

Stay Focused On Your Retirement Goals

Provided you have evaluated and elected your investment service providers under the Supplemental Retirement Program, the most challenging task still lies ahead: how to stay focused on your savings goals? Saving for retirement is a long-term commitment, and it is easy to lose sight of your goals when life's other financial obligations get in the way. To help you stay on course, this article includes:

- Information on managing your investments going forward
- Tips for staying focused on your savings goals
- Useful tools and online resources

Managing Your Investments

Beginning January 1, 2010, you may enroll or make changes to your investments by contacting the investment provider representatives directly (contact information is available on the AACPS internet and employee intranet sites). The representatives will assist you with your investment choices. You will also need to complete a Salary Reduction Agreement and submit it to HR/Benefits. Your changes will become effective on the pay day following the date of your change, provided you make that change before the payroll cutoff date (usually the Friday after pay day for the next pay day). If your change misses a cutoff, it will be held until the next regular cutoff for implementation.

Maintaining Focus

Having your retirement savings deducted from your pay is one of the best methods of saving for retirement. As the saying goes, if you don't see it, you don't spend it. Here are some additional tips for staying focused on your retirement savings goals:

- Take advantage of online calculators at most of the investment provider's websites to determine how much you will need to save and make projections based on your current balances
- In down markets, it is easy to lose confidence in your investments. Be mindful of your emotions and remember that in the past, the stock market has experienced far more periods of positive returns than negative ones. While previous results are no guarantee of future results, it is important to maintain a long-term perspective.
- Consider what motivates you to save. In other words, what is it that will make retirement great for you? Is it travel or buying a vacation home? Maybe pursuing your golf game at all of the finest resorts? Decide what motivates you and post reminders in places that will work for you – on your computer, your desk at home, your refrigerator, etc.
- Review your portfolio regularly to make sure that your investment mix continues to meet your anticipated financial needs. Talk to your investment provider representative to determine how frequently you should meet to assess your goals against the performance of your investment funds.

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- If you are a person who is not comfortable managing your retirement portfolio whatsoever, then maybe a lifecycle fund is the best choice for you. If you haven't already, talk to your investment provider representative to determine if this type of fund is right for you.

For More Information

While nothing beats the face-to-face education you can get from your investment provider representative, there are a lot of good websites available that also provide useful tools and information. Here are just a few:

- www.choosetosave.org
- www.403bwise.com/participants
- www.457bwise.com
- www.investopedia.com

Keep in mind, Retirement Manager also provides articles on retirement education and life event planning, calculators, and links to other websites.

If you have questions about any of the information here, please contact the Human Resources Benefits Department at (410) 222-5221/5219 or via email at benefits@aacps.org.