

United Way's COVID-19 Family Support Fund

FAQ: March 16th, 2020

Where do I find information about United Way's COVID-19 Family Support Fund?

On March 14th, United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley established the [COVID-19 Family Support Fund](#), a dedicated resource for working families affected by the crisis. Mobilizing United Way's broad network of nonprofit agencies, the COVID-19 Family Support Fund will provide a flexible source of cash assistance to help families weather the COVID-19 crisis. Here are links to the [news release](#) and the website [landing page](#). It has also been promoted on our social media networks. Also, here is a link to a [blog post](#) we published late last week.

Will United Way take overhead on these donations?

No, as with all Family Support and emergency funds, 100 percent of donations will go directly to help families in need.

How can someone request financial support from the fund?

For individuals looking for information about how to access emergency assistance funds, let them know that general information and referral is available through Mass2-1-1. They can dial 2-1-1 from any phone to be connected to United Way's call center. They can also visit [mass211.org](#). 211 is partnering with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to provide comprehensive information and referral for consumers. United Way will keep 211 apprised as funds become available through local agency partners. For specific information about how to access United Way's funding, please check the United Way website for regular updates.

How and when will this fund be distributed?

United Way will distribute funds through a network of 20+ local, community-based nonprofit partners across our region throughout the crisis. All inquiries about availability of funds will be coordinated through Mass 2-1-1. United Way will make its first distribution of funds as quickly as possible and additional distributions as funding is available.

How is United Way's fund different from other COVID response funds?

United Way's fund is differentiated in 2 ways:

- United Way covers a broad footprint across the region that includes: Greater Boston, the North Shore, Merrimack Valley, South Shore, Greater Attleboro/Taunton, and the NH Seacoast through local, community-based agencies.
- United Way's funds will provide direct emergency assistance for individuals and families rather than supporting non profit operations or programs.

What is United Way's track record and history in this type of fund distribution?

United Way is not new to emergency response -- United Way's Family Fund has a 20 year history. It already supports vulnerable children and families in these communities through our partners. We know that during an emergency, the most critical things philanthropic leaders can

do is coordinate, to ensure funds are deployed to meet as many needs as possible. United Way will coordinate its distribution of funds with local and state officials, nonprofits, and other philanthropic leaders. In an evolving crisis this will require flexibility and multi-level prioritization. Funds will be distributed as they are received to ensure they are used effectively.

How does United Way determine if recipients of donor funds are legitimate?

United Way distributes funds through a network of community-based nonprofit agencies who have the fiscal and administrative controls designed to manage multiple sources of public and private funds including housing, utilities, etc. This is what they do, day in and day out. United Way issues specific guidelines for how its donor funds can be distributed, including controls that require funds to be distributed directly to vendors rather than to individuals, so that they are used for the purposes for which they are intended.

What can funds be used for?

United Way funds will be used to assist individuals and families impacted by lost wages. United Way funds will be distributed in partnership with local nonprofits - with specific distributions targeted for specific purposes. We anticipate funds will be used for the following purposes:

- Housing expenses
- Utility assistance
- Emergency food and supplies
- Childcare expenses
- Medical needs
- Other basic needs

United Way will issue guidance to its partners for the parameters of each grant based on donor intent and emerging needs. Agency partners will determine eligibility with flexibility, recognizing many populations are vulnerable in a crisis like this and that those most economically vulnerable before will remain most vulnerable through the crisis. United will require funds to be distributed directly to vendors rather than to individuals, so that they are used for the purposes for which they are intended.

How is UW coordinating with other funds?

United Way has existing partnerships with companies across the region. In addition, United Way is coordinating efforts with Combined Jewish Philanthropies, The Boston Foundation, the Mayor of Boston's Fund, other local and regional community foundations and with local officials to understand how they anticipate deploying funds. In previous crises this has proven invaluable so that philanthropic dollars are directed to meet as many needs as possible.

How quickly will funds get disbursed?

United Way anticipates a distribution of funds as soon as possible and will reassess regularly when funding is available for further distribution.

Will UW support needs statewide or within our service area?

Right now United Way will support needs in our service area. We remain open to partnerships with other foundations, corporations, or government agencies to serve communities outside our service area in partnership with other Massachusetts-based United Ways.

How is this fund different from unemployment?

Some individuals who are out of work may have access to unemployment insurance. Emergency financial assistance differs from this because it is not paid directly as cash assistance to individuals but rather will be used to pay vendors on their behalf, such housing expenses, utility assistance, emergency food and supplies, childcare expenses, medical needs or other basic needs. United Way funding will be distributed in consultation with others to ensure it is put to best use.

How can someone make a donation?

- **Credit Card Online:** <https://unitedwaymassbay.org/get-involved/covid-19-family-fund/>
- **Mail a Check:** United Way of Massachusetts Bay, PO Box 51381, Boston, MA 02205-1381. Please include "Covid-19 Fund" in the memo of your check.
- **Donor Advised Fund:** If you would like to utilize your Donor Advised Fund, please include The United Way COVID-19 Family Support Fund in your recommendation details. Our tax ID number is 04-2382233.
- **IRA Rollover:** Please include "Covid-19 Fund" in the memo line of your check or include "The United Way COVID-19 Family Support Fund" in your distribution request. Our tax ID number is 04-2382233. For more information, please contact Janet Collins at jcollins@unitedwaymassbay.org or 617-624-8045.
- **Gifts of Securities:** <https://unitedwaymassbay.org/get-involved/give/specialized-giving/donate-securities/>