






Financial Resources for Health Emergencies

Being confronted with the impact of a health-related situation can be stressful mentally, physically and financially. Take proactive measures by viewing resources in this document, provided by My Secure Advantage™ (MSA).


HOW MSA HELPS

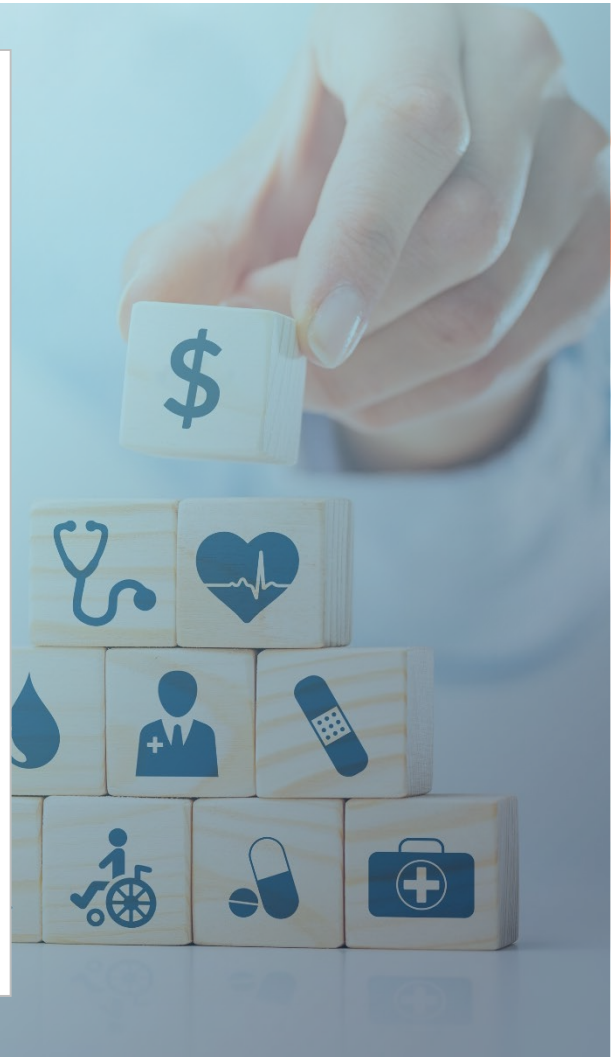
Leverage the experience and peace of mind that a Money Coach can offer:

-  Know where to start and how to move forward
-  Find local resources to meet basic needs
-  Ideas and tips for replacing lost income
-  Determine mortgage and rent concerns
-  Understand how to protect yourself financially

GET STARTED

Talk with a Money Coach today about how you can keep your budget healthy.

 866-262-5750 | Monday-Friday, 6AM – 5PM PST



Our team of Money Coaches are available to offer information, resources and problem-solving assistance to help people work through the many financial challenges and decisions that they may face in the coming days and weeks. Each member is treated with the utmost of respect, compassion and support. Each consultation is specific to the needs of the individual, leaving no constructive stone unturned. Your Money Coach can assist in dealing with the fallout from reduced income by helping you do the following:

Find Resources to Meet Basic Needs

A coach's first priority is to assure that the basic needs of you and your family are met (shelter, food, water, etc.) during a reduction or loss of income. Coaches will provide extensive resource contacts to help you maintain a level of basic safety and stability. If you have the ability, stock up on food and medication in case you or your loved ones are not able to leave the house.

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Replace Lost Income

Many people experience an immediate loss of income when their household is hit by a reduction in working hours or a shutdown. Coaches will educate you on the options for replacing income, such as unemployment insurance, public assistance, grants or low-interest loans. Many federal employees are eligible to receive unemployment compensation. In general, federal and state unemployment insurance programs provide unemployment benefits to eligible workers who are unemployed through no fault of their own (as determined under state law) and meet other eligibility requirements of state law. Check in the state government pages of your phone book and contact your local office for more information. You can also get contact information for the unemployment office in your state by going to servicelocator.org/OWSLinks.asp.

Mortgage/Rent Concerns

During an emergency situation, employees are often uncertain as to how they will pay their mortgage or rent. Coaches will help you understand your options and determine next steps for dealing with your mortgage company or landlord.

Other Financial Topics

Some banks and credit unions offer zero interest or low-interest loans to specific groups. We suggest contacting your bank or credit union to see if they offer zero interest or low-interest loans. Also keep in mind that your Money Coach is able to work with you on any financial challenge that you might have. Most common concerns relate to budget, debt, credit, student loans, college planning, retirement or taxes.

Community Resources

United Way

Find out what types of help may be available in your area by contacting United Way/AIRS (Alliance of Information and Referral Services). In some parts of the country, just dial 2-1-1 or visit 211.org. If the 2-1-1 system is not yet available in your area, look in your phone book for the local United Way, or visit their website to search for their local phone number at unitedway.org. United Way may be able to direct you to the following resources in your area:

- Basic Human Needs Resources: food banks, clothing closets, shelters, rent assistance, utility assistance.
- Physical and Mental Health Resources: health insurance programs, Medicaid and Medicare, maternal health, Children's Health Insurance Program, medical information lines, crisis intervention services, support groups, counseling, drug and alcohol intervention and rehabilitation.
- Employment Supports: financial assistance, job training, transportation assistance, and education programs.
- Support for Older Americans and Persons with Disabilities: adult day care, congregate meals, Meals on Wheels, respite care, home health care, transportation, and homemaker services.
- Support for Children, Youth and Families: childcare, after school programs, family resource centers, summer camps and recreation programs, mentoring, tutoring, protective services and Head Start. The Head Start program is a federal program that is funded directly to local grantees. For information regarding Head Start visit acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohs. To find your local office, search under the program locator: eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/HeadStartOffices.

United Way and the 2-1-1 network are good places to start, but also try these additional resources for help...

Housing

For housing counseling, including advice for eviction or foreclosure, and rental help in your state, contact HUD (Housing and Urban Development) at 1-800-569-4287 or online at hud.gov.

Religious Organizations, Charities & National Relief Groups

Local churches and religious organizations often operate assistance programs. Even if you are not a member of a particular organization, you may still be able to receive assistance in your community. National relief groups may be able to help meet short-term immediate needs.

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Catholic Charities

Check catholiccharitiesusa.org for an Internet search of resources in your area or look in your phone book for a local number.

Goodwill Industries

Check goodwill.org for an Internet search of resources in your area or look in your phone book for a local number.

Salvation Army

Check salvationarmyusa.org for an Internet search of resources in your area or look in your phone book for a local number.

Government Assistance

Although getting assistance from the government can take some time, it may be worth the wait. City, county, and state governments vary in the types of assistance available. Contact your local Department of Health and Human Services, sometimes called County Social Services to see if you qualify for public assistance programs, including food stamps or emergency financial funds, or Medicaid. Look in your phone book in the government pages.

To reach the State Human Service Agency Info and Links for your State: hhs.gov/programs/social-services/index.html

U.S. Conference of Mayors

Another gateway of information to local resources may be found at the U.S. Conference of Mayors website at usmayors.org. To search for your local mayor's office, go to find a mayor and type in your city to access possible local sources of assistance.

Help with Home Heating and/or Cooling Bills

You or someone you know may be eligible for help with home heating and/or cooling bills through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). LIHEAP is a federally funded program that helps low-income households with their home energy bills. LIHEAP can help you stay warm in the winter and cool in the summer. By doing so, you can reduce the risk of health and safety problems (such as illness, fire, or eviction).

The federal government does not provide energy assistance directly to the public. Instead, LIHEAP operates in the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Indian tribes or tribal organizations, and the U.S. territories.

The LIHEAP program in your community determines if your household's income qualifies for the program. The LIHEAP program may also require households to meet additional eligibility criteria to receive LIHEAP assistance. *NOTE: The availability of LIHEAP assistance is not guaranteed. Often most of the Federal LIHEAP funds are spent during the winter.

Your LIHEAP program may be able to offer you one or more of the following types of assistance:

- Utility bill payment assistance
- Energy crisis assistance
- Weatherization and energy-related home repairs

To apply you may need the following:

- Recent copies of your utility bills
- A recent payroll stub or other proof that shows your current gross income
- Documentation showing income from Social Security, unemployment insurance, pension funds, disability, etc.
- Final utility termination notice (if you've received a shut-off notice from your energy company)
- Proof of present address (e.g. rent receipt, lease or deed, property tax bill)

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- Proof of total members living in your household (e.g. birth certificates, school records, etc.)
- Social Security cards (or numbers) for all persons living in your household
- Proof of U.S. citizenship or permanent residence

For more information about LIHEAP and where to apply, call the National Energy Assistance Referral (NEAR) project. NEAR is a free service providing information on where you can apply for LIHEAP. You can speak to someone at NEAR, Monday through Friday, from 6 a.m. - 6 p.m. (MST). Call the toll-free phone number at 1-866-674-6327. You can also send an email to liheapch.acf.hhs.gov/referral.htm, or you can find your State's LIHEAP office through the website, liheapch.acf.hhs.gov/profiles/energyhelp.htm.

Benefits Check Up

Another online resource is called Benefits Check Up, which can be found at benefitscheckup.org. Once you have completed the online questionnaire, the site quickly gives you a personal report of public programs and benefits that you may qualify for. Benefits Check Up is designed primarily for older adults, ages 55 and over. Although the service may also be helpful for younger people, it may not include every program for which you might qualify.

Government Benefits

If you are seeking benefits information for someone younger than age 55, check out benefits.gov. This is a government resource for federal benefits for people of all ages. You may also call 1-800-FED-INFO (or 1-800-333-4636).

Military Benefits

The military has emergency financial assistance that may be available if you meet the qualifications.

- Army Emergency Relief – <https://www.aerhq.org/Financial-Assistance>
- Air Force Aid Society – <https://www.afas.org/how-we-help/emergency-assistance/>
- Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society – <http://www.nmcrcs.org/>

Disability

If struggling financially due to a disability, determine whether there is disability coverage either through the employer's coverage, private coverage, or through your state. Although qualifying can be difficult, Social Security pays disability benefits under two programs: the Social Security disability insurance program and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. If you're eligible for any programs, process the paperwork to collect the benefits as soon as you're able to.

Social Security

Visit the Social Security website, ssa.gov, and use the Benefit Eligibility Screening Tool (BEST) to find out if you could be eligible for benefits from any of the program's Social Security administrators listed below. If it looks like you may qualify for Social Security benefits, you can apply online or call 1-800-772-1213.

- Medicare
- Social Security Disability
- Social Security Retirement
- Social Security Survivors
- Special Veterans
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

Loans

Consider taking out a personal loan if you do not qualify for any financial assistance, and you have already considered other options such as borrowing from home equity, borrowing from a retirement plan such as a 401(k), borrowing from friends or from family members.

Keep in mind that financial institutions submit their best rates to their websites, so if you have negative items or a poor credit score appearing on your credit report, you may not qualify for the best rates available. The other problem with trying to qualify for a personal loan is that the creditor considers your debt-to-income ratio, and if your income has recently been decreased, it may be more difficult to qualify.

Lastly, keep a positive attitude and make as many people aware of your situation as possible. Remember that any help you receive gets you one step closer to getting your financial life back on track.

Payday Loans

Stay away from payday loans. Avoid these predatory loans at all costs. Advertisements for payday loans make them seem like a fast, easy, no-nonsense way to get money when you're in a financial hardship. Getting a loan is as easy as showing a recent paystub, a copy of your driver's license, and a blank check. Paying off that loan can end up taking months, even years, to pay back. Most people find themselves taking out new payday loans to cover old payday loans and ultimately end up paying thousands of dollars on what started out as a few hundred dollars of debt.

Tax Tip

It is a good idea to check to see if you may qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Sometimes called the Earned Income Credit (EIC), it is a refundable federal income tax credit for low-income, working individuals and families. Congress approved the tax credit legislation in 1975. When the EITC exceeds the amount of taxes owed, it results in a tax refund to those who claim and qualify for the credit. To qualify, taxpayers must meet certain requirements and file a tax return, even if they did not earn enough money to be obligated to file a tax return. The EITC has no effect on certain welfare benefits. In most cases, EITC payments will not be used to determine eligibility for Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), food stamps, low-income housing or most Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) payments. For more information, check the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) website at <https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/individuals/earned-income-tax-credit>. You can also check with a tax advisor who can help you determine if you qualify for the tax credit and assist you with completing the proper forms to file.



Take Control with My Secure Advantage

While health-related emergencies may often feel difficult to control, you can control what action you take moving forward. Through My Secure Advantage, talk to a Money Coach and get guidance, answers, and an action plan for handling your financial situation. Call 866-262-5750 today.

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