



403(b) and 457 Program

Business and platform overview

Provided by:

Disclosure:

Aspire for 403(b) and 457 plans

Aspire is the smart retirement solutions for 403(b) and 457 plans. Aspire is an open-investment and open-advisor solution - currently acting as a provider in over 6,000 school districts in the United States and is the nation's largest independent recordkeeper serving K-12, healthcare, municipality, and township retirement plans.

Aspire's platform offers over 30,000 mutual funds from well-known fund families, including Vanguard, T. Rowe Price, Franklin Templeton, Fidelity, American Funds, and hundreds of others. Each plan can offer all these funds to participants or choose their own specific fund menu. Participants may work with a financial advisor of their choice or self-direct and invest on their own. A plan may also choose to assign a specific financial advisor or firm to work with participants.

Benefits, services, and capabilities

- Access to low-cost mutual funds
- No proprietary fund requirements
- Third-party money manager services available
- Easy participant enrollment with ability to invest on their own or work with an advisor of their choice
- Transparent fee structure
- Traditional and Roth options are available
- Loans available
- Partnerships with all Third-Party Administrators that specialize in K-12
- Customer service support M-F 8:00 am – 8:00 pm ET

Administrative website portal

Employee deferrals and employer contributions are easily processed online by the employer (where applicable), TPA, or payroll provider, using uniquely-assigned logins. These logins also provide access to downloadable, comprehensive data, employer administrative guides, communication materials, and reports – and additional services that will enhance the ease of plan management.

Participant website portal

Investment changes, as well as loan and distribution requests, can be initiated online or in paper. A wide range of account and investment data is available on the system, including links with Morningstar reports, prospectus, annual reports, semi-annual reports, and SAI. Paper statements are mailed quarterly but participants can access statements at any time and for custom time periods via the portal. Within online accounts, participants have links to educational videos, FAQs, white papers, and several calculators. They also have the ability to request an automatic rebalance of their portfolios quarterly, or may initiate a rebalance as needed.

Investment options

Mutual funds

Aspire delivers a selection of more than 30,000 mutual funds from over 500 fund families, that includes share classes from the associated fund family. Some funds may require certain minimum contribution levels to meet institutional share class availability and Aspire does not have proprietary mutual funds.

Professional money management

By using third-party investment managers, participants - and, if applicable, their advisors - can select from portfolios designed by professionals instead of picking individual funds. The money manager is also responsible for monitoring the performance and rebalancing or changing funds to meet the performance objective.

Fees and expenses

403(b) and 457	
New plan setup	None
Participant fees	\$3.33 monthly and 15 bps on assets annually
Custodial fees	Included in the participant fees stated above
Investment expense	Reflected in the mutual funds selected
Professional money management / Strategist services	Specific to strategist and deducted from participant account balances
Advisor compensation	<p>Commission-based advisors are paid according to the commission structure incorporated in a particular fund, and are paid by the fund company.</p> <p>Fee-based advisors are paid according to specified advisory fee, and are paid from funds deducted from participant balances.</p>

Other applicable, transparent plan & participant-level fees:

- \$100 loan initiation
- \$75 per distribution processing
- \$25 check replacement
- \$10 recurring distributions

All Aspire fees are charged independent of the expense ratios of the investment funds – which can be located in a fund’s prospectus.

Asset safety and security

The standard check on operational compliance for a recordkeeping platform is an annual SSAE No. 16 (formally SAS 70) CPA audit. The SSAE No. 16 audit determines whether or not a company's technology, business processes, physical security, and infrastructure meet or surpass SSAE 16 standards. Aspire performs this audit annually and has continually received favorable results. A copy of the latest audit is available by request.

As comprehensive as this audit is, it was not specifically designed for record keepers of defined contribution plans. The Centre for Fiduciary Excellence (CEFEX) (www.cefex.org) filled this gap by developing a certification program that has become the nationally recognized standard for evaluation of plan recordkeepers. This certification is an independent recognition of a recordkeeper's conformity to all practices and criteria. Aspire has been certified each year since the inception of the CEFEX program in 2008.

All monies are handled by the custodian associated with the product, AdvisorTrust (with Matrix Trust as sub-custodian), one of the fastest growing trust companies in the United States. Matrix Trust is part of Broadridge, one of the largest financial administrative firms in the country. The invested assets are held with the fund company in which the participant has invested – not with AdvisorTrust or Matrix Trust. Both AdvisorTrust and Matrix Trust have processes and controls in place to ensure participant assets are secure. Both firms maintain significant errors and omissions insurance.

PCS Retirement is among the nation's largest independent and conflict-free retirement solution providers in the industry. PCS Retirement acquired Aspire in July 2019 and together, they provide recordkeeping services to 19,000 plans and 850,000 eligible participants representing \$26+ billion in AUA.

Aspire is a comprehensive retirement solution that includes business development tools for financial advisors and data-driven recordkeeping technology supporting individual retirement accounts and health savings accounts. With over 92,000 educators and school administrators and \$6+ billion in retirement assets across 6,000 retirement plans, Aspire has developed a strong presence across the individual and multi-vendor retirement markets.