



FAQs: Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) for Federal Employees

- 1. What is VERA? VERA stands for Voluntary Early Retirement Authority and** is commonly referred to as early out retirement. This authority expands the normal retirement eligibility to allow employees to retire voluntarily, with an immediate annuity, before they would otherwise be eligible. The VERA is separate from the Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment (VSIP) also called the buyout authority. A VERA or VSIP are not dependent or contingent on the other. An agency can offer one and not the other. To get both you must meet the criteria for both.
- 2. Who is eligible for a VERA?** Once your agency has received OPM approval for a VERA, which the NIH received, you must also meet some additional requirements. If you are covered by the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), you must have served in a position covered by the CSRS for at least 1 year out of the 2 years immediately before retirement. For employees covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), this rule does not apply.

Select NIH employees meeting all the following conditions are eligible for an early out:

- Minimum age and service requirements
 - At least **age 50** with at least **20 years** of creditable Federal service; or
 - **Any age** with at least **25 years** creditable Federal service.
 - Minimum of five years **civilian** service, not military service. Military service can increase your service years, but you must have at least 5 years of civilian service.
 - Employee is separating from a position subject to CSRS or FERS coverage.
 - If subject to CSRS, must be covered under CSRS for at least one out of the two years prior to retirement. This requirement does not apply to FERS employees.
- 3. Is there a waiver for years of service or age for this VERA?** Not at this time.
 - 4. I am Title 42. Can I take the VERA?** Time limited appointments are not eligible. We are obtaining clarification for Title 42s that do not specifically have a time limit.
 - 5. Am I eligible for VERA as a FERS employee who meets the Minimum Retirement Age (MRA) with at least 10 years of service, but less than 20 years?** No, 20 years of service is the minimum to qualify for the VERA. You may be eligible to retire under the FERS MRA+10 optional retirement with a reduced annuity.
 - 6. Are the age and creditable service requirements calculated at time of filing?** Age and creditable service is calculated based on the determined retirement date.
 - 7. I submitted and was approved for the DRP. How does this impact me?** Employees who were approved for DRP are not eligible for the HHS-VERA/VSIP offer.
 - 8. What is a DSR and how does it differ from a VERA?** To learn more about DSR, please refer to our [Fact Sheet](#).

- 9. How does opting into the VERA program become impacted in the event of a RIF?** Our office doesn't have specific information surrounding any RIFs. You would need to reach out to your Retirement Specialist to review your situation.
- 10. Can I retire under VERA and receive a VSIP?** Yes, NIH is offering both to the notified employees, and **if you meet the criteria for both**, you can retire under VERA and receive a VSIP.
- 11. If I retire under VERA and do not take the buyout, can I take a job in another Federal agency?** Yes; however, you will come back as a reemployed annuitant, which generally means your annuity is subtracted from the salary you earn in the new position.
- 12. What if my agency offers a VERA but I am on military duty during the authority time limit?** Employees on military duty are treated as though they were still on the job and are not disadvantaged because of their military service. Therefore, if you met the eligibility criteria during the offer period, you would have 30 days following your return to duty to either accept or reject an offer of VSIP or VERA.
- 13. What is the effective date of my retirement/separation?** You may select the date of your retirement as long as it's in the window. Refer to the [FAQ](#) page for details.
- 14. Can I use my accumulated annual or sick leave balance to meet the years of service?** No, neither your annual nor your sick leave balance can be used to meet eligibility requirements.
- 15. I am Title 42. Can I take the VERA?** Time limited appointments are not eligible. We are obtaining clarification for Title 42s that do not specifically have a time limit.
- 16. What does "continuous service" mean?** To be eligible for early retirement, you must have been on the rolls of the National Institutes of Health 30 days prior to the request for the VERA, with no breaks. Leave without pay (LWOP) and other non-pay status during an appointment is NOT considered a break in service.
- 17. Leaving federal service under VERA is supposed to be voluntary. What if I am offered a VERA or VSIP but do not choose to leave?** Early Retirement is for voluntary separations AND coercion is *prohibited*.
- 18. Does the VERA eligibility change the eligibility for regular optional retirement?** No.
- If you are under CSRS, you can take regular optional retirement if you are 55 with at least 30 years of service; age 60 with 20 years of service, or age 62 with 5 years of service.
 - If you are under FERS, you can take regular optional retirement if you have reached your minimum retirement age (MRA) with at least 30 years of service; age 60 with 20 years of service, or age 62 with 5 years of service.
 - In addition, an employee under FERS is eligible for an immediate annuity if he/she has 10 years of service and has reached the Minimum Retirement Age (MRA). (Under this eligibility

there is a 5 percent reduction for each year the employee is under age 62.) The MRA chart can be found at the following link: <http://www.opm.gov/retire/faq/pre/faq11.asp#FERS>.

- An employee under CSRS must meet the 1-out-of-last-2-years coverage requirement and all employees must have at least 5 years of civilian service.

19. I have not been enrolled in the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) program for a full 5-year period and I accept a VERA, do I lose my FEHB?

No, OPM has granted pre-approved waivers to employees who have been covered under the FEHB Program continuously since the beginning date of the agency's approved VERA and retire under the VERA.

20. I have not been enrolled in the Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FGLI) program for a full 5-year period. Do I lose my life insurance when I retire under VERA?

Most likely, yes, but you could be eligible under certain circumstances. You should consult with your benefits specialist to discuss your options.

21. Can I cancel an application for disability retirement and take advantage of the VERA if I meet eligibility requirements?

Yes, you may withdraw your disability application at any time prior to its approval from OPM. Applications may also be submitted for more than one retirement for which you qualify (discontinued service, MRA, etc.) and OPM will review each application separately.

22. If I take early retirement, is my annuity reduced?

- CSRS employees who retire under the voluntary early retirement authority will have a reduction in their annuity of 2 percent per year for each year they are under age 55. (The reduction is 1/6 of 1 percent for each full month.) This is a permanent reduction in annuity.
- Employees with only FERS service will not have their annuities reduced under voluntary early retirement. FERS employees retiring under the MRA+10 provision are subject to a reduction of 5% for each year under age 62.
- Under early retirement, FERS employees will receive a FERS supplement if under age 62 once they reach their MRA.
- Employees with both CSRS and FERS service will have a reduction only for the CSRS portion of their annuity if under age 55.
- Special rules apply to the calculation of annuities of employees who have part-time service after 1986. Please contact your benefits specialist HCMO to determine if these rules apply to your situation.

23. Can I use my accumulated annual or sick leave balance to meet the years of service?

No, neither your annual nor your sick leave balance can be used to meet eligibility requirements.

24. Do I receive payment for unused annual or sick leave upon taking VERA?

You will be paid for your unused annual leave. Sick leave is used as part of your annuity computation.

25. I'm covered by FERS. Can I still receive the Special Retirement Supplement as a FERS covered employee?

Yes, but you will not receive this until you reach your MRA.

26. How do I know if I have enough time in service to meet the requirements to retire?

Although you can check your retirement service computation date (SCD) in GRB; you should still check with your benefits specialist **BEFORE** you make a decision on accepting a VERA. The Benefits Office can provide you with a retirement calculation and verify that your retirement SCD is correct. Different types of appointments; types of federal service; or paying a deposit/redeposit can make a difference in your SCD. The rules are complicated and differ depending on the retirement system you are covered under. **Do not just assume your service time is creditable.**

27. Where can I go to obtain an estimate of my annuity?

You need to contact your benefits specialist at AskBenefits@nih.gov or by using the [HR Contacts](#).

28. Where can I get more general information on federal retirement benefits?

Click here <http://www.opm.gov/retire/index.aspx>. If you have questions or need additional information contact your benefits specialist at AskBenefits@nih.gov or by using the [HR Contacts](#).

29. What is the effective date of my retirement/separation?

You may select the date of your retirement as long as it's in the window. Refer to the [FAQ](#) page for details.

30. Can I delay the date of my retirement? NIH OHR is waiting on additional information surrounding dates for the HHS VERA-VSIP.

31. Can Veterans Preference be applied to be eligible for a VERA? No. There is no preference for veterans under the VERA authority.

32. If I accept the current VERA offer, will I then be placed on administrative leave? NIH OHR is still waiting clarification on separation/retirement dates/leave, etc.

33. What happens to my benefits during and after the VERA process? (Ex: FSAs) Please review our [VERA Fact Sheet](#) and other FAQs at [Retirement FAQs | Office of Human Resources](#).