

Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) and Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments (VSIP)

In an effort to streamline the application and inquiry process for the Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) and the Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment (VSIP) opportunity, the Talent Management Office (TMO) is providing guidance and FAQs regarding applying for the program and what to expect.

The Department of Commerce (DOC) has been given approval for the [Voluntary Early Retirement Authority \(VERA\)](#) and [Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments \(VSIP\)](#). This is an opportunity for employees who meet VERA's eligibility criteria to retire early without an age penalty and possibly receive a VSIP. Employees that are eligible for a [Voluntary Immediate Retirement](#) or who choose to resign during the authorized period could also be eligible for the VSIP. The VERA/VSIP will be available from **March 18, 2025 to April 17, 2025**.

VERA and VSIP Eligibility Requirements

All employees, in all positions, at all grade/band levels, in every geographic location except for positions focused on immigration enforcement, national security, wage mariners, patent examiners, trademark examining attorneys, supervisory patent examiners, supervisory trademark examining attorneys, or public safety can apply for VERA or VSIP. The authorities can be used alone or together to incentivize employees to leave voluntarily to avoid or lessen the impact of a Reduction in Force (RIF).

- VERA allows some employees to retire and receive an immediate annuity (pension) and carry their FEHB participation into retirement, who would otherwise not be eligible to retire.
- VSIP authority allows employees a lump-sum payment of up to \$25,000 as an incentive to voluntarily separate. ***Employees do not need to be retirement eligible to accept the VSIP.*** Employees receive the lesser of what they would receive in severance pay or the \$25,000.

Note: An employee who is separated during a RIF will ***not*** receive severance pay if they are eligible for retirement (including uniformed service retirement.) VERA and VSIP allow such employees to retire before a RIF and receive some or all of their severance entitlement (up to \$25,000.)

VERA and VSIP Guidance

Employees may apply to VERA and/or VSIP authorities through **Thursday, April 17, 2025**, and must be offboarded (via resignation or retirement) no later than **Saturday, May 3, 2025**.

Employees who elect to separate under VERA and/or VSIP may also elect to be placed on administrative leave from the date their application is approved through the date of their

separation. Employees that would like to apply for VERA and/or VSIP may do so through their supervisor, in coordination with their servicing human resources office.

Eligibility and other information can be found on the OHRM [VERA](#) and [VSIP](#) webpages, as well as with the [FAQs](#).

VERA and VSIP Application

To take advantage of this program, please complete the [VERA/VSIP Application Form](#), and provide your form to TMO.Retirements@doc.gov. (Please do not submit this form through Kiteworks).

Interested employees must apply by 11:59pm ET on 4/17/2025.

You will be notified once your application has been approved. Employees may not receive administrative leave until their application is approved. If you are retiring through VERA or optional retirement, please submit your retirement application through TMO.Retirements@doc.gov (You must submit your retirement application prior to 5/3/2025.)

FAQs

Q1: Is my specific position/department/bureau eligible for the VERA and/or VSIP?

A1: All employees, in all positions, at all grade/band levels, in every geographic location except for positions focused on immigration enforcement, national security, wage mariners, patent examiners, trademark examining attorneys, supervisory patent examiners, supervisory trademark examining attorneys, or public safety can apply for VERA or VSIP. Final eligibility will be determined upon review of the application.

Q2: Am I eligible for VERA as a FERS employee who meets the Minimum Retirement Age (MRA) with at least 10 years of service, but less than 20 years?

A2: No, 20 years of service is the minimum to qualify for the VERA. You may be eligible to retire under the FERS MRA+10 optional retirement with a reduced annuity.

Q3: Is there a waiver for years of service or age required for this VERA?

A3: No, not at this time. (VERA service and age requirements are stated on the VERA/VSIP Form.)

Q4: Are the age and creditable service requirements calculated at time of filing?

A4: Age and creditable service will be calculated once we receive your VERA/VSIP application.

Q5: What is the effective date of my VERA retirement or any separation with a VSIP?

A5: You may select the date of your retirement or separation from the date of application approval through May 3, 2025. **You must be off the rolls no later than Saturday May 3, 2025.**

Q6: Can I use my accumulated annual or sick leave balance to meet the years of service?

A6: No, neither your annual nor your sick leave balance can be used to meet eligibility requirements.

Q7: I submitted and was approved for the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP). How does this impact me?

A7: Employees who were approved for DRP are not eligible for the DOC VERA/VSIP offer.

Q8: Can I retire under VERA and receive a VSIP?

A8: Yes, DOC is offering both to the approved employees, and if you meet the criteria for both, you can retire under VERA and receive a VSIP (if eligible).

Q9: What is Discontinued Service Retirement (DSR) and how does it differ from a VERA?

A9: To learn more about DSR, please refer [here](#).

Q10: Do I receive payment for unused annual leave or sick leave upon taking VERA?

A10: You will be paid a lump-sum payment for your unused annual leave, credit hours, or compensatory time. Sick leave is calculated as part of your annuity computation (sick leave under the equivalent of 30 days will not count). Any unused time off awards will be forfeited.

Q11: What happens to my benefits during and after the VERA process? (Ex: FEHB, FSA)

A11: Normally employees must carry FEHB for a period of 5 years in order to carry FEHB into retirement. However, OPM has granted waivers to employees who have been covered under the FEHB Program continuously since the beginning date of the agency's latest statutory VSIP authority, or OPM-approved VSIP or VERA authority, and retire during the statutory VSIP or OPM-approved VSIP/VERA period; and receive a VSIP; or take early optional retirement.

You cannot continue to contribute to FSA once you separate from federal service. You may contact FSAFEDS directly regarding your FSA balance and reimbursements. Questions regarding FEGLI, FEDVIP, & TSP will be addressed during your retirement counseling.

Q12: If an employee is eligible to retire today, can they also take VSIP?

A12: Yes, employees eligible for a voluntary immediate retirement may apply for the VSIP.

Q13: Do employees notify the bureaus to say they want to apply?

A13: You may notify your immediate supervisor that you are going to apply; however, it is not required. Please send your VERA and/or VSIP application to TMO.retirements@doc.gov

Q14: If there are specific questions that are not covered in the document, who should employees contact for further guidance?

A14: Employees can submit questions or a request for a scheduled retirement counseling session at TMO.Retirement@doc.gov.