



PUBLIC EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT ADMINISTRATION COMMISSION  
10 CABOT ROAD, SUITE 300 | MEDFORD, MA 02155  
WWW.MASS.GOV/PERAC



## **GUIDE FOR PERAC**

---

# Member's Guide to the Comprehensive Medical Evaluation & Return to Service Process



**Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission**

Philip Y. Brown, Esq., Chair  
The Honorable Diana DiZoglio, Vice Chair  
Kathleen M. Fallon  
Kate Fitzpatrick  
James J. Guido  
Richard MacKinnon  
Jennifer F. Sullivan, Esq.

Bill Keefe  
Executive Director

10 Cabot Road, Suite 300, Medford, MA 02155  
Phone: 617-666-4446 | Fax: 617-628-4002 | Web: [www.mass.gov/perac](http://www.mass.gov/perac)

Cover art: Adobe Stock  
Design and Layout: PERAC Communications  
*Revised April 2026*

# Member's Guide to the Comprehensive Medical Evaluation & Restoration to Service Process

---

## Overview of the Comprehensive Medical Evaluation Process

---

The Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission (PERAC), in accordance with Chapter 306 of the Acts of 1996, oversees the Comprehensive Medical Evaluation (CME) of disability retirees. The goal is to determine whether or not you are able to perform the essential duties of your former job or a similar position in the same department for which you are qualified. It is important to note that a different procedure has been developed and implemented for State Troopers.

In addition, due to a recent legislative change, a member may request that, in addition to being evaluated for a return to their former position, that they be evaluated for a specifically identified position other than the position from which they retired, including a position with a different employer or a position that would entitle the member to membership in a different retirement system. Thus, upon your request, you may be evaluated to return to a different position than the position from which you retired.

You must identify a specific position and provide an official job description that identifies the essential duties of that position, which will be reviewed by PERAC and, eventually, the examining doctors.

### Appeals

If you are aggrieved by a determination, you may, within fifteen (15) days of receiving a decision letter, file an appeal with the Division of Administrative Law Appeals (DALA). Your notice of appeal must state your email address, your street address, and your telephone number. You must include a copy of your decision letter along with your notice of appeal. The notice of appeal may be filed through an online portal, by email, by mail, or by other methods.

#### **For guidance, please visit:**

The Division of Administrative Law Appeals website at:  
[www.mass.gov/how-to/file-an-appeal-with-the-division-of-administrative-law-appeals-dala](http://www.mass.gov/how-to/file-an-appeal-with-the-division-of-administrative-law-appeals-dala)

#### **For submissions by email:**

[dalapleadings@mass.gov](mailto:dalapleadings@mass.gov)

#### **For submissions by paper mail or hand delivery:**

14 Summer Street, 4th Floor, Malden, MA 02148

---

## 1 | Selection

PERAC schedules disability retirees for a CME each year for the first two years following their retirement and every three years thereafter.

### Selection Criteria

- You can be selected based on your date of retirement and the date of your last evaluation.
- Or, upon your written request, but not sooner than one year from the completion of the last evaluation.
- Or, if your Annual Statement of Earned Income shows substantial earnings.

---

## 2 | Request for Medical Information from You

A PERAC Nurse Case Manager will request medical information from you and review your PERAC case file. If no additional medical records are available, you must notify PERAC in writing and PERAC may schedule you for a CME with a physician.

### Possible Outcomes to Initial Records Review Process

- PERAC may find that you are currently unable to perform the essential duties of the position from which you retired, and/or a different position for which you have provided an official job description. You and your retirement board will be notified that the CME process has ended. You may be subject to future evaluations.
- Or PERAC may find that you are permanently unable to perform the essential duties of the position from which you retired, and/or a different position for which you have provided an official job description. You and your retirement board will be notified that the CME process has ended.
- Or PERAC may find further information must be assembled before a determination can be made.

---

## 3 | Request for Medical Information from Your Retirement Board

If additional information is required, the PERAC Nurse Case Manager will request your entire disability retirement file and re-examination file(s) from your retirement board.

### Possible Outcomes after a Review of All Available Information

- PERAC may find that you are currently unable to perform the essential duties of the position from which you retired, and/or a different position for which you have provided an official job description. You and your retirement board will be notified that the CME process has ended. You may be subject to future evaluations.
- Or PERAC may find that you are permanently unable to perform the essential duties of the position from which you retired, and/or a different position for which you have provided an official job description. You and your retirement board will be notified that the CME process has ended.

- Or PERAC may find that you may be able to perform the essential duties of the position from which you retired, and/or a different position for which you have provided an official job description. PERAC will schedule you for a CME with a physician to certify your abilities.

---

## 4 | CME Appointment

The PERAC Nurse Case Manager will obtain a current job description, including essential duties, from your former employer/department head, and/or from your potential new employer.

### Details

- The PERAC Nurse Case Manager will schedule you for a CME with a single physician. PERAC will forward the job description(s) and all available medical information to this physician.
- The physician will examine you and may order tests or consultations as needed. The evaluation process may extend over several days or weeks.
- The physician will complete a narrative report and send it along with test results to a PERAC Nurse Case Manager for review.

---

## 5 | Review of CME Report

A PERAC Nurse Case Manager reviews the CME Report.

### Possible Outcomes

If you are found unable to perform the essential duties of the position from which you retired, and/or a different position for which you have provided an official job description, you may be re-evaluated by a PERAC Nurse Case Manager in the future.

Or, if you are found able to perform the essential duties of the position from which you retired, and/or a different position for which you have provided an official job description, PERAC's Disability Unit will schedule you for a restoration to service examination (RTS), to be conducted by three separate physicians to certify as to your abilities.

---

## Overview of the Restoration to Service Process

If it is determined, through the CME process, that you are able to perform the essential duties of the position from which you retired or a similar job within the same department, and/or a different position for which you have provided an official job description, your case will move into the RTS process. It is important to note that a different procedure has been developed and implemented for state troopers.

As mandated by Chapter 306 of the Acts of 1996, PERAC interacts with a retiree's retirement board, his or her former employer, and the Commonwealth's HRD as the RTS process unfolds.

Retirement boards, among their many responsibilities, approve disability retirements and process monthly allowances. PERAC selects retirees for RTS evaluations and schedules all related medical

appointments. Your PERAC Nurse Case Manager will contact your former employer to obtain a copy of your job description, including your essential duties from which you retired.

The official job description that you have provided from a new employer will be submitted to the RTS medical panel if you are requesting to return to work to a different position. If you are found able to return to your former position, the retirement board will notify your former employer. If you are found able to perform the duties of a different position for which you have provided an official job description, PERAC will contact your retirement board, former employer, potential new employer and HRD.

The Human Resources Division plays two roles. First, in situations where the former position, job duties, or department has changed since disability retirement, the Personnel Administrator may determine what constitutes the “same or similar position” within the department. See M.G.L. c. 32, section 8 (2). Second, for those returning disability retirees who have been separated from service for more than five (5) years, the Appointing Authority must submit a retraining program to HRD for approval. See M.G.L. c. 31, section 39.

---

## 1 | Scheduling Examinations

PERAC schedules you for RTS examinations with three different physicians. These examinations are not conducted on a joint basis. Each physician will conduct a separate examination.

At least one of the physicians will be a specialist in the medical field related to the condition for which you retired. The other physician(s) will specialize in fields whose relevancy is determined by PERAC.

### Key Points

- PERAC submits your original disability information, CME evaluation report, and updated medical information, along with a job description that includes the essential duties of the position from which you retired, and/or the official job description that includes the essential duties of a different position for which you seek to return, to the physicians who will be conducting your RTS examinations.
- If you cancel an appointment within 48 hours of a scheduled examination or do not keep an appointment, you must reimburse PERAC for the costs incurred. PERAC’s Disability Unit will reschedule an appointment only when compelling personal reasons are involved.
- The principal purpose of the examination is to discuss and evaluate your physical condition or mental health. Attendance at the examination shall be limited to you, the medical panel physician(s), your physician and attorney, and your employer’s physician and attorney. You may permit the presence of other individuals, provided their presence will not disrupt the examination.

---

## 2 | Reports

The physicians will complete the RTS certificates and narrative reports and send them to PERAC within 30 days of conducting their examinations.

### Following Steps

You and your retirement board will receive copies of the certificates and narrative reports from PERAC.

If the unanimous outcome of the RTS examination is that you should be restored to service, PERAC will notify your retirement board. If the unanimous outcome of the RTS examination is that you should be returned to a different position for which you have provided an official job description, PERAC will notify your retirement board, HRD, your former employer and potential new employer.

Your retirement board must notify your former employer that you must be restored to service.

---

## 3 | Restoration to Service Time Frames

### Within Two Years

If the determination that you should be returned to service in the position from which you retired is made *within two years* of your date of retirement, there are three possible outcomes.

#### Possible Outcomes

- If there is a vacancy in the position from which you retired, you are required to be returned to that position. When you are returned, your disability allowance must be revoked.
- Or, if there is no vacancy in your former position, but you are found able to perform the essential duties of a similar job within the same department, as determined by the Human Resources Division (HRD), and that position is vacant, you must be returned to that position. When you are returned, your disability allowance must be revoked.
- Or, if no similar position is vacant, a vacancy must be created for you by reducing the rank and position of the last person promoted to such a position. You must be returned to that position. When you are returned, your disability allowance must be revoked.

### After Two Years

If the determination that you should be returned to service in the position from which you retired is made *more than two years* after the date you retired for disability, there are two possible outcomes.

#### Possible Outcomes

- If there is a vacancy in the position that you held or a vacancy in a similar position within the same department, as determined by HRD, you must be returned to that position. When you are returned, your disability allowance must be revoked.
- Or, If there is no vacancy, you must be granted a preference for the next available position or similar position for which you are qualified. You will continue to receive your retirement allowance until reinstatement occurs or until the amount of your potential earnings necessitates a reduction in or revocation of your pension.

---

## 4 | The Restoration to Service Re-Evaluation (RTSR) Process

When a member is found able to perform the essential duties of his/her former job, and/or the essential duties of a different position for which the member has provided an official job description, PERAC will notify the member, his/her retirement board and employer, the Commonwealth's Division of Human Resources and, the potential new employer. Some time may pass before a position becomes available and the member is actually restored to active service. In the interim, a PERAC Nurse Case Manager and a CME physician will monitor the member's medical status if found able to return to the same or similar position from which you retired. Every six months, the member will be asked to complete and return a health questionnaire to PERAC. The member will also be re-evaluated by a CME physician upon any significant change in his/her medical condition and before returning to work. The goal is to assess the retiree's medical readiness to return to work and minimize the possibility of missing a retraining or academy opportunity.

---

## PERAC Q & A

**Q: How may I contact PERAC?**

A: Our contact information is below:

Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission  
Ten Cabot Road, Suite 300  
Medford, MA 02155  
Phone: 617-666-4446  
Web: [mass.gov/PERAC](http://mass.gov/PERAC)

**Q: If the appointing authority does not want me to return, can I be prevented from returning to work?**

A: No, the Supreme Judicial Court has ruled that an employer does not have the right to prevent an individual who has been cleared by the medical panel from returning to service.

**Q: When I return, will I receive creditable service for the time I was disabled? Cost?**

A: When you are returned to service the creditable service you earned before you retired will be restored. When you are ultimately retired, you will receive creditable service for all the time you received a disability retirement. This creditable service is provided without cost to you.

**Q: How long do I have to be returned to service before I can retire for superannuation?**

A: There is no requirement that you work a certain number of days or years before you are eligible for superannuation retirement. If you do not work for three years after your return to service, the compensation used in computing your retirement allowance for the remainder of the three-year period will be that which you earned immediately before your disability retirement.

**Q: What happens if no jobs are available after I successfully complete the CME/RTS process?**

A: When a member is found able to perform the essential duties of his/her former job, and/or the essential duties of a different position for which the member has provided an official job description, PERAC will notify the member, his/her retirement board and employer, and the Commonwealth's Division of Human Resources and, if appropriate, the potential new employer. Some time may pass before a position becomes available and the member is actually restored to active service. In the interim, a PERAC Nurse Case Manager and a CME physician will monitor the member's medical status if found able to return to work for the same or similar position from which your retired. Every six months, the member will be asked to complete and return a health questionnaire to PERAC. The member will also be re-evaluated by a CME physician upon any significant change in his/her medical condition and before returning to work. The goal is to assess the retiree's medical readiness to return to work and minimize the possibility of missing a retraining or academy opportunity.

**Q: What if years pass and a vacancy does not open while I am on the vacancy list?**

A: Your allowance could be modified based on your actual or potential earnings while you are awaiting restoration to service. Your allowance could also be modified based on your actual or potential earnings if you are found not able to return to service.

**Q: If I cannot do the job after I am returned, can I resume my disability?**

A: You cannot resume a disability once the medical panel finds you are able to perform the essential duties of the position from which you are retired and you are returned to service.

**Q: What if I suffer the same condition as the one for which I was originally retired?**

A: If you are injured while on the job, you would need to apply and be approved for a new disability retirement based on a new medical condition or the exacerbation of a preexisting medical condition. There is no automatic return to your previous disability retirement.

**Q: Will the retirement presumptions (heart, lung, and cancer) apply after I am restored to service?**

A: Once you are returned, the presumptions would apply to you as they would to any other member of a retirement system. You would need to meet the requirements of the presumptions before you could benefit from them.

---

## **HRD Q & A**

---

**Q: How may I contact HRD?**

A: Human Resources Division  
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 600  
Boston, MA 02114  
Phone : 617-878-9700 | Web : [mass.gov/HRD](http://mass.gov/HRD)

**Q: Will I be subject to additional testing or training?**

A: Yes. The amount of additional testing or training depends upon the number of years of separation from service as well as the type of position formerly held.

---

## Non-public Safety Positions

Appointing authorities may require retraining programs for returning disability retirees who have been out for less than five years. For those returning to work after more than five years, the retraining program must be approved by the Personnel Administrator. See M.G.L. c. 31, §39.

---

## Public Safety Law Enforcement Positions

- For absences of less than one year, the Massachusetts Criminal Justice Training Council (MCJTC) requires compliance with the First Responder Law (CPR and First Aid) and current qualification in Firearms. See M.G.L. c. 111, §201, 550 CMR 3.03 (6)(a)
- For absences of one year to less than five years, the MCJTC requires compliance with the First Responder Law (CPR and First Aid), current qualification in Firearms, as well as successful completion of a training program approved by the MCJTC. See M.G.L. c. 111, §201, 550 CMR 3.03 (6)(b).
- Under Civil Service law those returning disability retirees who have been out for more than five (5) years are subject to a retraining program approved by the Personnel Administrator. These retraining programs include the HRD Physical Abilities Test (PAT) and a MCJTC academy or a satisfactory alternative. Appointing authorities may require additional training in other areas of the job. See M.G.L. c 31, §39, 550 CMR 3.03 (6)(c).

---

## Public Safety Firefighter Positions

Under Civil Service law those returning disability retirees who have been out for more than five (5) years are subject to a retraining program approved by the Personnel Administrator. These retraining programs include the HRD Physical Abilities Test (PAT). Appointing authorities may also require additional retraining specifically related to firefighting.

### **Q: What will satisfy HRD's requirements for approval of retraining programs for municipal police officers and firefighters?**

A: Police and firefighter retraining programs for all returning disability retirees with absences greater than five (5) years must include:

1. A full body medical examination to determine if the returning disability retiree is capable of performing the essential functions of the job and to ensure that the original disability, which required retirement, is no longer present. This full body medical must be within six months of the PAT.
2. Completion of the HRD PAT. Appointing authorities must allow retirees a full sixteen weeks to prepare for the PAT according to the HRD Physical Ability Test Preparation Guide. The sixteen-week training period begins upon the returning disability retiree's receipt of the Test Preparation Guide. Appointing Authorities should have copies of the Test Preparation Guide.
3. Appointing authorities may require a retraining program specifically designed for the returning disability retiree.

**Q: What happens if I cannot pass the PAT?**

A: Police officers and firefighters must take and pass the PAT as part of an approved retraining program. If you cannot pass the PAT, the appointing authority will be notified.

**Q: Will I be restored to my non-civil service status?**

A: Your restoration to a non-civil service title will be determined by your appointing authority and must be based upon available vacancies.

**Q: Will I have seniority over other employees who were not employed when I was retired?**

A: Your civil service seniority will be based on your date of original appointment. Union seniority is based upon the applicable collective bargaining agreement.

**Q: When am I entitled to civil service and union contract protection?**

A: You will be entitled to any civil service rights you had upon your disability retirement when you are reinstated to your position. Union protection upon your return will be based upon the applicable collective bargaining agreement.

**Q: What if the position from which I am retired no longer exists?**

A: If your position no longer exists, you would be returned to a similar position. The Human Resources Division/Personnel Administrator determines what is a same or similar position.

**Q: Who do I contact with questions concerning the process?**

A: You may contact the HRD Civil Service Unit at 617-878-9700.

