



# HELPING HANDS



## Protect yourself financially from the impact of Corona Virus

### Keep up with your bills

There are ways to get help if you are struggling to pay your bills due to the financial impact of COVID-19. If you can still pay your bills, you will likely be better off staying on track. Keep in mind that if you decide to use a program that lets you pause or reduce payments, you will still owe the money you have not paid once the program ends. You have options.

#### If you can't pay your bills

[See these steps](#). Don't hesitate to contact your financial lenders and creditors if you can't keep up because COVID-19 has cost you income. Financial regulators have encouraged lenders to work with their customers during this time.

#### If you can't make your mortgage payments

The new CARES Act allows homeowners with federally backed loans who are affected by the pandemic to request a forbearance of their mortgage for up to 180 days. The forbearance can be extended for up to an additional 180 days. Private mortgage loans may also offer programs. [Learn more here](#).

#### If you can't keep up with your student loans

The CARES Act also [automatically suspends payments on federally-held student loans](#) through September 30, 2020. For help with a student loan other than a federally held loan, you should contact your service provider to see what options are available to you.

#### If you're already behind on your bills

[Check out these tips](#) for dealing with debt – a stressful experience even under normal circumstances.

#### If you're a financial caregiver

Those who serve as financial caregivers for older adults or people with disabilities may have [unique worries and challenges](#).

### Keep Your Money Safe

Whether or not you've experienced a financial hit, [don't head for the ATM to withdraw more cash than you usually need](#). Your money is safe in your [bank](#) or [credit union](#) account. Unlike money kept at home, you likely have [federal protections](#) if money you've deposited is taken illegally and in the unlikely event your institution shuts down. You will always be able to get cash when you need it. The professionals restocking cash machines and moving money across the country are on the job and are considered [essential service workers](#).

### Take control of your finances

[Getting money smart](#) is one of the best ways to be ready for any kind of trouble the future might bring. We also offer a [variety of tools](#) including some designed to help you [track your spending](#), [build a budget](#), [pay off your debt](#), or [take stock](#) of your overall financial well-being. And always remember to [manage and protect your credit](#).

**Steps to take if you have trouble paying your bills or meeting other financial obligations**

If you have trouble paying your bills, or loans, or paying on time, there may be a number of options to help, especially if you reach out early to your lenders or creditors.

Contact your lenders, loan servicers, and other creditors

If you're not able to pay your bills on time check the relevant website, to see if they have information that can help you.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) and other financial regulators have encouraged financial institutions to work with their customers to meet their community needs.

If you can't make a payment now, need more time, or want to discuss payment options, contact your lenders and servicers to let them know about your situation. Being behind on your payments can have a lasting impact on your credit.

Credit card companies and lenders may be able to offer you a number of options to help you. This could include waiving certain fees like ATM, overdrafts, and late fees, as well as allowing you to delay, adjust, or skip some payments.

When contacting your lenders, be prepared to explain:

- Your financial and employment situation
- How much you can afford to pay
- When you're likely to be able to restart regular payments
- Be prepared to discuss your income, expenses and assets



The heart and soul of the District 141 Employee Assistance Program is the local lodge EAP peer coordinator. These dedicated men and women volunteer their personal time to assist other union members and their families who are experiencing personal difficulties. EAP peer coordinators do not make clinical diagnoses or clinical evaluations, however, they are trained to make a basic assessment of your situation and refer you to an appropriate resource for a more detailed evaluation. EAP peer coordinators will follow up to ensure you have been able to access services that addressed the difficulty you were experiencing.

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**Sources for Credible  
Outbreak- Related  
Health Information**

**Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention**

1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30329-4027 1-800-  
CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)  
<https://www.cdc.gov>

**World Health Organization**

Regional Office for the Americas  
of the World Health Organiza-  
tion  
525 23rd Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20037

202-974-3000  
<http://www.who.int/en>

**IAM**

GOIAM.org

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# Financial Addendum to Helping Hands Special Edition V, 2020



## Understand where your money goes

The prequel to your financial story begins with a look into your past and current finances. What do you spend money on, and where are you getting your income? By tracking these factors, you can get a better sense of your financial picture today so you can plan for the future.

### **1. Take our quiz to see how healthy your finances are.**

**Answer just 10 questions** to measure your financial well-being and get a few steps for making improvements. Take it now, then take it again later to see if your story has changed.

### **2. Learn where your money is coming from.**

Before you can make any improvements, you need to get an accurate picture of your finances. Start by tracking **your sources of income**.

### **3. Learn where your money is going.**

Fill out **our spending tracker** to get a sense of your regular expenses. To get a handle on your money, you need a system that will allow you to track your daily spending on an ongoing basis. Find and stick to a system that works best for you.

### **4. Write your bill due dates on a calendar.**

If you have trouble making ends meet at the end of the month, the timing of your income and expenses may be off. It's often helpful to see the full picture. **Write down the due dates for your bills on a printed calendar** that you can look at regularly as you plan for the weeks ahead.

## Small changes can make a big difference

There are some easy steps you can take to turn the corner on your finances. Once you have an accurate picture of your money, follow these tips to start aligning your expenses to your income.

### **5. Create a working budget that matches your cash flow.**

Your cash flow is the timing of when money comes in and when it goes out. Looking your budget, especially if you tend to run short, can help you **create a working monthly budget**.

### **6. Request due dates for your bills that help you stay on track.**

If there are certain weeks when money is especially tight, you can contact your creditors and utility companies and **request new due dates that better align with your income**.

### **7. Compare your spending month-to-month.**

Track your spending closely for several months. By **looking at your spending in real-time and comparing it to the previous month**, you'll start to see places where you can make adjustments and move money into savings.

## Save for emergencies

Saving money might feel out of reach at times, but consistently putting away even small amounts of money can make a big impact over time. Check out our tips for making saving a part of your everyday routine, and then watch it grow.

### **8. Give yourself financial security with an emergency savings fund.**

Start by putting aside what you can afford in order to help cover many common emergencies, such as a car repair or medical bill, that could otherwise become costly debt. Prioritize a dedicated savings account for these unexpected expenses as one of your top savings goals, and as you get a better handle on your overall financial situation, you may decide to set more aside.

### **9. Set rules for your emergency savings—but don't be afraid to use it.**

Set guidelines for yourself for when you can spend down this savings fund and what constitutes an emergency, but if you need it, don't be afraid to use it. That's what it's there for. Just remember to work to rebuild it.

### **10. Make saving easy by making it automatic.**

Whether it's through your bank or employer, there are a number of ways to have **money automatically transferred into your savings every week or month**. Reoccurring transfers are considered one of the most effective ways to build your savings.

### **11. Put extra money into savings at times when you have it.**

There may be weeks when money is tighter than others. Take the opportunity to put money into savings when you have it.

### **12. Use your tax refund to help you reach financial goals.**

For many Americans, a tax refund can be one of the largest checks they receive all year. **Make a plan now to dedicate a portion of that money** to saving for some of your larger financial or savings goals.

## Reduce your debt

Paying down debt can seem scary or tough, but with some proven strategies, you can make it happen, bit by bit. Our tips for reducing debt can help you find the right methods to trim your debt into something that feels manageable.

### **13. Before making a plan to pay down your debts, know what you owe.**

Use our **debt log** to get a sense of the amount of debt you owe, including interest rate and projected payoff date, and who you owe it to.

### **14. Choose a debt reduction strategy that works best for you.**

There are two common strategies to pay down your debt: the highest interest-rate method and the snowball method. Learn the differences and **pick the one that works best for you**.

### **15. Learn about federal and private student loans repayment options.**

Whether you have federal or private student loans, or a mix of the two, start with the loans you're most concerned with, and learn how to **optimize paying them off**.

### **16. In the market for a car? Negotiating can save you hundreds or thousands of dollars over the life of your loan.**

Plan ahead, and **learn what's negotiable**.

## Create better money habits

Improving how you manage your money on a daily basis may take time and dedication, but as you develop better money habits, you'll create a financial story that you're proud of.

### **17. Apply only for credit you need.**

While it's not the only factor, a good credit score is key to your financial well-being. One way to **get and keep a good credit score** is to apply only for credit you need.

### **18. Set an annual reminder to check your credit reports.**

You're entitled to **free credit reports every 12 months**, so set up an annual reminder to review them for **any errors** that may be hurting your credit and should be fixed.

### **19. Set up alerts to stay on top of your checking account balance.**

Through most banks and credit unions, you're able to set up alerts to notify you of your checking account balance at the end of the week or if your balance gets low. This helps you monitor your accounts and also protects you from incurring **additional overdraft fees**.

### **20. If you can't make a bill payment, act fast and call your creditors.**

Missing a bill payment can have several negative financial impacts. If you're experiencing a financial emergency, **contact your lenders or creditors before your due date** to see what options may be available to you.

### **21. When shopping for a loan, get quotes from at least three lenders.**

One of the best ways to save money on a loan is to shop around and get estimates from several lenders to best compare terms and fees. This is true for **home loans** as well as other types of loans, including **auto loans**.

## Plan for success

Planning ahead is always helpful, and once you get a handle on your current financial picture, set some goals for what comes next. By building a plan, you have a roadmap to help guide you through the rest of your story.

### **22. When planning for the future, set SMART financial goals.**

**Break down your financial goals** so that they're **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound**. While dreams tend to be aspirational and often vague, setting actionable SMART goals can help you reach your dreams.

### **23. Set up a 529 savings plan for your children.**

If you have young children, college may seem far off, but to help reduce their need for student loans, **a 529 plan is an investment account** specifically for college in which your money can grow tax-free.

### **24. Make your savings consistent.**

Putting even a small amount into savings on a consistent basis is one of the best ways to get your savings to grow so you can meet your goals, small or large. **Set your own personal savings rule to live by and make a plan on how to achieve it**.

### **25. Prepare for life events and large purchases by planning ahead.**

Once you get a handle on your finances, you can **start to map out life events and large purchases**, so you can begin saving!