

# CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS RETIREMENT SYSTEM (CORS) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



If you have questions about your unique situation that are not covered in this FAQ, please contact the Maryland State Retirement Agency at 1-800-492-5909 or 410-625-5555. Alternatively, you can schedule an in-person appointment ([bit.ly/corsappt](https://bit.ly/corsappt)) at the Baltimore office.

## How many years do I have to put in the new system to retire?

You can retire from the Correctional Officers Retirement System (CORS) with 20 years of service as long as you have made 1 month of contributions to CORS. There is no age requirement if you have 20 years of service. If you are 55, you are also eligible for retirement, so long as you are vested in CORS (5 or 10 years depending on when you became a State employee).

You are vested in CORS after 5 years of service if you were a State employee prior to July 1, 2011. If you became a state employee on or after July 1, 2011, you are vested in CORS after 10 years.

If you choose not to transfer your time (only applicable to those employed with the State prior to July 1, 2008), you will have to become vested in the CORS system, starting from zero. You will also need 20 years of service combined in CORS & EPS.

## Who will be transferred to the CORS system from the state Employee Pension System (EPS)?

Everyone who joined state employment from July 1, 2008 and onward will be automatically transferred to CORS. There is no opt out for those who entered State employment from July 1, 2008 & onward.

If you joined state employment before July 1, 2008, you will be automatically transferred unless you indicate otherwise. For those who entered State employment prior to July 1, 2008, you will receive a letter soon, possibly as early as July 2024. The letter will contain information about how to opt out of the CORS transfer, but the transfer will generally benefit almost everyone. You will have to complete the request process to avoid transfer to CORS prior to June 1, 2025.

Anyone hired on or after July 1, 2024 will be enrolled in CORS from the beginning of their employment.

## Can I retire from CORS before I have 20 years of service?

You can only retire early if you are at least 55 years of age and are vested (5 years if you were hired before July 1, 2011; 10 years if you were hired on or after July 1, 2011). Keep in mind that your benefit factor is based on years of service, so if you are 55 with less than 20 years of service, your pension amount will be lower.

## I have 20 years of service and I'm planning to retire. When can I expect my benefits?

August 1, 2024 is the earliest date you can retire from CORS. Please expect a slight delay – approximately 2 months – until you draw your first benefit. While you may not get a check in August, you will receive your pension from the day you retire. Even if your benefit is delayed, it will be retroactive, so, for example, you may receive your August and September benefit at the same time.

## How will my pension amount be determined?

Your pension will be based on your highest 3 annual salaries if you were employed prior to July 1, 2011 or your highest 5 annual salaries if you became a State employee on or after July 1, 2011.

## Will this transition be permanent transition, or can it be reversed at some point before I retire?

The transition to CORS was established by state law and could only be changed by new legislation. In short, the transition is permanent unless a new law is passed.

## Will all DCA's be in CORS?

The bill contains a list of positions and places of employment that will be included in the transfer. You will be moved to CORS if you work at one of the following facilities AND have one of the following job classifications:

### Facilities:

- Eastern Shore Hospital Center
- Thomas B. Finan Center
- Potomac Center/SETT
- Spring Grove Hospital
- Springfield Hospital Center
- The Regional Institute for Children and Adolescents in Baltimore
- John L. Gilder Regional Institute for Children and Adolescents

### Job classifications:

- CAMH Associate - CI
- Developmental Disability Associate – CI
- Direct Care Assistant - CI
- Licensed Practical Nurse - CI
- Resident Associate, SETT – CI
- Security Attendant

## CORS FAQ (continued)

### What are the major differences between EPS & CORS?

The table below compares EPS & CORS.

**\*Important Note\*** Pre-reform means service prior to July 1, 2011. Post-reform means your State service began on or after July 1, 2011.

	CORS	EPS
<b>Age-based retirement</b>	55 years as long as you are vested	<i>Pre-reform:</i> age 62 with 5 years of service <i>Post-reform:</i> age 65 with 10 years of service
<b>Years of service-based retirement</b>	20 years of service	<i>Pre-reform:</i> 30 years of service <i>Post-reform:</i> age + service must equal at least 90 (e.g. age 55 + 35 years of service = 90)
<b>Employee contributions</b>	5% (You will effectively get a 2% raise once the transfer from EPS to CORS is complete.)	7%
<b>Benefit factor</b> (percent of salary you will receive as pension for each year of service)	1.82% (slightly higher than pre- or post-reform in EPS)	<i>Pre-reform:</i> 1.8% <i>Post-reform:</i> 1.5%
<b>COLA</b> (cost of living adjustment, applied to your pension amount once you retire)	<i>Pre-reform:</i> unlimited <i>Post-reform:</i> capped at 1% or 2.5%, depending on returns on State's retirement investments	<i>Pre-reform:</i> 3% cap <i>Post-reform:</i> 1% or 2.5% cap, depending on returns on State's retirement investments

### I got a notice about a deficiency in CORS. What does that mean? Do I owe CORS money?

Only those employed with the State prior to 2008 might receive such a notice. These notices have to do with years of service when employee contributions to EPS were less than 5% (1980 to 2008). **You DO NOT have to pay this deficiency** – the state will recover it slowly by small adjustments to your pension amount when you retire.

Even with large deficiencies, employees usually still benefit from transferring to CORS. If you have a lot of time before 2008, you may also have time before 1998. In EPS, time before 1998 had a 1.2% benefit factor, but in CORS, you get 1.8% for all your service, including service prior to 1998 that is transferred, which will offset any deficiency. Service from July 1, 2011 forward also offsets deficiencies, as you were contributing 7%, whereas CORS only requires a 5% contribution.

### What is a benefit factor?

A benefit factor is how your pension amount is calculated. For example, in CORS, if you worked for 30 years and are 55 years of age, your benefit would be 1.82% (the benefit factor) multiplied by 30 (years of service).  $1.82 \times 30 = 54.6$ , so your annual pension would be 54.6% of \$55,000, or \$30,030 annually.

### How will the change in my contribution (7% in EPS vs. 5% in CORS) impact me?

**This change will only be to your benefit!** Immediately, you'll notice an increase in your pay, as the difference is equal to a 2% raise. Additionally, for the time when you were contributing 7% (July 1, 2011 & onward), CORS will give you the extra money you paid with interest upon transfer. Upon retirement, you can choose to be paid out for your extra contributions in a lump sum or incrementally through adjustments to the amount of your pension.

Excess contributions \*may\* be used towards any deficiencies – see last question to the left for more info on deficiencies.

### What did AFSCME Maryland have to do with the switch to CORS from EPS?

AFSCME Maryland members wanted the switch to CORS so that they had the same retirement benefits as other Correctional Officers and could retire at 20 years. AFSCME Maryland fought for that change in Annapolis, ultimately passing the legislation that allows you to switch to CORS & retire sooner.

**Not an AFSCME member yet?** Join us so that we can keep up the fight for YOU!



Visit [afscmemd.org/join](http://afscmemd.org/join) or scan the QR code to join!