

WELLNESS CONNECTION

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GOOD DECISIONS - Retirement: It's Never Too Early to Start Planning



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Happy National Financial Wellness Month! This is your sign to start building healthy financial habits and implement them into your everyday financial decisions. Building financially responsible habits can be tough due to the lack of instant gratification. Planning for retirement is a perfect example of this. For many people, retirement seems like a lifetime away, but the truth is you cannot start retirement planning too early.

Only 40 percent of Americans have calculated how much they need to save for retirement. Making a plan like this can feel

overwhelming, which is why [America Saves](#) suggests you ask yourself a few questions when thinking about retirement:

- What type of lifestyle do I want to live when I retire?
- Is what I am contributing toward my retirement enough to support how I plan to live in retirement?
- Am I saving enough for myself and my partner? Other dependent family members?
- How can I save for retirement when there are many other things to save for?

After thinking about those questions, maybe you feel ready to dive into planning for the days you are no longer on the clock! Here are a few ways to begin preparing for retirement no matter what stage of your career you are in:

Start saving, keep saving, and stick to your goals. If you are not already saving, now is the time to start! Anything you can contribute (big or small) to a retirement plan is helpful. Saving money now will give it time to grow before you need it for retirement. If you are already investing, that is wonderful! You may consider increasing your retirement contributions. Whether you are just starting on your savings journey or somewhere in the middle—keep your eye on the prize and stick to your savings goal!

Contribute to your employer's retirement savings plan. You are likely already doing this if you are a University of Illinois System Office employee. The State Universities Retirement System (SURS) is a state-wide system for Illinois public universities that provides retirement, disability, and related benefits to eligible participants and annuitants. Contributions to SURS are mandatory if you are eligible. You can visit the [System Human Resource Services](#) or the [SURS](#) website for further information on what retirement benefits you are eligible for.

Put money into an Individual Retirement Account (IRA). This is a great option for investing outside of your employer retirement savings plan. You can put up to \$6,000 a year into an IRA and up to \$7,000 if you are 50 or older. You can also start with much less. Remember, saving the smallest amount is better than saving nothing at all! When you open an IRA, you have two options: a Traditional IRA or a Roth IRA. The tax treatment of your contributions and withdrawals will depend on which option you select.

One of the great things about being a System Office employee is that we have access to so many resources and experts in their respective fields! Much of the information provided here was from resources provided by the [University of Illinois Extension](#). Check out Illinois Extension's tools, strategies, insights, and best practices to effectively manage your money!

