SFL Solutions For Life

Weekly Insight
December 15, 2025

5 Retirement Mistakes Kansas Educators Make - And How To Fix Them

This Week's Focus

Kansas educators work hard to build other people's futures, but retirement can still sneak up fast. This week's focus is the first five mistakes that trip up many teachers and school staff as they prepare to retire: ignoring pensions, waiting too long to save, underestimating inflation, neglecting investments, and overlooking healthcare planning.

These are not "finance mistakes." These are planning blind spots that can cause surprise stresses.

In today's edition of SFL Weekly Insights, we will show what each mistake looks like in real life, why it matters, and one simple action you can take this week to get back on track.

Content Overview

- KPERS basics and saving habits
- Inflation risk and neglected investments
- Healthcare timing, Medicare at 65, coverage gaps
- Free Teachers quiz to spot your biggest risk

Part 1
The *First* Mistakes That Trip Up Kansas Educators

SFL Solutions For Life

Mistake #1: Ignoring Your Pension (KPERS)

For many Kansas educators, a pension is the "bedrock" of retirement security. But if you do not understand how your pension works, you can miscalculate your retirement income and how much extra savings you will need.

What this mistake looks like (real life):
You hear "85 points" and assume you cannot retire until you hit it. But KPERS explains that 85 points is only one way to qualify, and **KPERS 1 members do *not* have to have 85 points to retire**.

Why this becomes a problem:
If you do not know when your benefits start, how much they may pay, or what rules apply to your situation, you can end up retiring later than planned or cutting spending more than expected.

Fix it this week (simple steps):
□ Pull your most recent pension estimate or statement. Write the date at the top.
□ Circle three basics you need to confirm: (**1**) when benefits can start, (**2**) estimated monthly amount, (**3**) survivor options.
□ Write one question you still have & bring it to your SFL review:

____

Micro-action: In one sentence, write: ***"My pension may cover ___% of my retirement pay."*** Then we can stress-test the gap.

Mistake #2: Procrastinating Saving (Waiting Too Long)

Educators are busy. The guidebook calls out that delaying retirement savings can be one of the costliest mistakes, because those years are lost opportunities to build a stronger cushion.

What this mistake looks like (real life):
You rely on your pension, but you never build "backup" savings for inflation, healthcare, and surprise expenses.

Fix it this week (no-jargon plan):
□ Pick a starting amount you can repeat (even small). Set it on auto.
□ Increase it after a raise, step, or contract change.
□ Decide your "why" in plain words: "I am saving so future-me has choices."

Micro-action: Write your goal for "extra savings" as a monthly number: **$_____/month.**

Next page: Mistakes #3 and #4 (Inflation and Investments), plus what to do <u>before</u> winter break.

Part 2
The *First* Mistakes That Trip Up Kansas Educators

SFL Solutions For Life

Mistake #3: *Underestimating Inflation (prices going up)*

If prices rise but your income does not rise the same way, your money buys less over time.

Why it matters for educators: Housing, food, utilities, and healthcare can cost more later, so a retirement plan that works today may not work later.

Action step (do this week):

□ Add a "prices will rise" cushion to your retirement budget.
□ Make sure part of your plan can grow over time (not only sit still).
□ **Write down 3 costs you worry will rise most:**

______________ / ______________ / ______________

Mistake #4: *Neglecting Investments (letting your money sit too long)*

If your retirement money is not set up to grow, you can fall behind over time.

Why it matters: Spreading money across different types of investments can lower the risk of one bad drop hurting everything at once.

Action step (do this week):

□ Find your account list (pension + any retirement accounts).
□ Ask:

1. ***"Where is my money right now?"***
2. ***"Have I reviewed it in the last 12 months?"***

Mistake #5: *Overlooking Healthcare (assuming it will stay the same)*

Healthcare costs can rise later, and your school coverage may not move into retirement the way you expect.

Key age marker: Many people start Medicare at 65, so retiring before 65 may create a coverage gap to plan for.

Action step (do this week):

□ Call HR and ask: ***"Do I have retiree coverage? What will it cost?"***
□ Write your target retirement age: ___ Write your age 65 date: ___
□ List your top 2 healthcare worries:

Worry #1:____

Worry #2:____

1. Ignoring Pensions

Failing to understand pension benefits can result in?

- ☐ A) Overestimating your savings
- ☐ B) Miscalculating retirement income needs
- ☐ C) Not saving enough for your child's education
- ☐ D) Underestimating healthcare expenses

2. Procrastinating Saving

What is a potential consequence of delaying retirement savings?

- ☐ A) Overfunding retirement accounts
- ☐ B) Experiencing financial growth faster
- ☐ C) Inadequate savings for future needs
- ☐ D) None of the above

3. Underestimating Inflation

Ignoring inflation can?

- ☐ A) Preserve your purchasing power
- ☐ B) Reduce your cost of living
- ☐ C) Erode your retirement income over time
- ☐ D) Increase your future spending