



Municipal Employees' Retirement System of Michigan
1134 Municipal Way, Lansing, Michigan 48917

Phone (517) 703-9030 • (800) 767-6377 • Fax (517) 327-8336 • Website: www.mersofmich.com

Frequently Asked Questions: Naming or Changing Your Beneficiary

Can I choose more than one beneficiary?

You can choose more than one Refund Beneficiary. A refund beneficiary will only receive a refund of your employee contributions (if any) plus interest. If you are married, your spouse is automatically your refund beneficiary. If you want someone other than your spouse as your Refund Beneficiary, or additional Refund Beneficiaries, your spouse must consent in writing.

You can choose more than one Successor Refund Beneficiary. If you do not name a Refund Beneficiary, or you and your Refund Beneficiary(ies) die simultaneously, your Successor Refund Beneficiaries will each receive a share of any employee contributions you have made plus interest.

You can choose only one individual as your Survivor Beneficiary. A Survivor Beneficiary is a person who would receive a lifetime monthly benefit in the event you die after meeting your division's vesting requirement but before retirement. If you are married, your spouse is automatically your Survivor Beneficiary. If you want to name someone other than your spouse as your Survivor Beneficiary, your spouse must consent in writing. A Survivor Beneficiary must have an insurable interest in your life (examples: spouse, child, grandchild, sibling, parent, grandparent). Several factors may affect the benefit to be paid to your Survivor Beneficiary (e.g., vesting does not apply where the member's death is directly duty related). Some of the decisions that you make when you retire may also affect the rights of your Survivor Beneficiary.

Can I name a trust or an estate as my Survivor Beneficiary?

No, you must name one living person.

What happens if my Refund or Survivor Beneficiary dies before I do?

If your beneficiary dies before you, you will need to name a new beneficiary. Because personal circumstances vary, we encourage you to contact the MERS Office of Employee and Retiree Services at (800) 767-2308 to discuss your options.

Where can I find the Beneficiary Change Request form?

The form for naming a Refund, Successor Refund, or Survivor Beneficiary can be found on our web site at www.mersofmich.com. Once completed and signed, it can be faxed (517) 703-9706 or mailed to our office at 1134 Municipal Way, Lansing, MI 48917. Changes are processed within approximately ten business days and a confirmation letter is mailed.

I am not yet retired and I've been married recently and need to assign a new beneficiary; what should I do?

Submit a copy of your marriage license, along with a new beneficiary change request form.

I am not yet retired and I've become divorced recently and need to assign a new beneficiary; what should I do?

Submit a complete copy of your divorce judgment and, if applicable, Eligible Domestic Relations Order (EDRO), to MERS for a confidential review. MERS will determine from the judgment if you are allowed to make changes to your beneficiary designation. If you are allowed to make a change, you can do so by submitting a beneficiary change request form.

Key points regarding divorces:

- Your ex-spouse may be awarded a portion of your monthly pension benefit pursuant to a judgment of divorce or EDRO.
- MERS will calculate your ex-spouse's share as directed by the court, subtract the amount from your retirement allowance, and pay it directly to your ex-spouse.
- Payments to your ex-spouse may start at your earliest eligible retirement date, whether or not you retire on that date or at a later date.
- Your benefit may also be affected if the court grants form of payment options to your ex-spouse.