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Email the LookOut Staff

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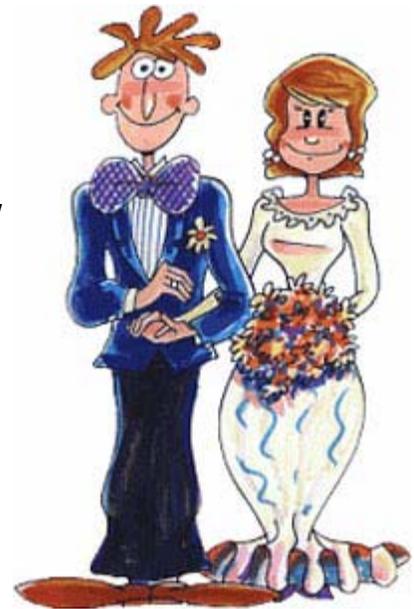
TECH tips

## New options for public school retirees when marrying after retirement

In the past, if a public school retiree married or remarried after his or her pension began, the new spouse could not be named as a pension beneficiary. However, Public Act 617 of 2006, which goes into effect January 1, now permits this under certain conditions.

**A retiree who was married at the time of retirement** and has since been widowed and remarried can name a new spouse as pension beneficiary as long as he or she elected a survivor option—not straight life—for the original spouse.

**A retiree who was single at the time of retirement** can name a new spouse if he or she elected the straight life option at retirement.



Retirees should know that if they add a spouse, their pension will be reduced because we will recalculate it using the standard actuarial formula. It's also important to know that a spouse named under this provision will be eligible for ongoing pension payments upon the retiree's death (unless the death occurs within 12 months of the election) but will not remain eligible for subsidized health insurances.

Those who marry before January 1 will have a 180 day window period to apply. For those who marry after January 1 the window begins six months after marriage and ends 12 months after marriage.

CE is working diligently with CSC to develop the forms and communications necessary to implement this new provision. Retirees interested in adding a new spouse as a beneficiary will be asked to contact us after January 1 for an estimate of benefits and an application.

For complete details on this new provision see the [Public Act 617 of 2006 At A Glance document](#).

**Calendar**

**November**

Thanksgiving Holiday 27-28

**December**

Public School Employees Board Meeting 11

EMPAC basket sale and silent auction 11

State Employees Board Meeting 18

Christmas Holiday 24-25

## Employer survey results

New Year's Eve 31

**On the Horizon**

- Spring All Staff meeting - April 21

**Quick Links**

- [ORS Member Website](#)
- [ORS Employer Website](#)
- [Knowledge Library](#)

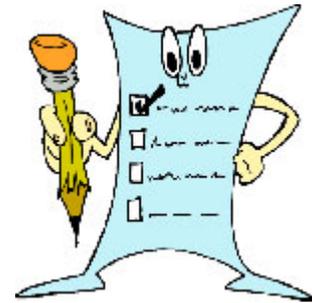
**Commonly Used Acronyms**

|      |   |
|------|---|
| AST  | Application Support Team                                    |
| BLA  | Business Leadership Assembly (EPC, BPOs, and BPLs)          |
| BPD  | Benefit Plan Design   |
| BPL  | Business Process Leader                                     |
| BPO  | Business Process Owner                                      |
| CE   | Customer Education  |
| CSC  | Customer Service Center                                     |
| DB   | Defined Benefit   |
| DC   | Defined Contribution  |
| DIT  | Department of Information Technology                        |
| DMB  | Department of Management and Budget                         |
| EPC  | Executive Process Council (Phil, Laurie, Tim, and Anthony)  |
| EPO  | Executive Process Owner                                     |
| ER   | Employer Reporting  |
| ORS  | Office of Retirement Services                               |
| PRIM | Preretirement Information Meeting (public school employees) |
| PRO  | Preretirement Orientation (state employees)                 |
| PS   | Process Support   |
| SME  | Subject Matter Expert                                       |

In October 2008, ORS conducted its fourth annual survey of public school reporting units. The intent of the survey was to find out what school employers think of our services, what new services we should provide, and to determine the overall satisfaction with our services.

The respondents were positive with 93.5 percent rating our service as either good or excellent. Although this is slightly lower than the 2007 satisfaction survey score (94.6 percent), the amount of change is not considered statistically significant.

With a solid 302 responses, we can say if we conducted the same survey 100 times, 95 out of the 100 times we should yield results within +/- 5.4 percent of the current number.



Some additional highlights of the survey include the following:

- Over 94 percent of respondents rated the Employer Reporting call center as useful or very useful. Over 99 percent rated this call center positively with regards to courtesy, and more than 97 percent rated the call center positively with regards to knowledge.
- Over 62 percent refer staff to the new self-service miAccount website when handling transactions such as beneficiary nominations.
- Over 82 percent rated the Employer Informational website as either useful or very useful.
- When rating calls received from ORS regarding FSAs, over 99 percent of respondents were positive towards ORS staff courtesy and over 98 percent positive regarding knowledge.
- Approximately 99 percent of respondents indicated they contacted the Employer Reporting call center for help with reports two or fewer times per pay period.
- Approximately 52 percent of respondents indicated they used both electronic and paper copies of the *Reporting Instruction Manual*.
- Fewer than 5 percent indicated they have staff who may not fully benefit from our communications when written or spoken in English.

Involved processes will continue to review and analyze the information to identify what we are doing well, continue to provide our reporting units with the services they need and want, and to see where we can improve.

## The inner workings of EMPAC

The Employee Activity Committee (EMPAC) is a team of individuals charged with promoting a culture of fun and inclusion while strengthening the ORS team. The committee consists of one representative from each process (CSC has two because of its size) who each serve a two-year term. Participation brings opportunities to build skills in leadership, teamwork, communication, and coordination of activities. It also serves as a forum for creativity and innovation.



ORS staff playing volleyball at the EMPAC sponsored 2008 summer picnic.

EMPAC hosts activities that gather staff together such as the summer picnic, Halloween party, the holiday party, with additional activities in between. While the committee is always brainstorming among

|     |                         |
|-----|-------------------------|
| T&T | Tools and Technology    |
| UAT | User Acceptance Testing |

themselves for new ideas for activities, your suggestions are always welcome. We encourage you to share them with your EMPAC representative.

### Holiday happenings

With the holidays approaching, EMPAC is busy planning this year's holiday activities. As in the past, the holiday tree has been placed in Crossroads with gift tags that allow you to purchase gift items for families less fortunate than our own. A silent auction, bake sale, and basket sale will take place before the holidays. Proceeds from the silent auction and bake sale will buy gift certificates from local grocery stores for holiday dinners. The basket sale proceeds will be used to fund future EMPAC activities. So grab a tag off the tree, bring in an item or two for the silent auction or bake sale, support your process's basket activity, or do a little of all. ORS has been very generous in making others' holiday season brighter. We are counting on another great holiday season this year as well.

### Activities

While EMPAC Committee members work hard to ensure activities go off without a hitch, most committee members find it to be a rewarding experience. So the next time your BPL asks for an EMPAC representative, volunteer. You too may find it rewarding.

A big round of applause goes out to those individuals who have previously served on the EMPAC committee and to its current members. Your efforts have assisted in providing a positive ORS culture and proved that fun has a place in the work day.

### Fundraising

To support the fun at work activities EMPAC has been brainstorming for new fundraising ideas. It is more important than ever before for staff to support the fundraising efforts of EMPAC. Feel free to share any ideas you have with your EMPAC representative and look for new fundraising activities in the future.

### Team members

Current team members include **Mary Anderson** (Customer Service Center), **Rosemary Baker** (Customer Education), **Lisa Barrone** (Employer Reporting), **Matt Torok** (Customer Service Center), **Leza Rebera** (BPD/Director's Office prior to her move to Process Support), and **Pam Ward** (Process Support).

## ORS Receives 2008 Public Pension Award

ORS has received the Public Pension Coordinating Council's Public Pension Standards 2008 Award.

The Public Pension Coordinating Council (PPCC) gives this award to those who meet professional standards for pension plan design and administration in six key areas: comprehensive benefits, funding, financial auditing, actuarial valuation, investment principles, and member communication.

**Fred Doll** from Customer Education said, "We're pleased to have received this award every year since 2004. We will be including the certificate in our 2007-08 CAFR (Comprehensive Annual Financial Report)."



New for the 2008 application, the Standards were separated into the Administrative Standards and the Funding Standards. A system may qualify for and receive a Recognition Certificate for either or both. A system that qualifies for both certificates, as did ORS, is awarded the Public Pension Coordinating Council Standards Award.

PPCC is a coalition of three national associations that, combined, serve the retirement systems that provide pension coverage for nearly every state and local government employee in the United States. PPCC's standards are a benchmark by which all defined benefit public plans can be measured.

## Offer thanksgiving to your community

Give thanks by sharing your blessings with others in your community. Below are a few ways you can lend a helping hand.

### United Way food service

The Capital Area United Way Volunteer Center has teamed up with five area nursing homes interested in having volunteers visit their residents. Two of the homes will use volunteers to serve residents food. Many seniors have no one to visit them on holidays and having someone show they care makes a big difference! Call (517) 337-8211 if you are interested in this volunteer opportunity.



### Give a meal with Compassionate Feast

The Old Town Commercial Association (OTCA) is preparing for [Compassionate Feast](#), a program that provides more than 100 poverty-stricken families with all the Thanksgiving fixings they need to make a traditional feast in their own home. Compassionate Feast takes place Monday, November 24, at the North Presbyterian Church. If you are interested in supporting Compassionate Feast, you can volunteer or give a monetary donation. Contact the OTCA office at 517-485-4283 for more information.

### Food Bank needs continued support

Although you have made offerings during the Harvest Gathering, keep in mind that the [Mid-Michigan Food Bank](#) helps prevent hunger in our community by distributing salvaged food products, including produce and fresh foods, at low or no cost to area non-profit agencies serving the hungry and the homeless year round. In 2007, nearly 50,000 people received 4.4 million pounds of packaged food and 1.3 million pounds of fresh produce from the Mid-Michigan Food Bank.

You can feed a family of four for six days by [donating only \\$60](#). Check out the [food bank website](#) to find out how you can donate by phone, web, in person, or by mail!

## National Save for Retirement week

Representatives from ING emphasized the importance of patience in uncertain financial markets during events held throughout National Save for Retirement Week, October 20 to 24. Nearly 190 people attended the informational sessions held in Lansing, Dimondale, and Detroit.



"History tells us that long-term investing is the way to go and it's important to try and stay the course," said **Heidi Schiller**. "We didn't talk to anyone who was going to make drastic changes to their accounts. A few people actually sat down with us and increased their contributions given the current market conditions."

In addition to the informational sessions, ING advisors met one-on-one with members during half-hour appointments. These participants received the same advice as those using the [Professional Account Manager Service](#). "This was a popular part of the events," said Heidi.

Heidi also mentioned that a number of participants thanked them for bringing the

information to their location. The ING staff is already looking to make these events even more successful in 2009.

## business briefs

### Last call for FSA

The open enrollment period for Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs) ends December 1. If you wish to participate in 2009, log into your MI HR Self-Service account and complete the online enrollment. If you need assistance, contact the MI HR Service Center at (877) 766-6447 (toll free), or 517-335-0529 in the Lansing area, Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.



**Loren Greeley** worked at ORS from 2004 to 2006 and returned to PS on November 12. Loren recently worked for a software company called Sircon and is a Grand Ledge resident. Welcome back, Loren!



Loren Greeley



Chelsea Sherman



Shanmugapriya  
Duraikannu

CSC welcomed a new student assistant, **Chelsea Sherman**, on November 17. Chelsea lives in Perry and is attending Lansing Community College with a focus in health care management. In her spare time she buys and sells horses and runs a camp for kids.

**Shanmugapriya Duraikannu** joined AST as a Java developer on November 17. Shangmugapriya will be assisting in the Member Account functional area.

November 7 was a day of many farewells. ORS said goodbye to **Chancellor Harrington** (PS), **Mike Kanuszewski** (BPD), and **Loleta Smith** (CSC). In addition, we wished the best to **Maudena Orsborn** (CSC) on her last day, November 14.

### Staff on the move

**Charles Leik** accepted the tech position in Process Support.

**Jim Rademacher** accepted the analyst position in Process Support.



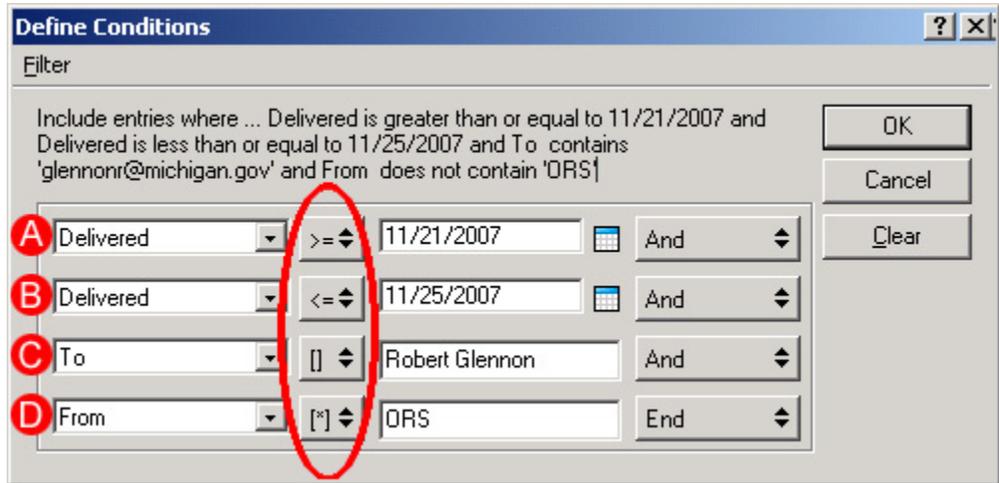
Simplify your GroupWise rules to simplify your life (and your coworkers lives!) We all know how tricky it can seem when trying to set up our GroupWise vacation rules just minutes before running out the door to begin our days of rest and relaxation. Here, we show you how to create a reusable vacation rule with the following benefits:

- It will only run between the dates you specify, so you don't have to worry about, turning it off when you return.
- It won't send your auto-reply to mailing list groups, resulting in dozens of people being notified that you're out of the office. Your colleagues will LOVE you for this!

**The best part?**

Once you have this set up, you can reuse this rule for all your vacations by simply editing the start and end dates and the text of the auto-reply message.

Since most of you probably know how to create a vacation rule already we'll just cover the conditions part of the rule here. However, for those who need a little more help, [please view our detailed instructions.](#)



**DMB Mission:**  
Partners in achieving excellence

**ORS Purpose:**  
We are an innovative retirement organization driven to empower our customers for a successful today and a secure tomorrow.

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Director: Phil Stoddard  
Edited by Customer Education



| Row | What it does  | Operator to use          |
|-----|---|--------------------------|
| A   | Tells the rule to only run when the date is on or after the date you specify. This means you can set up your vacation rule weeks before you leave when you're not so swamped with wrapping things up.   | <b>On or After Date</b>  |
| B   | Tells the rule to stop running after the date you specify. You don't have to be concerned about turning off the rule when you come back to work.  | <b>On or Before Date</b> |
| C   | This part will cause out-of-office replies to be sent only to GroupWise users. Be sure to type your name as it displays at the top of your folder list. If you wish to include everyone who sends you email then skip to row D.                         | <b>Contains</b>          |
| D   | This tells the rule to NOT reply to any email address that contain ORS (e.g. ORS-GOB Staff, ORS-Supplies, or ORS-LookOut). This prevents unnecessary replies to emails that are forwarded to you from email boxes that contain ORS in the mailbox name. | <b>Does Not Contain</b>  |

**Note:** Because some of the links in this newsletter point to network resources, some of the links may not work if you are reading this outside of the organization.