



# EXPERIENCE STUDY MEDIA PROTOCOL

## Communicating changes

Every five years, the Municipal Employees' Retirement System (MERS) of Michigan performs an Experience Study, which is a comprehensive analysis of MERS' funding policy for the Defined Benefit Plan and Defined Benefit portion of the Hybrid Plan. This study compares our members' actual experience with current actuarial assumptions to determine necessary funding policy and assumption changes.

Our primary goal is to ensure that each municipality has enough assets in their plans to pay for the benefits promised to employees. As a result of the most recent analysis, MERS is making adjustments to the mortality rate table, the investment rate of return assumption, and the amortization policy. Details of these changes are available on our website, at [www.mersofmich.com](http://www.mersofmich.com).

These changes could present communications and public relations challenges as local media outlets, the public and others try to understand how they affect local municipalities and costs to fund retirement plans.

## MERS is your communications partner

MERS is here to help you answer these questions and support your efforts to communicate with local media. Our team of experts has been trained to explain the changes clearly and in a way that minimizes misunderstanding and potential overreaction by the public and media. We'll work in partnership with you to deliver the most effective message to your local media in a consistent manner.

We want to encourage you to contact the team at MERS before fielding any media inquiries related to the Experience Study. We're here to support your team and be a resource for accurate information. We're also available to help with other questions about MERS or unfunded liabilities by providing support and information.

## Best practices for handling media inquiries

1. Never feel pressured to answer questions immediately. It is good practice to take a message and follow up later so that you can be prepared.
2. Use the Experience Study toolkit to familiarize yourself with the changes and the best ways to answer questions from the media, your council and the general public. ([www.mersofmich.com/Employer/Work-Scenarios/Unfunded-Liability](http://www.mersofmich.com/Employer/Work-Scenarios/Unfunded-Liability))
3. If possible, ask reporters why they are calling, where you can reach them and tell them you'll call them back. You should also ask if they have a deadline so you can be sure to follow up with them before they write their story.
4. Contact the team at MERS. We'll help you answer tough questions and respond to media questions and concerns in the most effective manner.

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**Working together, we can  
help you deliver a clear and  
consistent message to the  
media and the public.**