



Supporting Kin And The Children They Raise

DC COVID-19 Q&As

HOW DO THE DC AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS' ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HELP ME?

[*April 20, 2020 Update*](#)



HOUSING

Q. I can't afford to pay my rent during the public health emergency. Are there any protections for me?

A. Your landlord cannot evict you, charge you late fees, or increase your rent during the public health emergency. Your landlord can file a Complaint in the DC Superior Court Landlord & Tenant Branch, but all court proceedings are postponed until at least May 15, 2020.

[click here](#) for the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless Blog.



UTILITIES

Q. I can't afford to pay my utility bills. Can utility companies disconnect my services during the public health emergency?

A. Your utilities (electricity, gas, water, cable and phone) cannot be turned off during the public health emergency or for 15 days afterward. Your cable and telephone service can be downgraded to the most basic level.

[click here](#) for new help to pay your water bill.



DEBT COLLECTION

Q. I can't afford to pay my debt right now, like my car payment or credit card bill. Are there protections for me against debt collectors?

A. Creditors and debt collectors cannot do the following during the public health emergency and for 60 days afterward:

- threaten to file or file a lawsuit,
- threaten to take or take your wages or property,
- threaten to repossess or repossess your car,
- threaten to visit or visit you at your home or work, or
- confront you in a public place.



For things other than real property (e.g., mortgages), debt collectors cannot communicate with you about the debt during the public health emergency unless you communicate with them first.



FEDERAL STIMULUS MONEY

Q. How do Stimulus Payments work and how do I receive the money?

A. Everyone who makes up to \$75,000 a year and is not listed as a dependent on someone else's tax return will receive \$1,200 for themselves and \$500 per eligible **child dependent (**under age 17**). Those who file a tax return or receive Social Security, SSI, **SSDI, Railroad Retirement, or VA benefits** will automatically get a payment. If you do not file a tax-return [click here](#) to provide information to the IRS to calculate your payment. **Recipients of the above benefits who do not file tax returns also must provide information to the IRS on any child dependents to get payments for those children (by noon April 22 for Social Security, SSDI & RR; by early May for SSI and VA beneficiaries).****

To set up direct deposit for your payment, [click here](#) to submit direct deposit information for your bank, Cash App or PayPal.

PUBLIC BENEFITS



Q. I receive benefits like TANF, SNAP and Medicaid and my benefits are supposed to expire in April or May 2020. Do I have to recertify during the public health emergency for my benefits to continue?

A. No, your benefits will automatically continue and you don't have to recertify in April or May. Also, current SNAP customers not receiving the maximum benefit will automatically receive an additional emergency SNAP allotment in April.

Q. Can I apply for TANF, SNAP, and Medicaid during the public health emergency?

A. Yes, you can apply online at [click here](#) or drop off a completed application at an open ESA service center. [click here](#) for more information and a list of open service center locations.

Q. Can I apply or recertify for the Grandparent or Close Relative Caregiver Program subsidy during the public health emergency?

A. Although CFSA offices are closed to the public, you may still apply or recertify for the Grandparent and Close Relative Caregiver Program subsidies. You can go online to access an application. Print, complete, and email the application to cfsa.kinfirst@dc.gov. Once your application is complete, you should call 1-866-FAM-KIN1 to make an appointment to submit your application (if you did not email it) and for fingerprinting at the CFSA offices or at your home. Once approved, you will be able to sign your subsidy agreement and pick up your debit card at CFSA at the same time. **Recertifications are extended until 45-days after the end of the public health emergency. The 6-month eligibility period to apply for the subsidies has been permanently eliminated.**

[click here](#)

for the Grandparent Caregiver Program application

[click here](#)

for the Close Relative Caregiver Program application



COURT OPERATIONS

Q. Is DC Superior Court still open? How do I access court services?

A. Yes, DC Superior Court is technically still open although the public cannot access court buildings right now. The court is only conducting emergency hearings and criminal arraignments at this time. All pleadings must be filed online. [click here](#) for more specifics on court operations and to contact various court self-help centers.

YOUTH AND EDUCATION



Q. What happens to youth aging out of the foster care system during the public health emergency?

A. A foster youth who turns 21 may choose to remain in foster care during the public health emergency and for 90 days afterward.

Q. I have a high school senior in my family. Will they graduate this year?

A. Yes, high school seniors will graduate if they have met all requirements except the minimum number of classroom and community service hours, which have been waived.

Q. When do DC schools close this year?

A. DCPS schools will close May 29, 2020, and DC Charter Schools will close on or about May 29, 2020.

WORKER PROTECTIONS



Q. I lost my job or my work hours have been reduced. What help is there for me?

A. If you are unemployed, partially unemployed, or unable to work through no fault of your own, [click here](#) to apply online for unemployment benefits. Although traditionally limited to employees (W-2 workers), unemployment insurance has now been expanded to apply to independent contractors (1099 workers), self-employed, freelance, and “gig” workers. Work search and the waiting period have been waived. [click here](#) for more information from the Washington Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs. If you own a small business, are an independent contractor, or are self-employed, [click here](#) to apply for a federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan and for more information.

Q. I still have a job but I am worried about losing pay and/or my job if I have to miss work because I am sick, have to take care of someone in my family who is sick, or am quarantined because of COVID-19. What protections are there for me?

A. If your employer has between 50 and 499 employees and is not a health care provider, your employer must provide you with 80 hours of paid sick leave if you are a full-time employee. If you work part-time, then your employer must pay you sick leave equal to the number of hours you normally work in two weeks. Your employer cannot: (1) require more than 48-hour notice or more than reasonable notice in the event of an emergency; (2) require you to find your replacement; or (3) threaten retaliation including verbal or written warnings. You have additional rights to paid and unpaid leave under DC and federal laws. [click here](#) for more information on sick and family leave from the Washington Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs.



BUSINESSES AND SHOPPING

Q. It seems like so many places are closed. What is still open?

A. All nonessential businesses are closed. Businesses that are considered essential can remain open. Essential businesses include:

- Hospitals, clinics, dentists and medical marijuana dispensaries;
- Grocery stores, supermarkets, licensed farmers' markets, food banks, convenience stores and liquor stores;
- Laundromats, dry cleaners and laundry services;
- Restaurants but only for delivery or carryout;
- Gas stations and auto repair shops;
- Banks and credit unions;
- Shipping and delivery services;
- Taxis, car services and ride-sharing services;
- Housing and living facilities, including hotels but not conference facilities; and
- Public works and utilities.

[click here](#)

For a list of DCPS grocery sites open to all DC families. For residents who are homebound because of COVID-19, call the new food access hotline to request delivery of food and other essential items at 1-888-349-8323.



CONSUMER PROTECTIONS

Q. I think someone is trying to take advantage of the Coronavirus by raising prices or selling fake products. Is that against the law?

A. There are laws to protect the community from people trying to take advantage, especially in an emergency. Here are some examples of what someone can or cannot do:

- It is **OK** for merchants to stop people from stockpiling so that everyone has enough. When your supermarket only lets you buy one package of toilet paper, that is legal.
- It is **NOT OK** for merchants or anyone to price gouge. That means it is not legal to charge more money than usual for items that are popular or hard to get because of the emergency, like face masks or hand sanitizer.
- It is **NEVER OK** for merchants or anyone else to violate fair trade practices and the penalties are higher during a public health emergency. For example, it is not legal to make false claims about a product, like that it cures COVID-19 or that it kills Coronavirus if it doesn't.
- It is **NEVER OK** to threaten or harass a consumer with anything other than action that is legal.

[click here](#)

to submit a consumer complaint.



WILLS AND FUNERAL PROTECTIONS

Q. How can I write a will that requires 2 witnesses when I live alone and can't leave my home during the public health emergency?

A. You can now create a will with witnesses present via video chat, like Facetime or Skype.

Q. What if someone close to me dies and I have to make funeral arrangements?

A. By May 15, 2020, funeral homes have to provide you with a customer bill of rights, deal honestly with third parties on your behalf, and give you price lists for things like caskets/outer burial containers.



DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Q. I have a friend or relative incarcerated in DC. Has anything been done to help get them out sooner?

A. Yes, during the public health emergency, the Department of Corrections has the option to award additional good time credits to inmates sentenced for misdemeanors for release right away. The Bureau of Prisons may award up to 54 days of good time credits per year retroactively for felonies committed before August 4, 2000. The Bureau of Prisons may also consider compassionate release for inmates who are old and sick and for other reasons.



OTHER QUESTIONS

Q. What if I have other questions about DC government operations and services that were not answered here?

A. You can go to the Mayor's Coronavirus DC Website at [click here](#) or call the Coronavirus DC Hotline at 855-363-0333 (English) or 844-796-2797 (English and Spanish).

If you are a relative caregiver raising a DC child and need help, call the DC KinCare Alliance Legal Helpline at 202-505-5803, or go to the COVID-19 Resource Center on our website at www.dckincare.org.