

# Department of Family and Consumer Sciences

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## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE: COVID-19

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The COVID-19 pandemic has left many workers out of work through no fault of their own. The most recent unemployment data shows that a record 6.6 million+ Americans have filed for unemployment. In Tennessee, that number is 94,492 filings for the week ending March 28. If you find yourself needing assistance due to unemployment or a reduction in work, there is help.

This publication has been designed to provide an overview of some resources available during the COVID-19 crisis.



### Unemployment

The fastest and most efficient way to file an unemployment claim is to go to [Jobs4TN.gov](https://www.jobs4tn.gov). Due to the high volume of claims because of the COVID-19 emergency, if you file with any other method you could significantly delay the processing of your claim.

To help you in completing your online application, you will need some basic information, including:

- Social Security Number
- Driver's License
- Valid Email Address
- Bank account routing and account number (if you wish to receive your benefits by direct deposit)
- You'll also need to list some employer information like your last paystub, last day at work and your return date. (If the business is temporarily closed due to COVID-19, and you are unsure of the return-to-work date, use the date 16 weeks from the day of filing.)

The state can provide your weekly benefit payment through direct deposit or debit card. You can choose which method when you file your claim.

## TANF Assistance

Families can begin applying online for up to two months of emergency cash assistance if they were employed as of March 11, 2020, and they've lost employment or at least 50 percent of their earned income as a result of the pandemic. The assistance provides

- \$500 for a household of one to two persons.
- \$750 for a household of three to four persons.
- \$1,000 for a household with five or more persons.

This assistance is available in addition to any unemployment benefits individuals in the family may be receiving.

To be eligible, families must have been employed as of March 11, 2020, but have since then lost employment or at least 50 percent of their earned income due to the COVID-19 emergency, include a child under the age of 18 or be pregnant, have a valid Social Security number, must not have resources exceeding \$2,000, and the gross and/or unearned monthly income may not exceed 85 percent of the state's median income that's currently:

Gross Monthly Income of \$2,696 for a household of one.

Gross Monthly Income of \$3,526 for a household of two.

Gross Monthly Income of \$4,356 for a household of three.

Gross Monthly Income of \$5,185 for a household of four.

Gross Monthly Income of \$6,015 for a household of five.

The Tennessee Department of Human Services is asking applicants to complete the application process for emergency cash assistance online at [dhs.servicenow.com/relief?id=relief\\_registration](https://dhs.servicenow.com/relief?id=relief_registration). Applicants are required to upload their verification to the application prior to submitting to TDHS. Once the application and verifications have been submitted, no further action will be needed. Applicants DO NOT need to call the DHS office for an interview. They will receive a notification of denial or approval via email within five days. If approved, applicants can expect an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card to be sent within five to seven days of approval via mail.

## Sick Leave

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act provides certain employers with funds for paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19. These provisions will apply from April 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020. An employee is entitled to take leave related to COVID-19 if the employee is unable to work, including unable to telework, due to sickness (self or immediate family member) related to COVID-19. More information can be found at [dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employee-paid-leave](https://dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employee-paid-leave)

## Stimulus Money

It is estimated that more than 80 percent of Americans will get a coronavirus stimulus check. Individuals with an income under \$75,000 will receive \$1,200, plus \$500 per child. Reduced checks will go to individuals making between \$75,000-\$99,000. Married filing jointly will receive \$2,400 plus the child benefit.

You can find out your estimated COVID-19 stimulus payment here:

[washingtonpost.com/graphics/business/coronavirus-stimulus-check-calculator](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/business/coronavirus-stimulus-check-calculator)

The amount you receive will be based on your 2019 or 2018 (if return for 2019 has not been filed yet) Adjusted Gross Income. Checks will be directly deposited in April. Mailed checks will take longer.

### Using Your Stimulus Funds

What is the best way to spend stimulus checks? A great way to use your stimulus check is to build an emergency fund if you do not already have one. Reaching three to six months of expenditures in your emergency fund is recommended. However, the more uncertain your job, the longer your emergency fund needs to cover.

## New Retirement Fund Guidelines

While borrowing from retirement funds is not advisable in general, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) makes it easier and less costly to borrow from retirement funds, such as your 401(k) or IRA. The Act gives savers three years to put withdrawn funds back into a retirement account.

Borrowing from your retirement funds should be a last resort. You should exhaust all other options before you put your retirement in jeopardy.

## References

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