

Community Services Agency
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Surviving the Federal Government Shutdown

Here are steps you can take **Reduce Financial Impact**:

1. Take stock of your financial situation TODAY. Prepare a budget, identify where your money is going and opportunities for reductions. Contact the Union Plus Credit Counseling (through Money Management International) at: <https://www.unionplus.org/hardship-help/credit-counseling> or 1-877-833-1745. Money Management International will identify expenses, areas of expense reductions and develop an action plan. *See sample budget below.*
2. Postpone major purchases until the federal fiscal situation has been stabilized.
3. Keep bills current. Call or write your creditors right away. Here is a sample letter/email to send to creditors if you find yourself in a bind. Maintain copies of correspondence and keep a notebook of the dates, the name of the person you spoke with at the company and the outcome.

SAMPLE LETTER TO CREDITORS

Dear _____:

I am temporarily out of work due to federal government furlough and my income has been severely cut. I am asking your cooperation during this difficult period. Until I return to work, I need to cut back on my regular payments. I am proposing to pay \$___ for a temporary period instead of my regular payment of \$___. When I return to work, I will work with you on a plan to catch up my payments. Please let me know in writing if this is satisfactory and thank you in advance for your understanding.

(Signature, account number, address, phone)

6. Use your health, optical and dental insurance now to get checkups for yourself and your children, in case there is any interruption in coverage.
7. Stock up on food and medicine while you still have health insurance coverage. The Community Services Agency currently has canned and boxed goods available. Email sducote@dclabor.org to make an appointment for pick-up.
8. Members who have an active Union Plus credit card, mortgage or personal loan may also qualify for other hardship benefits. Visit the Union Plus website at: www.unionplus.org, or call Union Plus at 1-800-472-2005.
9. Attend union meetings so you can keep abreast of shutdown updates and stick together!

Sample Budget

There are many budget worksheets, many of which can be found on internet sites, but here is a simple one to get you started- ideally, you fill this out after having everyone in your family keep a record of what they spend for a week, so that you can fill in realistic numbers.

MONTHLY INCOME Category	Amount		Comments
Your income			
Spouse's Income			
Interest on Savings			
Unemployment Insurance			
All Other Income			
TOTAL MONTHLY INCOME			
MONTHLY EXPENSES Category	Current- Be honest!	What We Can Cut	Revised Budget
Rent or Mortgage			
Utilities: Gas Electric Water Phone			
Food			
Clothing			
Insurance			
Taxes			
Credit Card A			
Credit Card B			
Other Loans			
Medical Out of Pocket			
Transportation Gas/Metro Other			
Child Care			
Entertainment- movies, cable TV, etc			
Monthly Savings if any			
Other			
TOTAL MONTHLY EXPENSES			

Do you have an income gap in your budget?

Subtract monthly expenses from monthly income and see if you are short of cash for the month. If so, you urgently need to make some decisions about how to reduce spending, and how to increase income, or both!

Prioritizing Payments

With limited income, you will need to make decisions about what gets paid first. Although setting priorities is an individual thing (only you know what you can't live without), and should be done in conjunction with your family, there are a few general rules:

- With whatever income you have, **pay housing costs first!**
All your problems multiply if you lose your housing. Rents and mortgages are expensive and it's hard to find private assistance to keep you housed if you get behind and face foreclosure or eviction.
- Utilities are probably next on the list
- Health insurance payments are critical
- Court-ordered alimony or child support payments can't be overlooked

Reducing Household Expenses

Below are some tips to help you and your family survive the government shutdown. Consider these tips in conjunction with your budget.

- Stop carrying your credit cards and pay for things in cash; if you don't have the cash, you won't buy it
- Eliminate all the bells and whistles on your phone system and go to basic service; do you need land lines AND cell phones?
- Stop cable TV; regular TV is still FREE
- Cut back on dining out- generally we spend 16% of our income on food and 30% of that is in restaurants and for fast food
- Reduce or eliminate magazine subscriptions
- Before going grocery shopping, **MAKE A LIST AND STICK TO IT; NEVER** go to the grocery store hungry and eliminate junk and prepared foods- they are expensive
- Use coupons, compare prices and buy on sale
- Stay away from convenience stores which are very expensive
- Conserve energy by turning off un-needed lights and appliances including your computer, set thermostats appropriately
- Only wash clothes when you have a full load; same with dishwasher
- Plan meals to eliminate food waste; creative cooking with leftovers anyone?
- Eliminate unnecessary car trips
- Visit garage sales- great for kids' clothes
- Cut down on entertainment that costs. Explore free or low-cost ways of amusing yourself and your family

Generating Income

- Collect any debts owed to you by family or friends
- Sell your skills- typing, computer work, giving lessons, doing taxes, tutoring
- Sell Unused Household Items- all of us have tons of unused things in our homes, some of which other people will pay good money for- have a garage sale
- Consider Selling Valuables, like jewelry, antiques etc- usually this is a last resort if you are unable to pay for basic necessities in any other way
- Consider a part-time job, even one with limited income/benefits, until you can move back into your job
- Barter- can you provide child care for a few afternoons in return for transportation somewhere for your kids? Other ideas?

Emergency Resources

Emergency Food, Shelter and Health Care Directory (metro Washington area)

Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington
www.ifcmw.org, click on “Emergency Directory”

The Purple Book, A Booklet of Social and Human Service Assistance Programs

Published by Baltimore Gas and Electric:

https://www.bge.com/MyAccount/CustomerSupport/Documents/2018-2019%20English%20Purple_FULL%20Version_WEB.pdf

United Way of the National Capital Area

www.unitedwayna.org, under “who we help” click on participating agencies

United Way of America- resources anywhere in the country

www.unitedway.org, at the top right enter a zip code and it will send you to the United Way in your area

For Public Benefits such as food stamps, rental assistance, energy assistance-

Call your State’s Department of Human or Social Services

To connect to the AFL-CIO Community Services Liaison or Labor Agency in your area go to

www.aflcio.org, put your cursor on “about us” and click on “Community Services”, then click on “Directory of Labor Liaisons and Labor Agencies”

For Mortgage Delinquencies and Counseling

National Hotlines

Neighborhood Assistance Corp, 888-302-6222, www.naca.com

HomeFree-USA, 866-696-2369, www.homefreeusa.org

HOPE Now, 888-995-4673, www.hopenow.com

For HUD-certified housing counseling agencies in your area, go to www.hud.gov, click on “avoiding foreclosure”, then click on “finding HUD-certified housing counselors”. They are listed by state and locality. Some of these agencies also offer rental assistance.

For Pharmacy Assistance Programs

Call the Partnership for Prescription Assistance’s toll-free number

(1 8884PPA-NOW) or go to www.pparx.org

Take advantage of the AFL-CIO Union Plus Programs

Visit www.unionplus.org / 1-800 472-2005 for information about the credit card program, mortgage assistance, disaster payments, legal help and other programs available to union members.

Utilize the 211 system in your state

This is an information and referral service for most types of problems. Call 211 / Visit www.211.org

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