute of Health (NIH) reports a variety of benefits from regular meditation, including less chronic pain and anxiety and lower blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood-cortisol levels.

A commonly practiced type of meditation is called



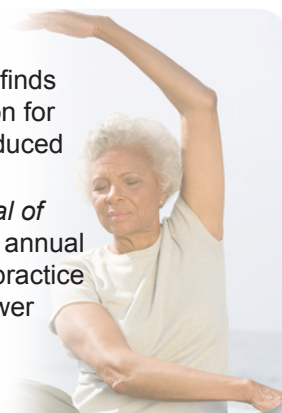
Want to Reduce Your Cancer Risk?  
Say "Om."

mindfulness meditation – observing sensations, perceptions, and thoughts without judgment. Studies have found that mindfulness meditation helps reduce anxiety, and those who perform it have a better immune response to the flu vaccine. Meditation practitioners say it improves their mood, immune function, and mental efficiency and alertness – all of which reduces stress.

### Did You Know?

- A UCLA study published in 2012 finds that 12 minutes of daily meditation for eight weeks decreases stress-induced aging.
- Research in the *American Journal of Health Promotion* shows that the annual medical expenses of those who practice transcendental meditation are lower than those who don't.

Sources: Bloomberg, Huffington Post



## Want to Reduce Your Cancer Risk? cont'd

### Talk to Your Doctor

At your next physical exam, talk to your doctor about your lifestyle and family history and make a plan to get cancer screenings that are appropriate for you.



Sit down in a comfortable position, set your timer, and close your eyes. Concentrate on your breath coming in and out of your nose. Inhale slowly through your nose (from your stomach, not your chest). Notice how the air feels hitting your nostrils as you inhale and how it feels going out as you exhale.

When the mind starts to wander (which it inevitably will), gently return your focus to your breathing. The idea is not to block or stop your thoughts, but to allow them to enter and exit your mind just as your breath enters and exits your body. When your alarm goes off, slowly open your eyes and continue your day.

### Getting Started

One of the best things about meditation is that all you need to start is a quiet place without distraction, a pillow for sitting on the ground (or a chair), a timer (most smart phones have one), and no expectations of what will or won't happen. Start with a 5- to 10-minute daily practice and work your way up.

Explore these resources for more information on meditation:

- [cancerfightingstrategies.com](http://cancerfightingstrategies.com)
- [mindful.org](http://mindful.org)
- [lifehack.org](http://lifehack.org)

Sources: American Cancer Society, PsychCentral, Medical News Today, The American Institute of Stress, CancerNetwork



## Spring Staying Healthy Together Workshop Held April 29

The half-day workshops offer a host of resources to help you stay healthy. As always, the workshops are a fun opportunity to learn ways to improve your health, win great prizes, and reconnect with other County retirees. The theme for the spring workshop is cancer prevention, screening, and treatment. Dr. Laura Clapper will be the presenter. She is the Regional Vice President and Medical Executive for Anthem Blue Cross Health and Wellness Account Management – Western Region. Watch your mailbox and [lacera.com](http://lacera.com) in early April for more information.

## Attention: LACERA Anthem Blue Cross Members cont'd from pg. 3

Social Security numbers, bank account numbers, or passwords

- Don't click on links in these messages
- Don't call phone numbers given in these messages

The goal of these fraudsters is to create websites and communications that look legitimate. If you're concerned about your account or need to reach an organization you do business with, call the number on your financial statements or on the back of your credit card.

LACERA continues to work closely with Anthem to better understand the cyber attack and its impact on our members. Visit [lacera.com](http://lacera.com) for updates.

## Anthem Blue Cross FAQs

### Q1. How many people are impacted?

A. Anthem is conducting an extensive IT forensic investigation to determine which members were impacted. They will provide additional details to their clients as soon as it is available. Initial analysis indicates the attacker had access to information on tens of millions of consumers. This includes Anthem's affiliated health plan members and other consumers within the Blue Cross Blue Shield system. Social Security numbers were included in a very small population of affected consumers.

### Q2. Do you recommend members change their passwords on the secure member site?

A. There is no evidence in Anthem's investigation to date to suggest that member information or credentials were compromised. For security reasons, Anthem encourages members to frequently change their passwords.

### Q3. Are there sources for more information about the Anthem cyber attack?

A. Anthem encourages anyone with questions to go to [AnthemFacts.com](http://AnthemFacts.com) or call their toll-free number at 877-263-7995.



# Retirement Lifestyle

In the December *Spotlight*, we explored encore entrepreneurship as one of four emerging models of working in retirement. If becoming an entrepreneur isn't for you, maybe you're more inclined to volunteer for a cause worth serving.

Whether you're newly retired or have been reading *Spotlight* for years, it's never too late to offer your time to an organization or individual who would benefit from the resources you offer. General H. Norman Schwarzkopf once said, "You cannot help someone get up a hill without getting closer to the top yourself." Might as well help someone along the way if you're going in that direction.

According to the results of a 2013 health and volunteering study published by

UnitedHealth Group, "Doing Good is Good for You," 94 percent of individuals who had volunteered in the

last 12 months reported that doing so improved their mood. About 25 percent of those surveyed said that volunteering has helped them to manage a chronic illness, both through keeping active and taking their minds off of their troubles.

Perhaps your favorite art museum has a docent program. Maybe you'd like to give financial advice to a nonprofit organization. If you have plans to travel overseas, you might consider assisting a disaster-relief organization while there. Whether your interests keep you at home to volunteer online, close to home, or on missions all over the world — volunteer opportunities abound.

Once you identify a cause or organization of interest, give some consideration to the following:

- Determine the commitment you're ready to make. Is this something you'll devote ten hours a week to doing, and for just a few weeks?
- Identify your motivations for volunteering. Do you want to make new friends? Do you want to segue into full-time employment? Are you looking for the opportunity to travel? Assessing your objectives will make it easier to prioritize one opportunity over another.
- Ask around. Is the organization credible? Request that the organization puts you in touch with veteran volunteers. What do they say about their

experiences there? A little bit of research may spare you months of fulfilling a commitment that turns out to be uncomfortable.

Be sure the hours required, the duration of the work, the intensity, and the opportunity generally suits what you want and are able to offer.

## Resources to Get Started

There are numerous resources for would-be volunteers. Many of them are online, but keep in mind that getting your volunteer gig may be as easy as asking a friend and joining in a volunteer activity.

If your search takes you to the Internet, try these sites:

• **VolunteerMatch** (volunteermatch.org) is a national nonprofit organization that can put you in touch with a nonprofit that needs you, and you can read previous

volunteers' reviews of each organization.

- **Global Volunteers**, a well-established (Non-Governmental Organization) in special Consultative Status with the United Nations, has a number of exciting projects abroad. If a one- to three-week volunteer vacation appeals to you, visit [globalvolunteers.org](http://globalvolunteers.org).
- Would you rather stay home? **iCouldBe** hosts an online community of volunteer mentors for at-risk middle and high school students. Read more at [icouldbe.org](http://icouldbe.org).
- AARP hosts **Create The Good**, where you can register and create a profile to receive local volunteer opportunities that match your interests and skills. Check it out at [createthegood.org](http://createthegood.org).
- The Corporation for National & Community Service hosts several **Senior Corps** programs for those 55 and older. Volunteers serve as foster grandparents to children of all ages, help adults live independently in their own homes as senior companions, and respond to a range of other opportunities. Read more at [nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps](http://nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps).

If you decide to volunteer in retirement, you'll likely get more than you give. There are a lot of opportunities through volunteering to have fun, find new friends, and share in something you care about.

**Disclaimer:** This material is given for general informational purposes only. LACERA is not affiliated with and does not endorse the above-referenced organizations and resources.



# 800-786-6464 LACERA's Call Centers: Member Services and Retiree Healthcare

Providing excellent customer service is important to LACERA. In this article, we will focus on customer service within our call centers in Member Services and Retiree Healthcare. When our members call, we want their questions answered to their satisfaction, and we aim to make the experience a pleasant one. Let's explore the variety of ways our call centers serve our members.

## Member Services Call Center: How May I Help You?

Our Retirement Benefits Specialists (RBS) listen to our members and provide the answers they're looking for. Our Specialists are knowledgeable solution-finders and take the time to make sure our members understand the processes and receive the information they need. The Specialists also follow up, as requested, and mail members retirement materials.

The primary function our Specialists perform over the phone is retirement counseling. Members often call to have a Retirement Benefit Estimate created or for information on the best day to retire, an explanation of the Retirement Options, or request a plan transfer. The Specialists can update a member's direct deposit, make an address change, and help members with their My LACERA registration. They can also change the addresses for beneficiaries, but for legal reasons, beneficiaries cannot be changed by phone.

Our Specialists access an individual's membership data on file with LACERA and provide specific, personalized answers to each member. Our Call Center is open Monday through Friday from 7 a.m.

to 5:30 p.m. Give us a call at 800-786-6464.

## Call Center Training

Before our Call Center staff ever answers a call, they undergo an extensive year-long training course known as the CORE Benefits Training Program, under the direction of our Quality Assurance team. Trainees are taught LACERA procedures and retirement calculations, and they learn the finer points of the Los Angeles County Employees Retirement Law of 1937 (CERL) and the California Public Employees' Pension Reform Act of 2013 (PEPRA).

During their training, the trainees put their new knowledge to the test and participate in special projects. They also team up with experienced Call Center staff members for comprehensive hands-on training, during which they take members' calls. On top of the CORE knowledge-based training, trainees also participate in customer service-related training. Upon graduation, the trainees become RBS, and are able to respond to members' inquiries, offering the world-class LACERA customer service our members deserve.

## Retiree Healthcare Call Center: Dial Our 800 Number and Press 1



The **Retiree Healthcare (RHC) Call Center** is committed to providing our members with high-quality and efficient customer service. To ensure the privacy of our members, all Retiree Healthcare Specialists are Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) compliant.

The RHC Call Center staff undergoes focused training on a variety of insurance and customer-service related healthcare subjects and can assist LACERA members with a variety of health insurance inquiries:

- Explaining to members the eligibility requirements for enrolling in our insurance plans
- Providing detailed benefits information – such as co-pays, deductibles, out-of-pocket expenses, etc. — on all available medical and dental/vision plans
- Assisting members with completing enrollment forms
- Providing the costs of our medical and dental/vision plans
- Informing members of the steps to take as they approach age 65, including Medicare information and how it coordinates with the medical plans LACERA offers
- Explaining the Medicare Part B premium reimbursement program

Our RHC Call Center is open Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. You can reach our Benefits Specialists at 800-786-6464, **then Press 1 for Retiree Healthcare.** Members may also address their inquiries to LACERA via e-mail, at [healthcare@lacera.com](mailto:healthcare@lacera.com).

# Don't Overpay for Medications

If You're Enrolled in LACERA-administered Anthem Blue Cross Plan I, II, or III

Starting in April 2015, if you're enrolled in Anthem Blue Cross I, II, or III plans, you'll soon have more cost-efficient options for obtaining maintenance medications. Members enrolled in these plans can now get a 90-day supply of maintenance medication at mail-order pricing, and mail-order co-pays, through the CVS Caremark Pharmacy Benefit Manager for Anthem Blue Cross.

This does not apply to non-CVS retail pharmacies or immediate or short-term medicine needs. For immediate or short-term medicine needs, you have to pay the cost of the medication 100% at retail, and later get reimbursed by Anthem Blue Cross at 80% if in-network pharmacy (or 60% out-of-network) after the annual deductible is met.

With **Maintenance Choice**, you can choose to fill a 90-day supply of prescription medication at any of the 7,300 CVS Pharmacy locations, or for the same low price, by mail with CVS Caremark Mail Service Pharmacy.

If you fill your prescription at a CVS Pharmacy, you'll pay the mail-order co-pay instead of paying the full cost and waiting for Anthem to reimburse you. All other retail claims (non-maintenance choice claims) will continue to be subject to the 100 percent member co-pay at the pharmacy, and member reimbursements will still be required from Anthem.

To determine which option is best for you, speak with a pharmacist at your local CVS pharmacy, visit

## OPTION 1:

Fill the prescription at a CVS Pharmacy

Fill your 90-day supply at any CVS Pharmacy location.

## OPTION 2:

Fill the prescription using CVS Caremark Mail Service Pharmacy

Have a 90-day supply of your long-term medications mailed to you.

caremark.com, or call CVS Caremark Customer Care at 800-450-3755.

### Long-term Maintenance Medications

You may order up to a 90-day supply of your long-term maintenance prescription drugs by mail. Call the CVS Caremark Mail Service Pharmacy at 800-450-3755

or visit caremark.com to do so.

After CVS Caremark receives your order, your prescription will be mailed in approximately 10-14 days. The co-pay amounts for long-term maintenance prescription drugs are:

- \$10 for a generic drug
- \$30 for a preferred brand-name drug (on the drug list)
- \$50 for a non-preferred brand-name drug (not on the drug list)

cont'd on next pg.

## Get More Savings: Generic vs. Brand-Name Prescription Drugs

There are many ways to save money and make your life easier when filling prescription drugs. Purchasing generic prescription drugs can make a big difference to your pocketbook.

### The Switch to Generic Drugs

Generic drugs work exactly the same as their brand-name equivalents, but they cost much less. Switching to generic drugs is just one of the ways you can be a better

healthcare consumer. By doing so, you'll reduce the money you spend without compromising the quality of the drug you purchase.

Why the cost difference? When prescription drug patents expire, generic equivalents become available at a lower cost because more companies can manufacture them, and the FDA inspection and approval process takes less time.

Ask your doctor if a generic equivalent is available and right for you. You can also contact your individual medical plan providers for specific information about their prescription drug list.

### The Breakdown

Here's how generic and brand-name drugs match up:

- Same active ingredients
- Same quality
- Same safety inspections
- Same effectiveness

# Inside My LACERA

## – Your My LACERA Profile

We've made it easy for you to adjust your basic contact information with LACERA by using your personalized Profile page within My LACERA. Once you sign in to My LACERA, you can locate your Profile page at the top of the home page; it's right next to your name.

### Address

Update your address online at My LACERA. You can add a few addresses to your Profile page — a home address and a mailing address. Having your current address on file



with us ensures that you receive your retirement allowance and other

correspondence in a timely manner. Keep us in mind when you move, and update your address.

### Phone Numbers

You can store up to three telephone numbers – primary, cell, and home – within your Profile page.

### Other

You may also change your email address, password, and security questions.

**My LACERA is your personal connection to your retirement.**

## Don't Overpay for Medications... cont'd

### Specialty Medications

Specialty medications (typically very expensive medications) are used to treat complex or rare conditions, such as multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoporosis, cancer, or anemia. They are usually self-injected or administered by a healthcare professional.

Unless they are dispensed in a physician's office, specialty medications are available by mail through Caremark Specialty Pharmacy Services. Most specialty medication prescriptions can also be dropped-off and picked-up at

your local CVS Pharmacy if that is more convenient. The co-pay amounts for specialty drugs are:

- \$50 for a supply of up to 30 days
- \$100 for a 31- to 60-day supply
- \$150 for a 90-day supply

To participate in this program, you must register with CVS Caremark Specialty Pharmacy Services by calling 800-237-2767. Use the same number for refills.

- Contact Anthem Blue Cross at 800-284-1110
- CVS Caremark Customer Care at 800-450-3755,
- LACERA Retiree Healthcare at 800-786-6464, then press 1

## New Checks Mean More Security

LACERA members who receive their retirement allowance via check will notice a few changes to the look of their check. Starting in May, the paper checks will be updated with new security features, all of which help LACERA to produce, PROTECT, and provide the promised benefits.

Changes on the new checks include:

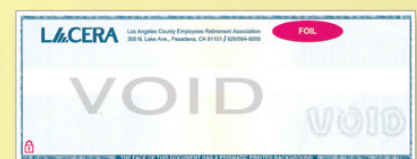
- The printed check statement is now 8½ x 14 and the member's name *and* address appear on the "records" portion of the check statement
- Only the member's name appears on the check itself (not the address)

- A holographic foil stamp is added to the front of the check, which will not display if copied
- High-resolution warning band
- True watermark, which displays if copied

Additionally, members will receive two inserts with their April and May retirement allowances. These inserts help to explain the new checks and highlight the added security features.

### Have you considered

**Direct Deposit?** We strongly recommend you enroll in Direct Deposit. It is the most secure and quickest way to receive your monthly retirement allowance. It's easy to enroll on My LACERA – visit lacera.com for details.





**LACERA**  
 PO BOX 7060  
 PASADENA, CA 91109-7060

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## LACERA Trustee and Principal Investment Officer Present at State-wide City and County Event



Board of Retirement member **William Pryor** and Principal Investment Officer **Vache Mahseredjian** (responsible for Fixed Income and Commodities), delivered presentations at the California Association of Public Retirement Systems (CALAPRS) Advanced Course in Retirement Plan Administration. The course, which several LACERA staff attended, is a three-day workshop for State and County public pension employees across California.



*William Pryor*



*Vache Mahseredjian*

Mr. Pryor discussed a trustee's function in a pension system, including fiduciary duties, when it's worthwhile to compromise, and his observations from 15 years on LACERA's Boards. In his presentation, Mr. Mahseredjian explained the mechanics of strategic asset allocation – how it works and what happens when it doesn't.

CALAPRS, a nonprofit corporation, was founded in 1985 as an educational and informational exchange association for the public pension systems in California.



*"Spring is nature's way of saying, 'Let's party!'"*

*– Robin Williams*

**Editor's Note:** *Spotlight on Retirement* is created by LACERA's staff. Consult with professional advisors regarding legal, tax, and/or medical matters; LACERA does not offer legal, tax, or medical advice.

**Email:** [welcome@lacera.com](mailto:welcome@lacera.com)