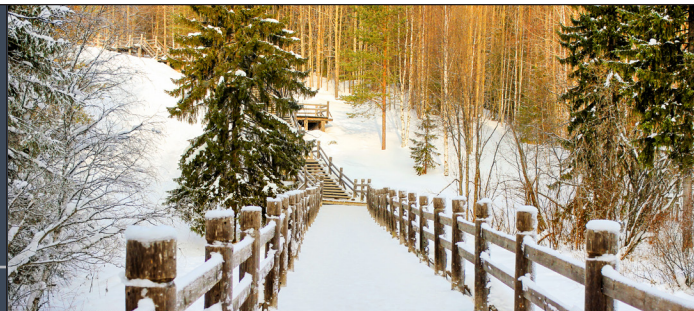


# RETIREE NEWS

JANUARY 2020



## Is Your Mailing Address Current?

Be sure to receive important notifications from MERS without delay by keeping your contact information current.

To change your mailing and email addresses online, log in to your myMERS account at [www.mersofmich.com](http://www.mersofmich.com) and select the “**Edit Profile**” link.

## Changing your Defined Benefit Beneficiary

One question we’re frequently asked by retirees is, “Can I change my defined benefit beneficiary after I have retired?” The answer to that question will depend on which of the three forms of payment you chose when you retired.

- **Straight Life** – Under a Straight Life payment, your monthly benefit ends when you die. If you made employee contributions to your Defined Benefit Plan, your monthly pension payments are paid from these contributions first. If your death occurs before your contributions are depleted, any remaining contributions will be paid out in a lump sum to the refund beneficiary(ies) you named at the time of your retirement. *You can change your refund beneficiary(ies) at any time.*
- **Life with 100%, 75%, or 50% to Survivor** – If you selected this payment type, you agreed to take a reduced payment now, so that you could name one person to receive a percentage of your monthly benefit after your death. Because the amount of your current benefit was calculated based on both of your life expectancies, *you cannot change the monthly payment beneficiary.* Instead, if your named beneficiary pre-deceases you, your monthly benefit will revert to the higher Straight Life payment amount.
- **Life with 20, 15, 10, or 5 Years Period Certain** – With this payment type, you agreed to take a reduced payment for your lifetime in exchange for a guarantee that your benefit will be paid out for a minimum number of years. If you die before your chosen time period expires, your beneficiary(ies) will receive your monthly benefit for the remainder of the chosen period. *You can change your beneficiary(ies) at any time before this period ends.*

Now that you have retired, you will no longer be able to update your beneficiary information online. You can download a *Beneficiary Change Request* form at [www.mersofmich.com](http://www.mersofmich.com).



## Working in Retirement Guidelines

If you are thinking about returning to work, you may be wondering if it will affect your retirement benefit. If you are hired anywhere other than the municipality you retired from, you can continue to receive your monthly pension payment without any restrictions on your employment.

However, if you retired under a MERS Defined Benefit or Hybrid Plan and are rehired by the same municipality you retired from, there are some rules.

If you return to a **regular** position:

- You must have 60 days of separation before returning to work.
- You may only work up to 1,000 hours in a calendar year.

If you return to a **voter-elected** position (by election or appointment):

- If you are elected/appointed into a *different* position, you must have *60 days* of separation.
- If you are re-elected/appointed into the *same* position, you must have *two years* of separation.
- There is no limit on the number of hours you can work.

Regardless of the position you are returning to, your period of separation must be a *bona fide separation*. This means you cannot pre-arrange or discuss returning to work either before you retire or during the required separation period.

If any of the above criteria are not met, your monthly benefit will be suspended until your employment is ended or age 70½, whichever comes first. You will also be required to repay any retirement payments you have received and may incur significant tax penalties. You and your employer must confirm your understanding of these rules by submitting a completed *Working in Retirement Certification* form.

You will not be eligible to re-enroll in the employer's pension plan offered through MERS.



## Are You Getting Ready to Prepare Your Taxes?

As a defined benefit retiree, you will receive a Form 1099-R issued by MERS. If you are receiving a benefit from multiple employers, you will receive a Form 1099-R for each. This form will be mailed by January 31, 2020, according to IRS requirements. This form is not available online. However, if you have not yet received it and are ready to start preparing your taxes, you may be able to find most of the information you need on your fourth quarter statement in your myMERS account. You will then be able to finalize your tax filing preparation after you receive your Form 1099-R from MERS.

If you have a Defined Contribution or 457 program with MERS, you will receive a second Form 1099-R issued by Alerus Retirement Solutions for each account that you took a distribution from. This form will also be mailed by January 31, 2020. However, unlike the 1099-R for your defined benefit, a copy of your 1099-R from Alerus can be found in your myMERS account.



## Census 2020: What to Expect

Every 10 years, the Census Bureau conducts a survey to determine the number of people living in the U.S. The next census will be conducted in 2020, with invitations to participate mailed to each household. Census results determine how many seats each state gets in Congress, how legislative and school districts are drawn, as well as how much federal funding each state receives. The greater the number of people counted in Michigan, the more our state will receive!

- Each household will receive a unique Census ID to use when responding.
- If you live in Michigan six months or more each year, use the code sent to your Michigan address.
- The Census will ask for information such as your name, gender, age, birthday, race/ethnicity, relationship to head-of-household, owner or renter and phone number.
- The Census will not ask about citizenship or immigration status.

Census invitations will be mailed in March, and in early to mid-spring of 2020 the Census Bureau will be sending out reminders to fill out your form and may follow up in person at households that don't respond. You can find out more about the 2020 Census at [www.becountedmi2020.com](http://www.becountedmi2020.com).

## Will Your Withdrawal Need a Medallion Signature Guarantee?

MERS has made it easy for you to withdraw funds from your Defined Contribution or 457 account with online distribution requests. To do so, log into your myMERS account and select the plan you would like to withdraw from, then click on the **“Distributions”** link in the left-hand navigation to make your request. All distributions requested online will be in the form of a check mailed to the address you have on file with MERS.

However, for your protection, there are some distribution requests that require a Medallion Signature Guarantee.

A Medallion Signature Guarantee is required for any transaction:

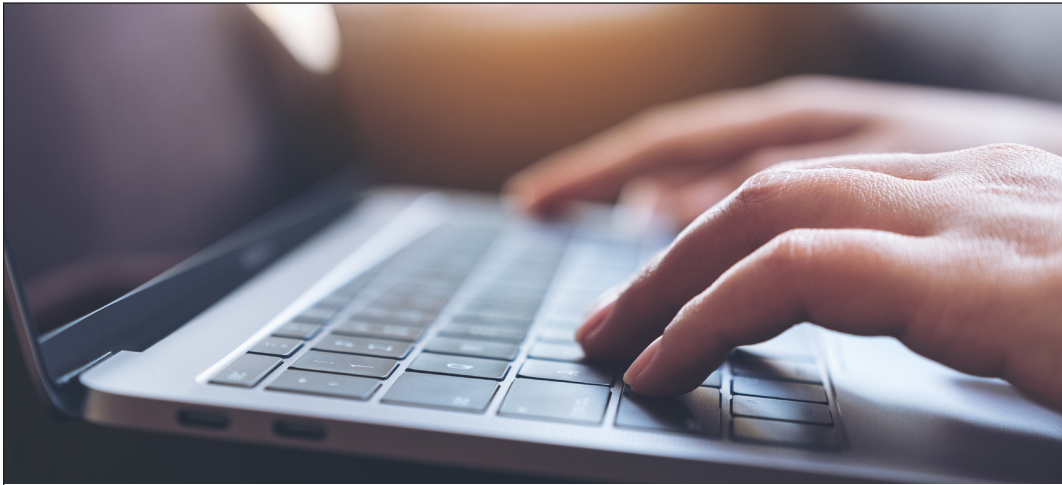
- Over \$100,000.
- Requiring a wire transfer or direct deposit.
- Being sent to a destination outside the United States.
- Being sent to an address other than the address of record on the account.

**A Medallion Signature Guarantee is not the same as a notary stamp.** This guarantee authenticates the validity of the request and the financial institution issuing the guarantee generally accepts liability for any forgery, protecting you and MERS from fraud. A Medallion Signature Guarantee can be obtained at many banks and credit unions, although you will probably need to be an account holder with them to get one. A searchable list of institutions that can issue a Medallion Signature Guarantee can be found at [www.msglookup.com](http://www.msglookup.com).

These requests require a paper form and cannot be submitted via e-mail, online or fax. You can find the distribution request form in your myMERS account. After selecting the plan you want to withdraw from, look for the **“Resource Library”** to appear at the top of the page. You can also contact MERS Service Center to request the form.








 **MERS**<sup>®</sup>  
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Lansing, MI 48917



**Contact us**

MERS Service Center is available 8:30 am - 5:00 pm, Monday - Friday to answer your questions.

**800.767.6377**

 You can also send us a question anytime on Facebook Messenger.

# Accessing Your Account Securely Online

Your myMERS account is a one-stop resource for most of your account needs. You can view or change your contact information, download forms and publications, find your quarterly statements and more.

It's also the safest way to update important financial information. To prevent someone else from fraudulently accessing your benefit payment, effective January 1, 2020, MERS will no longer accept changes to your direct deposit account or tax withholding over the phone. Should you need to update this information, you must do it through your myMERS account.

Changes to your direct deposit information or tax withholdings must be completed through your myMERS account.

If you've never accessed your myMERS account online before, don't worry. Here's how to get started:

1. Visit [www.mersofmich.com](http://www.mersofmich.com).
2. Click on the link that reads **"First time user or need help?"** located underneath the green "Login" button.
3. Follow the account access instructions for participants.

Still need help? You can call the MERS Service Center, and our customer service representatives will be happy to walk you through accessing and using your account.

## Join the conversation

Follow MERS of Michigan to keep up with the latest updates from MERS, learn from the experts about topics like health care and social security, and share retirement tips with peers.



[www.mersofmich.com](http://www.mersofmich.com)

## 2020 Pension Payments

Payments go out on the 18th of the month or one business day before a weekend or holiday.

- |               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| • January 17  | • July 17      |
| • February 18 | • August 18    |
| • March 18    | • September 18 |
| • April 17    | • October 16   |
| • May 18      | • November 18  |
| • June 18     | • December 18  |

*This publication contains a summary description of MERS benefits, policies or procedures. MERS has made every effort to ensure that the information provided is accurate and up to date. Where the publication conflicts with the relevant Plan Document, the Plan Document controls.*

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