Retirement Call-in Services

After hearing several concerns expressed by retirees that it is hard to get a live person when calling us, during the last year the Retirement Office has brought in a backup phone receptionist. Paul Young is the young man to whom you may talk when Shirley Jones is on another line.

We have twelve benefits processors, including some in training. Depending on the first letter of your last name or other factors, we assign you to one of these processors for questions and requests. They will be working on several applications as well as reports of death and death benefits, and responding to questions, and may simply be on the phone or away from their desk.

Contact Tips: Generally, call our main phone number, 301-680-6249. If Shirley is on the phone with somebody else, or on break, the phone will roll over to Paul. However, here are some tips that might help you:

- Questions regarding status of medical claims and/or coverage/payment for tests, doctor’s visits, etc., should be directed to the Adventist Risk Management line (1-800-447-5002). Retirement does not have direct access to your medical files.
- Questions regarding healthcare plan provisions, enrollment and eligibility should be directed to the SHARP line (301-680-5036).
- Requests for Medicare Part B reimbursement for eligible retirees must be done by mail, not phone.
- Notification of the death of the Retiree or spouse should be directed to the main Retirement phone number. (301-680-6249)
- Requests for replacement forms 1099-R, checks and verification of benefits for loans or housing should be made to Payroll. (301-680-6244 or -6250).
- Change of address; mail, fax or call our main line. (301-680-6249).
- Please do NOT call for a change of direct deposit account; instead, insert a voided check and a signed note requesting the change and mail or fax to 301-680-6190.
- You may call the Payroll information bulletin line(888-838-8955) for information on release of payments or for instructions on how to set up or change direct deposit data. This is an announcement line only and won’t accept messages.

SHARP Workshops planned for Southern California September 2013

Mark your calendar and plan now to attend one of two SHARP workshops that will be held in the Riverside/Loma Linda area next month.

**September 10, 2013  1-3 p.m. at the Loma Linda Filipino Church (sanctuary)**
11180 New Jersey Street, Loma Linda, CA

**September 11, 2013  1-3 p.m. at the Corona SDA Church (sanctuary)**
2550 S Main St, Corona, CA
When you call:

- Consider when to call us. We are located on the east coast.
- Retirement operates on a flex-time schedule. Most of us work long four day weeks. Fridays are not the best days to call.
- Have your Social Security number handy.
- When calling on behalf of somebody else, be sure you have provided us with a copy of your authority to discuss personal information with us.
- From time to time Retirees leave messages on multiple retirement phones. This will NOT speed up the response time, and often causes further delay. We return calls as soon as we can, but that may be 24 hours, and it may take longer to get the answer to your question if we need to do research or have a pressing deadline.
- Email is usually best. Always include your phone number and the last four digits of your Social Security number. Our standard email address at the office is NADRetirement@nad.adventist.org.
- If you are not sure who you should talk to, call our main number and let our receptionist direct you. This will save you from the delay caused by leaving messages for people who aren’t able to help you.
- Check out our website: www.adventistretirement.org. The site contains downloads of various forms and documents. You can get the most recent SHARP booklet, copies of previous newsletters, form W4P to change your tax withholding, last year’s Parsonage Allowance Letter, Answers to your Retirement Questions booklet and various other documents.

Direct Deposit

Each month our distribution staff distributes benefits for close to 17,000 retirees, amounting to almost $110 million dollars per year. Fortunately, more than 90% of retirees have set up a direct deposit with their banks. This saves the plan thousands in postage and handling, and gets the money deposited efficiently and timely, even when retirees are traveling or otherwise unable to get to their mail or bank.

Occasionally we hear from a retiree asking where their paper check went astray. Most show up in the mail a few days late, causing them anxiety and delay, and sometimes we go through duplicate work in cutting an extra check.

For the retirees who do not have direct deposit, we urge you to consider that option. You will receive a statement once per year in January, and we think you will like the reliability of the banking system in getting your benefit directly into your bank account each month with no effort on your part.

If you are a U.S. resident, currently receiving a paper check, and want to start direct deposit, please tear out from your checkbook a check from a U.S. bank that has your name printed on it, provide us with a note instructing us to put you on direct deposit, sign the note and send both check and note to us at the address provided on this newsletter. Please do not send a deposit slip. If you feel uncomfortable sending a blank check through the mail, write VOID in large letters across the check. Give yourself (and us) a break.

Benefits Distribution Day

Some have questioned why we don’t send benefits on the same day each month. We distribute monthly benefits on the 27th of the month each month to all retirees, except if the 27th falls on a holiday or a weekend. On those days the bank will not distribute the funds to your bank account. So we have determined that we will send on the 27th, or the next earliest business day before the 27th. We publish the distribution date in this newsletter. For instance in July, the 27th fell on a Saturday, so the distribution occurs on the 26th. In August the 27th is a Tuesday, so we will distribute on that day.

Retirement Reserves

From time to time we seek to provide retirees with information regarding the financial stability of the retirement plan. When the Church began to provide a retirement plan for its employees 101 years ago, it determined that it would not fund the plan, but would operate by creating a modest reserve, and fund current retirees with current contributions. Over the years that model has fallen out of favor. Most other denominations have sought to keep their plans near or at full funding, so that if the flow from the churches declined (as is happening today in most mainline denominations) the church would still be able to pay its retirees.
We measure the reserves maintained by dividing the annual benefits paid out into the actual assets invested. For instance the hospital retirement plan that we administer has just under twenty years of reserves. That plan is essentially fully funded. However the church pension plan has approximately two years of reserves.

The graphs nearby show the history of the church and hospital reserves, from 2006 into 2013. Many moving parts contribute to this graph, including contributions from employers, tithe coming in from the churches, investment returns, mortality rates and when people actually decide to retire. In order to maintain the stability of the plan, our consultants tell us we must earn an average of approximately 6% per year, and see stable flows of contributions from the tithe and the institutions of the church.

As you may imagine, we get plenty of advice. From the conferences, we are told that the church cannot continue to contribute at current levels to an old retirement plan. Retirees urge us to provide COLA’s each year. I remember a young pastor declaring that we should cash out all of our retirement reserves and ‘finish the work.’ Some suggest that we should get out of the stock market, and keep retirement money in insured deposits currently earning around 1%. Others have interesting schemes for investing retirement funds in off-shore investments that can out-perform the general market.

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A recent study we did for the NAD Ministerial Department shows that within the next decade over 50% of our working ministers will reach retirement age. This is called a demographic bubble, and concerns us as we seek to protect the retirement assets in order to fulfill the promises made to our faithful retirees.

**SHARP Corner**

**The SHARP HIPAA policy is our focus this month.**

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (“HIPAA”) protects the privacy of certain types of individual health information, regulates the use of such information by the Plan and imposes certain security protection measures concerning electronic health information. The Department of Health and Human Services has issued regulations on this subject that can be found at 45CFR parts 160 and 164 (“HIPAA Regulations”). The individual health information that is protected (“Protected Health Information” or “PHI”) is any information created or received by the Plan that relates to:

1. Your past, present or future physical or mental health or your past, present or future physical or mental condition.
2. The provision of health care to you or
3. past, present, or future payment for health care.

The Retirement office has been compliant with HIPAA through our association with Adventist Risk Management, Inc. The Plan has confirmed the privacy measures in place with all entities that may have access to your Private Health Information from our administrative function for the Plan. The employees of the SHARP department and members of the Adventist Retirement Board appeal committee and SHARP committee have obtained HIPAA certification.