

Papers & Forms & Decisions, Oh My!

You have arrived! You sought your first teaching job like a pro, and it paid off—you are an official teacher. You can't wait to get down to the business of your profession, beginning with arranging your classroom, but first you have "a few papers to fill out."

A few papers? It's a paperwork maze! Your college education didn't address the paperwork to be done simply as a condition of employment. Yet your decisions regarding these documents will affect you personally and may be irrevocable. At the least, making changes later will require a lot of effort.

District Requirements. Each school district has its particular requirements. Federal and state laws and negotiated agreements drive most of them; however, some compulsories are common to any school. Contemplating employment and insurance forms may seem insignificant compared to preparing for your first year of helping shape lives, but it is important. Becoming familiar with these requirements before getting caught up in a whirlwind of school-year preparations will help you make better decisions.

Orientation. School districts usually have an orientation at which you will receive a packet of information with forms to fill out. Whether you fill out the forms at that time or return them later, the abundance of information at an orientation can clutter your recall on what to do with each form. Furthermore, the vocabulary on these forms is new to most beginning teachers.

W-4. This tax-related form authorizes your school district to withhold the correct amount

of federal taxes from your paycheck. You will have to decide how many dependents you want to claim. For each dependent claimed, less tax is withheld. The amount withheld can deter-

mine whether you will owe taxes or be eligible for a refund when tax season rolls around.

I-9. This is the Employment Eligibility Verification Form required by the U.S. Federal Government for all employees hired after 6 November 1986. It verifies that you are eligible to work in the United States. You must present documents that establish your identity and employment eligibility, such as a driver's license and a Social Security card. A passport establishes both. The I-9 form lists acceptable documents.

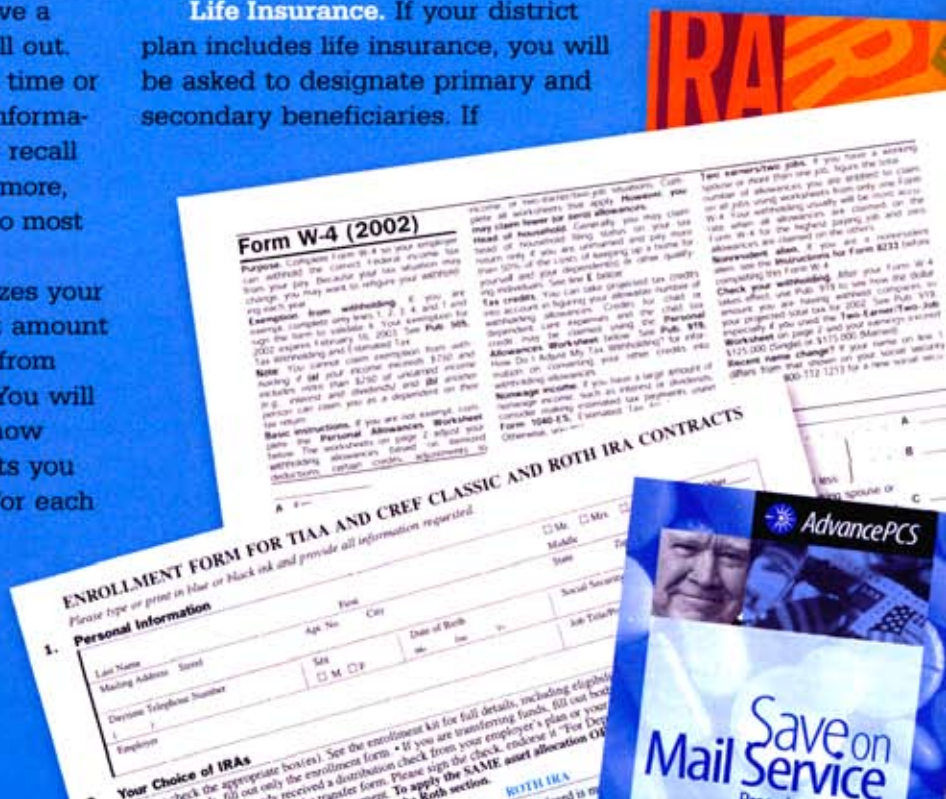
Background Checks. Background checks requiring fingerprints are standard. Many districts also require a local computer background check. Fingerprints often take three months to clear, so the local check is a cautionary stopgap during that waiting period. Note that background checks have fees. Incidentally, a background check is required for substitute teaching also.

Medical Insurance. Medical costs are rising across the country. Consequently, many districts require an employee contribution for medical insurance benefits that is deducted monthly from your paycheck. Often, districts have several health plans from which to choose, with options for including a spouse and dependents.

Life Insurance. If your district plan includes life insurance, you will be asked to designate primary and secondary beneficiaries. If



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you have multiple beneficiaries, you will be asked what percentage of your policy benefits each is to receive.

Retirement Plans. Retirement plans vary in choice and management options. Usually, districts have a retirement program in which all the teachers participate. Payroll deductions for other annuity programs may be an option in addition to the standard plan. Most retirement plans have an employee/employer matching contribution. Again, your contribution is deducted from your paycheck.

Sick-Leave Bank. Many districts have an option to contribute to a sick-leave bank. A sick-leave bank offers an alternative for members who run out of sick days. With this plan, you donate leave days to the bank from your annual allocation. Members with catastrophic illnesses who have used up their personal accumulated days may apply for additional sick leave.

Union Fees. The handling of professional affiliations varies greatly from state to state. If membership is a part of your employment contract, the fees will be deducted monthly from your paycheck.

Pay Distribution. The number of working months also varies. In most cases, a school work year includes 10 months of payment. Often you may choose between a 10- or 12-month pay schedule. In some cases, you can elect to receive a check every two weeks or once a month.

If your paycheck is direct deposited, you must provide

a voided check, bank account information, and your name and Social Security number. Anticipate two months to complete this process.

Mandatory Requirements. Mandatory employment requirements vary as greatly as schools do. Often, training on specific issues, such as child abuse, infectious diseases, and safety, are required for new employees within the first few months of employment. You may be required to obtain or provide proof of a physical exam and a tuberculosis (TB) test. Some districts ask staff members to sign ethical employee agreements. An example is an Internet or e-mail policy statement.

Substitutes. Many districts have automated substitute dispatch systems. Usually, you must set yourself up so that, when you call in sick, a substitute is dispatched. Automated or not, your school will instruct you on its process for getting a substitute.

Leave. Districts offer various employee leaves, including sick, professional, family medical, emergency, and civic. Each leave has its own requirements to meet and forms to fill out before it can be approved.

Negotiated Agreements. Teachers sign some type of negotiated agreement with their school system when hired, with many signing specific contracts. Within that negotiated document are conditions for salary, placement, benefits, leave, working conditions, grievances, and other association rights. Such agreements

vary widely among districts, so it is important that you read through and understand the contract you sign. Your district must abide by the language of that agreement.

Knowledge Gives Power. Accepting and starting a teaching position involves more than the obvious. Important quality-of-life decisions must be made when you accept a job. By having an understanding of these obligatory documents before orientation, the new information will be less overwhelming and you will make better decisions for yourself. ■



APPLICATION FOR GROUP INSURANCE TO
PEKIN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

New Applicant Change in Coverage (requested effective) Beneficiary Change
 Addition of Dependent/Spouse Delete Dependent/Spouse (Date of Event) Address Change

EMPLOYER Please Print in Black Ink

Section 1 - Employee

Name (Last, First, Middle) POLICY NO.
 Home Address Date of Birth Soc. Sec. No.
 City State Zip Code Marital Status
 U.S. Department of Justice
 Immigration and Naturalization Service
 Hours Worked Per Week Annual Salary (If Applicable) Date Employed Full-Time
 Effective Date of COBRA Continuation Reason for COBRA Continuation or
 Other Leave: _____
 Signature _____ Date _____

Section 2 - Dependent to be Insured

PLEASE READ ALL INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY BEFORE COMPLETING THIS FORM

Anti-Discrimination Notice. It is illegal to discriminate against any individual (other than an alien not authorized to work in the U.S.) in hiring, discharging, or recruiting for a fee because of that individual's national origin or citizenship status. It is illegal to discriminate against work eligible individuals. Employees CANNOT specify which document(s) they will accept from an employer. The refusal to have an individual because of a future expiration date may also constitute illegal discrimination.

Section 1 - Employee. All employees, citizens and non-citizens, hired after November 6, 1996, must complete Section 1 of this form at the time of hire, which is the actual beginning of employment. The employer is responsible for ensuring that Section 1 is timely and properly completed.

Preparer/Translator Certification. The Preparer/Translator Certification must be completed if Section 1 is prepared by a person other than the employee. A preparer/translator may be used only when the employee is unable to complete Section 1 on his/her own. However, the employee must still sign Section 1.

Section 2 - Employer. For the form, the term "employer" refers to a fee when the employer or

INSTRUCTIONS

• If an employee is retired within three (3) years of the date this form was originally completed and the employee's work authorization has expired or expires (reverification), complete this form and have the employee's work authorization reverified. List the employee's

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