

Actions to take in a Financial Crisis

During this time of crisis, the goal of the NeighborWorks Montana Network is to ensure that our communities are equipped with the knowledge and tools they need to remain in their homes and get the support they need to sustain. Please use this guide to help you navigate the uncertainties inherent with this crisis, and don't hesitate to reach out to us if you need help!

FOUR STEPS TO TAKE CONTROL AND HAVE A PLAN

1. Create a Budget: prioritizing needs that must be met first
2. Make a list of all your creditors including their name, contact information, and account number and payment information
3. Plan to contact different service providers and creditors to see if they have assistance or deferral plans in place - many will work with you
4. Research other assistance that might be available in the community to take some of the strain off your finances

Step 1: Create a budget

When your income changes and you have more bills than money, having a budget in place becomes critical. Taking care of your basic needs is your top priority - food, shelter, transportation, etc. These should be the first items you budget for.

This may require hard decisions and looking at your budget to see where you can make temporary cuts (such as memberships, streaming services, eating out, etc.) is the best place to begin. Another great tip when budgeting is to set a grocery budget and plan your shopping/meals accordingly. Meal planning helps you stay on budget, reduces food waste, and can establish good health habits. It will also be critical to ensure you in deciding the best course of action for any relief money that you might receive from the Coronavirus Relief Legislation.

With the Coronavirus Relief Legislation relief money being given, it is critical to have a plan for this money that includes essential needs and savings. It is also important to remember that the crisis does not mean you are able to stop paying your bills.

Recommended article to help clients plan:

- **Consumer Finance:**
 - <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/about-us/blog/protect-yourself-financially-from-impact-of-coronavirus/>

Crisis Budget

| | |
|---|---|
| Food | You and your family must eat. Begin by meal planning and do an internet search for ways to stretch a food budget, find coupons, and plan inexpensive meals. We have also included a statewide list of food pantries in our resource section. |
| Shelter | There is a federal hold on evictions in public housing and foreclosures for at least 60-days. Governor Bullock has also issued a state directive suspending termination for rentals, and suspending foreclosures, at least through April 10, 2020. However, this money will come due. If you can make these payments, they should still be a priority. You cannot just stop making your mortgage or rent payment. Work with your landlord or mortgage company. See step two for a page to get you started. |
| Transportation | You may be able to defer your car payment depending on your lender, contact them directly. |
| Phone, Email, Video | Communication is key right now! Call your service providers directly to see if they are deferring payments, etc. Be sure to watch your email for messages from service providers as well. |
| Medications | Prescriptions and other health supplies are essential. Do not sacrifice your health during this stressful time. Read http://www.news.sanofi.us/What-to-Do-When-You-Cant-Afford-Your-Chronic-Disease-Medication or https://www.verywellhealth.com/what-to-do-when-you-cant-afford-your-medication-1942844 . |
| Insurance | Life still happens, do not let your insurance lapse. Call your provider for assistance or possibly less coverage for the short-term to keep yourself protected. |
| Utilities | It is best practice to call your provider to make them aware, as well as take advantage of assistance they may be offering. |
| Clothing | If you have clothing to wear and can make do for a few months this should be an expense that can be moved to a secondary priority or put on hold all together. |
| Estimate Bills | If your bills vary month to month, you can look at the last few months of payments and use an average to help set your budget. |
| Other bills | It is good to evaluate your need for some services during a time of crisis to lessen the burden to your household budget. Are there things you can cut out? Has the directive to stay at home already helped reduce your spending? |
| <p>TIPS: If you cannot pay all your bills, prioritize by essential services. One technique is a rotation of paying each one as additional funds allow and making your way down the list with a single payment. This is after prioritizing essential needs and consequences of defaulting. Another is to divide any additional income by the number of bills and pay that amount to each. Here are a couple resources for processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dave Ramsey Article: https://www.daveramsey.com/blog/what-to-do-when-you-cant-pay-your-bills • CFPB - https://www.consumerfinance.gov/about-us/blog/behind-bills-three-steps-help-you-make-tough-choices-tight-moments/ | |



YOU ARE PROTECTED: Personal and Credit Card Loans should **not** take precedence over shelter and food. The Fair Credit Collection Practices Act protects you from harassment or unethical debt collection practices. You cannot be threatened, subjected to violence or obscene language, they cannot contact you outside of the hours of 8 am and 9 pm, they cannot misrepresent who they are and they cannot contact your work if told verbally or in writing that is not allowed. For more information On Fair Credit Collection visit the FTC [HERE](#).

BEWARE OF SCAMS: Predatory lenders and Scammers will try to take advantage of this time of crisis. Always verify information and double check credibility of credit offers or bailout offers you get. The Federal Trade Commission has [tips to protect yourself from possible coronavirus-related scams](#). The FTC and the Food and Drug Administration have also [cautioned consumers to be on the look-out for sellers of unapproved and misbranded products, claiming they can treat or prevent coronavirus](#). Learn more about how to [prevent, recognize, and report fraud and scams](#).

Be careful of taking on more to credit to solve your problems. High interest loans, payday loans, other options may compound your problems long-term. <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/payday-loans/> Please follow our steps and work with creditors before taking high interest or payday loans.



Emergency Budget

| Income | April | May | June | July | August | September | October |
|---|-------|-----|------|------|--------|-----------|---------|
| Paycheck | | | | | | | |
| Unemployment | | | | | | | |
| Savings withdrawal | | | | | | | |
| Other sources: | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| Total Income | | | | | | | |
| High Priority Budget Items | | | | | | | |
| Food (include pet food) | | | | | | | |
| Shelter (Mortgage/Rent) | | | | | | | |
| Transportation (payments, gas, maintenance, etc.) | | | | | | | |
| Phone & Internet | | | | | | | |
| Medications (Rx and over the counter) | | | | | | | |
| Utilities (electricity, gas, sewer, garbage, etc.) | | | | | | | |
| Insurance (home/rental if not part of shelter total) | | | | | | | |
| Insurance (vehicle) | | | | | | | |
| Health Insurance (if not part of your paycheck) | | | | | | | |
| Total | | | | | | | |
| Remaining (Income minus Total) | | | | | | | |
| *If remaining balance is negative reach out to creditors, landlord and check 211.org resource listed in additional resources section for help in these areas. | | | | | | | |
| Other expenses: | April | May | June | July | August | September | October |
| Household cleaning and paper supplies | | | | | | | |
| Toiletries | | | | | | | |
| Medical expenses | | | | | | | |
| Clothing | | | | | | | |
| Other | | | | | | | |
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| Total | | | | | | | |
| Balance (Remaining funds minus other expense total) | | | | | | | |
| *If balance is negative, go back and create a plan month-by-month to pay what you can when you can. | | | | | | | |



Step 2: Create a list of all creditors and their contact information. You will need this in order to effectively take advantage of relief programs and negotiate with lenders.

HOMEOWNERS, YOU CAN NOT JUST STOP PAYING YOUR MORTGAGE!!
DO NOT DO NOTHING! CALL YOUR FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS IMMEDIATELY
TO SEE HOW THEY CAN HELP YOU!

Lender/Creditor Contacts
 (this list is not exhaustive)

| Name | Link to Website | Phone Number |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Ally Bank | https://www.ally.com/ | Auto: 1-888-925-2559 Bank: 1-877-247-2559 Home: 1-855-256-2559 |
| American Express | https://www.americanexpress.com/ | 1-800-528-4800 |
| Bank of America | https://www.bankofamerica.com/ | 1-800-432-1000 |
| Capital One | https://www.capitalone.com/ | 1-877-383-4802 |
| Chase | https://www.chase.com/ | 1-800-432-3117 |
| Chrysler Financial | https://chryslercapital.com/ | 1-855-563-5635 |
| Discover | https://www.discover.com/ | 1-800-347-2683 |
| First Interstate Bank | https://www.firstinterstatebank.com/ | 1-855-342-3400 |
| Fannie Mae | fanniemae.com | 1-800-232-6643 |
| Freddie Mac | freddiemac.com/about/covid-19 | 1-800-424-5401 |
| Montana Family of Glacier Banks | https://www.glacierbank.com/ | 1-800-735-4371 |
| Montana Housing | https://housing.mt.gov/ | 1-800-761-6264 |
| Opportunity Bank | https://www.opportunitybank.com/ | 1-888-750-2265 |
| Stockman Bank | https://www.stockmanbank.com/ | 1-877-300-9369 |
| Synchrony Bank | https://www.synchrony.com/ | 1-866-419-4096 |
| Toyota Financial Services | https://www.toyotafinancial.com/us/en.html | 1-800-874-8822 |
| US Bank | https://www.usbank.com/index.html | 1-800-872-2657 |
| Wells Fargo | https://www.wellsfargo.com/ | 1-800-869-3557 |



My Account Contacts

| Type | Company | Phone/ email/ website | Acct Number | Payment Amount |
|--------------------------|--|--|-------------|----------------|
| Unemployment | MT Unemployment Insurance Claim Office | (406) 444-2545 uid.dli.mt.gov/claimants | | |
| Mortgage or Rent Payment | | | | |
| Auto Loan | | | | |
| Electric | | | | |
| Gas | | | | |
| Water/Sewer | | | | |
| Phone Company | | | | |
| Internet Service | | | | |
| TV Service | | | | |
| Vehicle Insurance | | | | |
| Home/rental Insurance | | | | |
| Health Insurance | | | | |
| Life Insurance | | | | |
| Credit card | | | | |
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Step 3: Reach out to Creditors to see if they have assistance or deferment plans you can take advantage of to reduce the pressure and stress of the situation.

1. Be prepared to explain your specific hardship.
 - a. For example, layoff due to slow economy caused by COVID-19 shutdown.
2. Let them know you are following a budget but need their assistance. Ask specifically for what kind of help they may be able to offer.
 - a. For example: Some auto lenders are deferring payments for a few months, adding those payments to the end of the loan. You still must pay them, but not right now. The length of your loan is extended.
3. Be patient. We have found wait times and response times are longer due to high demands.
4. Be kind. These are unique times, and everyone is under additional stress. A little kindness goes a long way to making a conversation more tolerable and productive.
5. Do not commit to a payment plan you are not sure you can meet. You can always thank the lender for their information and help and let them know you will be in contact as you continue to work on things.

Step 4: Research additional sources for relief and aid. Here is a quick list of resources we have put together. This list is not exhaustive, so check these links regularly.

| Name | Type of Service | Phone Contact & Website |
|---|--|--|
| Montana 211 | Statewide source for all kinds of resources and referrals for services | 2-1-1 montana211.org |
| Montana Unemployment | Place a claim for unemployment | (406) 444-2545 uid.dli.mt.gov/claimants |
| Montana Food Bank | List of statewide local pantries | (406) 720-3825 mfbn.org |
| Montana Free Financial Help | Help paying heating & utilities | freefinancialhelp.net/montana-heating-and-utility-bill-assistance |
| Montana Works | Job Service | (406) 444-2840 montanaworks.gov |
| Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services | | dphhs.mt.gov dphhs.mt.gov dphhs.mt.gov/contact/hotlines |
| Montana Governor's Page | Links to resources in the state | http://governor.mt.gov/ |
| NeighborWorks Montana | This is our info! | Email: info@nwmt.org Phone: (406) 604-4540 Website: nwmt.org Facebook: facebook.com/NeighborWorksMT |



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|---|---|---|
| United Way | There are several counties that have a United Way office. | unitedway.org/local/united-states/montana |
| Montana Suicide Prevention Lifeline | You are not alone! | 1-800-273-8255 dphhs.mt.gov/suicideprevention/suicideresources |
| USDA Rural Development COVID-19 | Available Resources | www.rd.usda.gov/coronavirus |
| HUD | Communications, guidelines and resources | (202) 708-1112 hud.gov/states/coronavirus |
| NCSHA | Summary of Federal Coronavirus Relief Legislation and what is included. | Relief Legislation |
| Centers for Disease Control | | 1-800-232-4636 cdc.gov |
| Ready.gov | Disaster preparedness related to the pandemic | https://www.ready.gov/pandemic |
| HOPE Inside Disaster | Help resources | https://www.hopeinsidecovid19.org/recovery#scroll-Get-Connected |
| U.S. Department of Health & Human Services | | 1-877-696-6775 hhs.gov |
| Help with Bills | National resource for finding help paying bills | 1-844-872-4681 usa.gov/help-with-bills |

NWMT Statewide Network:

Our housing counselors can offer guidance. If possible, please complete steps one thru three before you call us for assistance so we can better meet your needs. With many of us working from home, emails have been listed as the best form of initial contact.

| Location | Organization Name | Housing Counselor |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Billings | The Home Center | Carrie Sharp csharp@hrdc7.org |
| Bozeman | Homeownership Center HRDC 9 | Roselle Shallah rshallah@hrdc9.org |
| Browning | Blackfeet Housing Authority | Mike LaMere, Sr. mlamere@blackfeethousing.org |
| Butte | Headwaters RC&D | Courtney Loeffler cedwards@headwatersrcd.org |
| Great Falls | NeighborWorks Great Falls | Rosie Kiernan rkiernan@nwgf.org |



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|------------|--|---|
| Hamilton | Bitter Root RC&D | Sara Briggs sabriggs10@gmail.com |
| Havre | HRDC 4 | Alma Garcia garciaa@hrdc4.org |
| Helena | Rocky Mountain Development Council | Beverly Dashnaw bdashnaw@rmdc.net |
| Kalispell | Community Action Partnership of NW Montana | Naomi Valentine nvalentine@capnwmt.org |
| Lame Deer | Northern Cheyenne Housing Authority | Rachael Two-Two rtwotwo@gmail.com |
| Lewistown | Snowy Mountain Development Corporation | Cathy Barta barta@snowymountaindevelopment.com |
| Missoula | Homeward | Julie Pavlish jpavlish@homeward.org |
| Missoula | Human Resource Council | Fanny Friesz hrcxi@montana.org |
| Ronan | Salish & Kootenai Housing Authority | Kyle Hendrickx khendrickx@skha.org |
| Wolf Point | Great Northern Development Corporation | Brianna Vine brianna@gndc.org |

We hope these resources help you find the assistance you may need. We want you to know that you are not in this alone. NeighborWorks Montana is committed to providing resources and education to help you during this time. Visit nwmt.org to learn more about our services.