

COVID-19 FINANCIAL RESOURCES

United Way of Summit County

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Akron Financial Empowerment Center

We're Here to Help: One-On-One Financial Counseling

The Financial Empowerment Center offers free one-on-one financial counseling at no cost to any individual in Summit County. Our professional financial coaches can help you navigate financial challenges, contact your creditors, negotiate payment plans, and develop a plan to stay on track with your finances during this uncertain time. In response to COVID-19, appointments are available by phone or remote video conference. To schedule, call 2-1-1 or [click here](#).

COVID-19 Financial Resources Page Contents:

- [CARES Act Economic Impact Payments](#)
- [Unemployment Compensation](#)
- [Filing your Taxes](#)
- [Accessing your Financial Institution](#)
- [Trouble Paying Credit Cards](#)
- [Trouble Paying your Mortgage](#)
- [Trouble Paying Rent](#)
- [Trouble Paying Utilities](#)
- [Trouble Making a Car Payment](#)
- [Student Loans and Financial Aid](#)
- [Short Term and Emergency Loans](#)
- [Avoiding Scams](#)
- [Job Searching](#)
- [Additional Resources: 211 County Websites and More](#)

CARES Act Economic Impact Payments

Economic Impact Payments

- Under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, eligible tax filers who filed tax returns for either 2019 or 2018 will automatically receive an economic impact payment of up to \$1,200 for individuals or \$2,400 for married couples. Parents also receive \$500 for each qualifying child age 16 or under. Additional information is summarized below, but you can also refer to this IRS Economic Impact Payment website at www.irs.gov/eip.
- Tax filers with adjusted gross income up to \$75,000 for individuals and up to \$150,000 for married couples filing joint returns will receive the full payment. For filers with income above those amounts, the payment amount is reduced by \$5 for each \$100 above the \$75,000/\$150,000 thresholds. Single filers with income exceeding \$99,000 and \$198,000 for joint filers with no children are not eligible.
- The vast majority of people do not need to take any action to receive the checks. The IRS will calculate and automatically send the economic payment to those eligible based on their 2019 tax return, or their 2018 tax return (if 2019 has not been filed).
- Social Security beneficiaries who are not typically required to file tax returns will not need to file an abbreviated tax return to receive an economic impact payment. The IRS will use information on the Form SSA-1099 and Form RRB-1099 to generate the economic impact payments for Social Security recipients who did not file tax returns in 2018 or 2019. However, Social Security (including SSDI) and Railroad Retirement beneficiaries who don't file a tax return AND who have qualifying children under age 17 should use the "Non-Filers: Enter Payment Info" tool described below to claim the \$500 payment per child.
- The IRS launched a new webtool for individuals who don't normally file a tax return because their income was under \$12,200 (\$24,400 for married couples) and who don't receive Social Security retirement or disability benefits. This tool entitled "Non-Filers: Enter Payment Info" and will allow you to provide the IRS with information necessary to generate your economic impact payment. [Click here](#) for more information.
- If an individual's 2018 or 2019 tax return does not include direct deposit information and you prefer to receive a direct deposit rather than a paper check, individuals can provide their banking information to the IRS available online through the "Get My Payment" tool at www.irs.gov/eip. If you do not currently have a checking account, [click here](#) to check out safe and affordable Bank On certified accounts that can be opened online here.
- For security reasons, the IRS will mail a letter about the economic impact payment to the taxpayer's last known address within 15 days of the payment being paid. The letter will include information on how to report any failure to receive the payment. The IRS will not call, text, email, or contact you via social media asking for personal or bank account information. To check the status of your payment, you can use the online IRS "Get My Payment" tool found at www.irs.gov/eip.

Unemployment Compensation

- The Ohio Office of Unemployment Insurance Operations has compiled frequently asked questions regarding COVID-19's impact on unemployment benefits, including information on an expedited claim process for employees laid off because of the pandemic. [Click here](#) to see the list.
 - [Click here](#) for a step by step guide to filing for unemployment. Steps are summarized in the bullets below.
 - You can file online for unemployment at unemployment.ohio.gov 24 hours/day, 7 days a week. When filing a claim related to COVID-19, workers should use the following mass-layoff number to expedite claim processing: 2000180. As your submission is processing, do not hit refresh because that will send your submission to the end of the virtual line. Be sure to remember your Personal Identification Number (PIN). You can also apply by phone at 1-877-644-6562 or TTY 1-614-387-8408, M-F from 7am-7pm or Saturday from 9am-1pm.
 - Unemployment insurance is a week-to-week benefit so claimants must claim each week of unemployment by logging onto unemployment.ohio.gov. Unemployment claims are filed when the week is over. For detailed instructions for filing weekly claims related to COVID-19, [click here](#).
 - The Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce has developed a Resource page for Employers and Employees affected by Covid-19. [Click here](#) for more information.
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Filing Your Taxes

- The U.S. Treasury Department and the Internal Revenue Service have extended the deadline to file 2019 federal income tax returns and pay any applicable federal taxes from April 15, 2020, to July 15, 2020.
- IRS has established a special webpage focused on steps to help taxpayers, businesses and others affected by the coronavirus. This page also includes Free-File resource to prepare your federal return online for free. [Click here](#) for more information.
- My Free Taxes is a free software sponsored by United Way Worldwide and H&R block. You can file a FREE *simple federal and state return. This software does not allow individuals to file Schedules A, C, D or E. [Click here](#) for more information.

While many Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and AARP Tax Aid sites have suspended free tax preparation services, you can stay updated on their operations.

- For AARP Tax Aid, [click here](#) or call 1-888-227-7669
 - For VITA, [click here](#) or call 1-800-906-9887
 - The State of Ohio will be following the federal government and IRS in extending the deadline to July 15, 2020 to file and pay the state income tax. As with the IRS extension, Ohio will be waiving penalty on tax due payments made during the extension. Also, there will be no interest charges on payments made during the extension. [Click here](#) or call 1-800-282-1780.
 - The City of Akron has extended the deadline to file the 2019 individual Akron income tax return to July 15, 2020. Contact your local city's income tax department for questions about city taxes.
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Accessing Your Financial Institution

- Local banks and credit unions are posting information on their websites about their response to COVID-19 including changes to their current operations and assistance available to their customers. You can also see a list of specific programs offered at local banks and credit unions at [Ohio Bankers League](#) and [Ohio Credit Union League](#).
 - When possible, it is recommended that you do transactions using Online or Mobile Banking, Phone Banking, Drive-Thru, or ATMs.
 - The COVID-19 pandemic increases the importance of a safe and affordable mainstream bank or credit union account for managing your money remotely, including to receive wages and government benefits securely and more quickly. To view information about Bank On certified checking accounts that can be opened online, [click here](#).
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Trouble Paying Credit Cards

- If you have seen a reduction in pay due to COVID-19 and are struggling to make your credit card or loan payments, contact your lender right away. Explain your situation and ask about hardship programs that may be available. Regulatory agencies have encouraged financial institutions to work with customers impacted by the coronavirus. 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, overpayments, and late fees, as well as allowing you to delay, adjust, or skip some payments.
 - Check the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's (CFPB) resource "What Should I Do If I Can't Pay My Credit Card Bills" for additional tips. [Click here](#) for more information.
 - Call 2-1-1 to be connected to nonprofits in your community that offer free credit and financial counseling.
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Trouble Paying Your Mortgage

- If you do not have enough money in savings to cover your mortgage payment or rent, contact your lender immediately. Don't wait until you're behind on payments. Lenders may work with you to waive late fees, set up a repayment plan or offer loan forbearance.
 - Check the CFPB's resource "If I Can't Pay My Mortgage Loan, What Are My Options" for additional tips. [Click here](#) for more information.
 - On March 18, 2020, The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) authorized the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to implement an immediate foreclosure and eviction moratorium for single family homeowners with FHA-insured mortgages for the next 60 days. [Click here](#) for updates from HUD.
 - Call 2-1-1 to be connected to nonprofits in your community that offer housing or financial counseling or visit your 2-1-1 online database and look for "Financial Assistance" under the "Housing & Shelter" category.
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Trouble Paying Your Rent

- If you are unable to make your rent payment, contact your landlord immediately and try to work out an agreement.
 - Call 2-1-1 to be connected to nonprofits in your community that offer housing or financial counseling or visit your 2-1-1 online database and look for “Financial Assistance” under the “Housing & Shelter” category.
 - Community Legal Aid has compiled the following [informational sheet on Eviction proceeding](#) during COVID-19.
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Trouble Paying Utilities

- If you are struggling to pay your utility bills, contact your service provider right away. Many utility providers offer emergency assistance programs. Check with your water, gas, electricity, and internet providers for the most up to date information.
 - Ohio has received an extension of the Winter Crisis Program through May 1, and the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) through June 1. The Winter Crisis Program helps income-eligible Ohioans maintain their utility service, while HEAP provides eligible Ohioans assistance with their home energy bills through a one-time benefit applied directly to their bill. You can now also apply for these programs over the phone, instead of needing to appear in person. [Click here](#) for more information or call 1 (800) 282-0880 to begin your application.
 - Call 2-1-1 to be connected to nonprofits in your community that offer utility assistance or visit your 2-1-1 online database and select the “Utilities” category.
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Trouble Making Your Car Payment

If you think you may fall behind on your auto loan, call your lender and explain the situation. The sooner you contact your lender, the more options may be available. Potential options include changing the payment due date, requesting a payment plan, or asking for a payment extension/deferral. For more information, [click here](#) to visit the CFPB’s article.

Student Loans and Financial Aid

- The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provides automatic suspension of principal and interest payments on federally-held student loans through September 30, 2020. These suspended payments will count towards any student loan forgiveness program. For qualifying borrowers, your federal student loan servicers will suspend all payments without any action from you. [Click here](#) for more information.

- The CARES Act excludes borrowers with Perkins loans and commercially held Federal Family Education Loans (FFEL). If you're not sure what type of loan you have, check your account online or contact your loan servicer. To find out who your loan servicer is, call the Federal Student Aid Information Center (FSAIC) at 1-800-433-3243 or [click here](#).
 - If your student loan is excluded from the CARES act, you can still contact your servicer to see what options are available. You may be able to enroll in an income-driven repayment program or apply for forbearance
 - The Department of Education has also stopped the collection of defaulted federally-owned student loans including garnishment of wages, the offset of tax refunds, and Social Security benefits. While most collection activity will be automatically stopped, if you are still experiencing a wage garnishment due to federally-owned student loans, you may need to contact your employer for next steps on temporarily lifting the garnishment.
 - The Department of Education has compiled a list of Frequently Asked Questions for students, borrowers and parents. [Click here](#) for more information.
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Short Term and Emergency Loans

- Contact your local bank or credit union to discuss short term or emergency loans they may have available.
 - HFLA of Northeast Ohio offers no-interest loans to residents of Northeast Ohio. [Click here](#) or call 216-378-9042 to discuss options.
 - The US Small Business Administration (SBA) provides low-interest disaster loans to help small businesses recover from declared disasters. [Click here](#) for more information.
 - Be wary of taking out a high cost short term loan. Talk with your creditors to negotiate more time to pay bills, borrow from friends or family, request assistance from your faith-based institutions, or explore financial assistance programs by calling 2-1-1.
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Avoiding Scams

Consumers should be on alert for increased fraud during the COVID-19 outbreak. Consumers should not share financial or other sensitive information with anyone who contacts you unsolicited. You can visit the [Federal Trade Commission's Coronavirus website](#) or the [Department of Justice website](#) for updates and to report scams.

Additional tips:

- Fact-check information. Scammers and sometimes well-meaning people share information that hasn't been verified. Before you pass on any messages, contact trusted sources such as federal, state, or local government agencies.
 - Don't click on links from sources you don't know.
 - Don't provide financial account details or other personally sensitive information via email.
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Job Searching

While COVID-19 has caused layoffs and other changes to many employers, other businesses are still hiring. Resources are listed below.

- The Ohio Means Job online site lists current job openings. [Click here](#) for more information.
- ConxusNEO recently revamped two websites to better connect and serve the changed needs of job seekers and providers during COVID-19. You can view their sites at conxusneo.jobs and raisegoodjobs.org.
- Indeed.com has compiled a resource for people searching for a job. [Click here](#) for more information.

Call 2-1-1 to be connected to nonprofits in your community that offer job finding assistance or visit your local 211 online database and look for “Job Finding” under the “Jobs & Public Benefits” category.

Additional Resources

211 County Links:

- [Portage and Summit Counties](#)
 - [Stark County](#)
 - [Lorain County](#)
 - [Carroll County](#)
 - [Harrison County](#)
 - [Jefferson County](#)
 - [Tuscarawas County](#)
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Economic Support:

- [Ohio Department of Health Resources for Economic Support](#)
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GET HELP



GET ENEWS

Sign up to receive updates on how United Way is working to strengthen your community & to learn how you can help.

[Sign Up Today >](#)

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