



EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE OF THE PACIFIC, LLC

Financial Resources For a Hardship

Many of us face financial challenges in life. When you have financial problems, there ARE things you can do to make things better. Calling your EAP for some **free financial coaching** can be one of these things you can do to improve your financial well-being. Each employee's situation is unique and your financial coach will spend time to listen and assess your specific circumstances to consider appropriate resources and steps that you may take to resolve or reduce your hardship, from paying bills through homelessness. Although we can't guarantee that a half-hour of financial coaching or the resources your coach recommends will resolve your situation, we do offer a compassionate, informative and non-judgmental coaching session to each covered individual who reaches out to us. There are many options that a financial coach will go over with you, including many of the following ideas:

Prioritizing which bills to pay first is usually an important step. Paying bills that maintain shelter, such as the mortgage or rent, are most important, as well as continuing crucial services such as the power and water. Contact your creditors and let them know that you are experiencing financial hardship. They may be willing to make special arrangements for you for a period of time. Many states also have programs to assist consumers with their utility bills if they qualify.

Once you have contacted your creditors and determined which bills must be paid, **identify possible money sources** you may already have. If you do not have money in a savings account, consider options such as borrowing from home equity, borrowing from a retirement plan like a 401(k), borrowing from friends or family members, or taking out personal loans. If necessary, consider selling items to generate some cash.

If you cannot make the payments to maintain your household, **seek assistance**. Fortunately, there are many places to turn when your finances hit tough times. Knowing where to go can be one of the largest challenges in getting help.

Job Loss

If your financial difficulties are due to a family member's job loss, find out if there are public benefits available for that person. Determine whether there are unemployment benefits through your state.

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.

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 are eligible for any programs, process the paperwork to collect the benefits as soon as you are able to do so. If it looks like you may qualify for Social Security benefits, you can apply online at ssa.gov or call **1-800-772-1213**. (See additional information on other Social Security programs below.)

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. They may be able to direct you to the following resources in your area:

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- **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:** child care, 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: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/center-locator>

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 and 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. Search for local numbers by using Yahoo Yellow Pages: local.yahoo.com/browse_state.php

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 Salvation Army, 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)
- 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 e-mail to liheapch.acf.hhs.gov/referral.htm, or you can find your State's LIHEAP office through the website, www.liheapch.acf.hhs.gov/profiles/energyhelp.htm.

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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).

Social Security

In addition, 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 administers:

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

If it looks like you may qualify for Social Security benefits, you can apply online or call 1-800-772-1213.

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.

Do a search for rates of local lenders for personal loans. Try the Bankrate website at bankrate.com and click on the "Personal Finance" icon, or try nerdwallet.com and click on "Personal Loans".

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 irs.gov/individuals/article/0,,id=96406,00.html. 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.

Neither Employee Assistance of the Pacific, LLC nor CLC Incorporated nor any of their representatives endorse any of the websites or company names listed here.

This information is not to be a substitute for seeking advice specific to your situation from a legal or financial professional. If legal or financial advice is required, contact an attorney or financial advisor. Most EAP plans include financial and legal consultation at no charge to the employee, so call your EAP to set up a time for some free financial consultation!

Sample Letter to Creditors

DATE

CREDITOR NAME

CREDITOR ADDRESS

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am a xxxxxxxxx worker in the State of Hawaii and need your help. Because of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), I am not currently able to work and have been [situation — e.g. laid off].

I have a (LOAN/CREDIT CARD BALANCE/OUTSTANDING BALANCE) with your institution and would like to work out an alternate payment plan should the Coronavirus situation continues to not allow me to work.

My account number is (ACCOUNT NUMBER) and the current outstanding balance is \$_____. Please contact me at the address below or at () ____-____ to let me know what options are available.

Being laid off is not something I would choose to do if the situation we face in our profession was not so dire. We appreciate every effort you can make to accommodate us during this difficult time. We are fighting for our family's future in Hawaii.

Sincerely,

Signature

(PRINT NAME AND ADDRESS)

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Additional Information

Local Resources

Aloha United Way 211 Information and referral

Labors Community Services Program (Aloha United Way/AFL-CIO) Food baskets, diapers, general assistance for striking workers

Catholic Charities Hawaii Help line 521-4357 Walk in office: 1822 Keeaumoku St. M – F 9 – 12 & 1:30 – 3:30 Housing, counseling & emergency assistance

Employee Assistance of the Pacific (808) 597-8222 (All islands) Counseling services and financial coaching(covered by Local 5 Health & Welfare Trust Fund)

Helping Hands Hawaii 440-3835 Emergency financial assistance with rent and utilities

Foodbanks Hawaii Foodbank, Inc. 2611-A Kilihau Street Honolulu, HI 96819 Phone: (808) 836-3600 or 275-2000 Email: foodbank@hawaiifoodbank.org Dial 211 and ask for a food pantry in your area

Honolulu Community Action Program (HCAP) 33 S. King St. #300 Honolulu 96813 521-4531 Family and emergency services, produce food distribution

Government Services

State of Hawaii Department of Health and Human Services Public Assistance Information Line: 1-855-643-1643 Food stamp and financial assistance processing centers

Unemployment Compensation Insurance Claim benefits for unemployment compensation will not be automatic. The State of Hawaii Department of Labor will make the determination of eligibility for unemployment compensation. Computers are available at Strike Headquarters to FILE ONLINE: <http://labor.hawaii.gov/ui/>

Paying the Bills

Credit due to Vendors

1. Where possible, you should make at least a minimum payment. If you are unable to make the minimum payment, be sure to **contact your creditor** immediately to work out a repayment plan. Some of the options include reduced payments or deferred payments.

2. If you are not able to make any payments, the vendor may report the incident to credit rating agencies. Such reports will note that the individual is on strike.

Utility Companies

Most utility companies will allow you to make special arrangements on payment. This is done on an individual basis and it is very important that you **contact the utility company** if you are unable to make payments. The following are contact numbers for the various utility companies on Oahu:

HECO 548-7311 Hawaiian Telcom 643-3456 Spectrum Cable 855-369-8209 Hawaii Gas 535-5933

Banks First Hawaiian Bank 844-4444 (Customer Service will direct you to the appropriate department) **Bank of Hawaii** 1-888-643-3888

Hotel & Travel Industry Federal Credit Union 942-5115 Chanda at ext. 223 or Normita at ext. 228

Bill Payment Information

Individuals who will be unable to make payment on any bill during the strike period should **immediately contact their creditors**. It is best to contact them in writing so that there is a physical record of contact in your files. A written record may be important if legal problems emerge later. Inform creditors that you are member of UNITE HERE! Local 5 and are on strike and would like to discuss a repayment plan. A sample letter that you can follow is attached for your reference. If you do not hear back from the creditor within two weeks, you may need to follow up by phone.

It is best to notify your creditors **before you get behind**. Creditors are usually easier to work with when you let them know about your situation before a severe problem arises. It is important that you **pay what you can**. Even if you cannot pay the creditors the amount they want, make your best effort to pay something regularly. This holds arrears as low as possible and lets the creditor know that you are doing all you can. Continuous partial payment may keep your account from being turned over to a collection agency. It is also important to **stay in touch** with your creditors. After the initial contact, continue to contact them every two weeks. This reassures the creditor, shows a responsible attitude toward your obligation, and may keep the creditor from hounding you. **Most creditors will generally be able to work out a solution** to deal with late payments, providing that the striking customer has both an acceptable credit rating and was not in arrears when the strike commenced. More detailed information is listed below.

Mortgage Loans

1. Mortgage loans are usually tied to other national organizations or sold to other national lending companies over which the original lending company has no control. Thus, even if the mortgage loan was originally made with a local financial institution, the terms on such mortgage loans cannot be modified at the discretion of the local financial institution. The national organizations are not likely to make special arrangements for our local members on strike.

2. The mortgage companies, however, will generally NOT foreclose on a striking individual if the individual has a good repayment record and was not in arrears when the strike commenced.

3. Strikes are generally regarded much like a natural disaster, both are temporary and not indicative of a person's willingness or ability to make payments.

4. Should payments not be made after approximately sixty days, lending companies are obligated to report the problem to the state credit bureau. Such reports, however, will be footnoted to indicate that the individual is on strike.

5. Mortgage loans cannot be extended or deferred. You will be required to make up payments after a strike. Be sure to contact your loan company to set up a repayment plan.

All Other Loans Through Banks and or Credit Unions

1. Most financial institutions indicated that if an individual is unable to make payment, a solution could be worked out. Options available include loan extension and refinancing. Solutions will vary depending on your financial history and the particular company you are dealing with.

2. Loan extension – You can ask your lender for an extension of your loan repayment beyond the original contract deadline. If an extension is granted, you will be required to pay interest on your outstanding loan balance while you are on strike, with interest charges added to your total repayment amount, payable during the extension period.

3. Refinancing – It may be to your benefit to ask to have your loan refinanced, in effect paying off your old loan with a new one – with the payment period extended. Whether the new loan has a higher or lower interest rate will depend on the terms of your existing loan and the current interest rates prevailing at the time of refinancing.

4. In general, the financial institutions agree that a customer who has a good payment record, and who contacts the lending company in advance to discuss strike-related problems, will find lenders to be flexible and understanding of the unique situation caused by a strike.

