

At a Loss?

Your PAF Toolkit for Dealing with Work Disruption,
Decreased Income and Paying for Living Expenses
During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Pat Jolley, RN
Director, Clinical Initiatives
April 2020

PATIENT ADVOCATE FOUNDATION MISSION AND HISTORY

OUR MISSION

Patient Advocate Foundation (PAF) is a national 501(c)3 non-profit organization which provides case management services and financial aid to Americans with chronic, life-threatening and debilitating illnesses.

OUR HISTORY

When PAF opened its doors in 1996, it did so by offering one-on-one personal advocate services to patients battling serious disease. Today personalized case management remains core to what we do for patients. These services are provided individually to those patients and the caregivers and providers that are working on behalf of a patient.



Speaker Bio



Pat Jolley, R.N.

Director of Clinical Initiatives
Patient Advocate Foundation



Q&A

Enter your question

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Additional Information

- PAF COVID Care Resource Center
- PAF COVID Care
- Today's Slides
- CDC Information about COVID-19



TODAY'S OBJECTIVES

- Introduction
- Discuss proactive strategies for dealing with day to day living expenses
- Identify funding sources you may not have considered
- Discuss where you can find alternative resources to help make ends meet
- Upcoming Webinars
- Q&A Session

FINANCES DURING THESE UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCES

- Most have never been in this position before – Don't be embarrassed to ask for help
- Guilt surrounding finances– “I should have saved more” “I should not have spent so much” “I should have seen this coming”
- Almost 80% of workers live paycheck to paycheck and many households say it would be difficult to cover an unexpected \$400 expense

Federal Reserve's Report on the Economic Well-Being of US Households in 2017



UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS AND COVID-19

- Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act):
 - Applies to anyone who lost their job, been furloughed, is unable to work or can't find work due to COVID-19
- Includes self-employed workers, independent contractors, freelancers
 - Those who do not have work history to qualify for state unemployment benefits may qualify check for state specific requirements
- Emergency Paid Sick Leave for Employees Provides:
 - Extra 13 weeks of unemployment benefits
 - All unemployed workers receive extra \$600 a week for up to 6 months
 - Self-employed workers and gig workers can receive unemployment benefits

EXPANDED FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE FOR EMPLOYEES



- Receive up to 10 weeks of leave @ 2/3 of regular pay up to \$200/day
- Must be caring for child under age 18 whose school or childcare provider is closed due to COVID
- Must have been employed for 30 days

MAINTAINING HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE

- Verify if employer will maintain health coverage during temporary leave
- You may be able to keep same coverage with COBRA
 - Premiums can be expensive- you pay 102% of premium
- Have 60 days after loss of insurance job-based insurance to enroll
- Can use funds from health savings account to pay premium



SPECIAL ENROLLMENT FOR HEALTH INSURANCE MARKETPLACE PLANS

- Coverage begins 1st day of month after you apply
- Drop in income could qualify you for tax credits to lower your premium
- May be eligible for premium tax credit to help pay for coverage
- May be able to change current Marketplace plan during this time*
- If child under 26 you may be able to add to your Marketplace plan*

www.healthcare.gov

SPECIAL ENROLLMENT FOR HEALTH INSURANCE MARKETPLACE PLANS



- If you lost your job, but former job did not offer coverage
 - Generally, does not make you eligible for Special Enrollment Period
 - Should still call or apply to verify if you qualify for Special Enrollment Period

STATE MARKETPLACE OPENINGS

- Some states that operate their own marketplaces have temporarily reopened them allowing citizens to apply for coverage
- California: through 6/30
- Colorado: 3/20 - 4/30
- Connecticut: 3/19 - 4/17
- Washington DC: Open with no deadline
- Maryland: 3/16 - 6/15
- Massachusetts: through 5/25
- Nevada: 3/17 - 5/15
- New York: 3/16 - 5/15
- Rhode Island: through 4/15
- Washington: 3/18 - 5/8



MEDICAID OR CHIP

- Offers free or low-cost comprehensive coverage
- Can apply at any time during year if you qualify
- Medicaid Expansion in 37 states up to 138% FPL
 - Unemployment counts but not federal supplement
- Savings and other assets not counted



PREMIUM PAYMENTS

- If you can't pay premiums because of hardship due to COVID
 - Check with your insurance company about extending premium payment deadline or ask if they could delay terminating your coverage if premium not paid
 - May have grace period during which coverage may not be terminated for not paying premiums- check with the state or insurance company



BASIC COST OF LIVING

- Look at your budget – (or create one) – what can you spend for basic needs
- Your focus is to get through each day
- Should include:
 - Fixed expenses (mortgage, rent, taxes, insurance, loan payments, child support and other fixed monthly payments)
 - Variable monthly expenses (food, gas, repairs, utilities, health care expenses, recreation and childcare)
 - Future expenses (income or property tax and other debts)
- Make list of all current obligations-
 - What is necessary and what is not – gives you power to know you can get through this
 - If you lost your job or are struggling financially consider paying minimum payments
 - This is a good time to negotiate with creditors about lowering payments on your credit cards

BASIC COST OF LIVING

- Put any extra money into savings to have extra cash on hand to pay for groceries or medical costs
- List payments in order of importance – helps pay most important bills first
- Wants versus Needs
 - Cable
 - Cell phone plan
 - Review any subscriptions



FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

- Unemployment
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)- provides cash for limited time to low income families
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)- provides cash to low income seniors, and low-income children, adults with disabilities



WHERE ELSE CAN YOU GET MONEY?



- Withdraw from IRA or 401K without having to pay taxes for 2 years
- Can take money out of Roth IRA with no penalty
- Explore viatical options
- Call creditors and see if you must pay your mortgage
 - Some states have put a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures
- Consider calling credit cards and asking to expand credit limit
- Some banks offering low-interest loans

FOOD ASSISTANCE

- Call USDA National Hunger Hotline 866-348-6479
- Contact community or religious organizations to stay on top of local programs
- Contact your local food banks
- Stores have dedicated hours for seniors and vulnerable shoppers
- Meals on wheels
- Many school systems offering meals for students to pick up daily



STATE AND LOCAL GOVT REDUCING RED TAPE FOR FOOD BENEFITS

- Families First Coronavirus Response Act – allows flexibility to state, ensuring participants can purchase food and provides emergency allotments for:
 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
 - Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
 - Providing meals to students from rural schools closed due to COVID
 - Approved food sites for student meals
- Coronavirus Food Assistance Program
 - Direct support to farmers and ranchers to compensate for decrease in demand oversupply
 - Purchase fresh fruits & vegetables, dairy products and meat that will be distributed to food banks, community & faith-based organizations and other non-profits serving Americans in need

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/covid-19-emergency-allotments-guidance>

<https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2020/04/17/usda-announces-coronavirus-food-assistance-program>

TRANSPORTATION

- Automakers
 - Deferred payments
 - Flexible payment arrangements
 - Payment extensions on case by case basis
 - Interest-free loans
- Other transportation expenses
 - Findhelp.org/search
 - Different programs help pay for gas, transit, bus passes, transportation for healthcare
- Some national car insurance companies are providing refunds of a percentage credit back to policy holders



RENT AND MORTGAGE

- The CARES Act gives homeowners with federally backed loans financial relief:
 - Blocks foreclosure proceedings for at least 60 days
 - Allows homeowners to defer mortgage payments for 180 days.
- As the homeowner, before you are behind:
 - Contact your lender to discuss payment arrangements they may already have special waiver in place due to COVID-19
 - Banks or credit unions may offer hardship programs – call and apply
 - Work out a payment plan with your landlord/mortgage company to show you are acting in good faith
 - Share details of your financial hardship- could be note from employer or unemployment application
 - Be as open and honest as you can to allow your landlord/mortgage company to plan accordingly
 - Offer to pay a partial payment if possible

RENT AND MORTGAGE

- Forbearance is a hardship option that allows homeowners to postpone payments - provides immediate relief, BUT interest still accrues on the loan
- If lenders won't work with you, may consider reporting them to the state attorney general's office or the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
<https://www.bankrate.com/mortgages/mortgage-lenders-offer-help-to-borrowers-affected-by-coronavirus/>
- Sample temporary hardship letters from National Consumer Law Center
<https://www.nclc.org/special-projects/covid-19-consumer-protections.html>



RENT AND MORTGAGE

- Discuss options – get details in writing
 - If payment /rental deferment plan, understand the terms before signing and agreeing to them
 - Ask for reduced rate over several months with ability to repay the rest of the amount over a specific amount of time
 - Everything is negotiable right now; landlords don't want to have to find a new tenant right now
 - If you cannot work something out, contact Department of Housing and Urban Development website provides government's rental assistance resources
 - Including local financial assistance programs, Catholic Charities and local Salvation Army- also call 211 for united way for other organizations
- <https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/03/what-to-do-if-you-cant-pay-rent-because-of-the-coronavirus-pandemic.html>



UTILITIES



- Many utility companies, including major providers offering energy bill assistance programs which may allow you to defer payment until later date
 - Suspending disconnects if having difficulty paying bills
 - Waiving late bill payment fees
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
 - Helps pay heating and cooling bills
- Weatherization and energy-related minor home repairs

INTERNET/PHONE

- Internet providers may not be as flexible, but companies have COVID response programs:
 - Waiving late fee for residential or small business customers
 - Providing free or reduced cost internet to low-income families
 - Help pay for internet or phone, computer, and assistive technology
 - Free mobile hotspot programs
 - Additional minutes and data for wireless customers
- Lifeline Support for Affordable Communications -
 - Provides up to a \$9.25 monthly discount on service for eligible low-income subscribers
 - Available to eligible low-income consumers in every state, commonwealth, territory, and on Tribal lands

<https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/lifeline-support-affordable-communications>
- PCs for people – individuals and families that meet eligibility requirements can receive computer, computer repair, internet, and learning resources

<https://www.pcsforpeople.org/>

OTHER EXPENSES

- If you have student loans, contact your service provider to see discuss options
- If you have federal loans, consider forbearance
 - Interest is currently being waived for the duration of the crisis — or going on an income-based repayment plan, which could lower your monthly payments, sometimes even to \$0 per month
- U Haul offering free 30 days storage unit rental to college students
- Consider temporarily scale back or stop contributing to retirement-specific accounts if you don't have cash savings to fall back on – put money into an account for emergencies

GENERAL RESOURCES

- Local COVID resources – 211.org or call 211
 - Assistance finding food, paying housing bills or essential services - no direct funding
 - United Way- local website on specific resources
- Findhelp.org/search
 - Food assistance, help paying bills, free or reduced cost programs, COVID-19 programs
- PAF Program- COVID Care
 - Provides personalized help navigating the health care system and enrolling in insurance or safety net programs
 - Contact: (800) 532-5274 Option “0”; Or
 - Online: <https://bit.ly/PAFHelp>

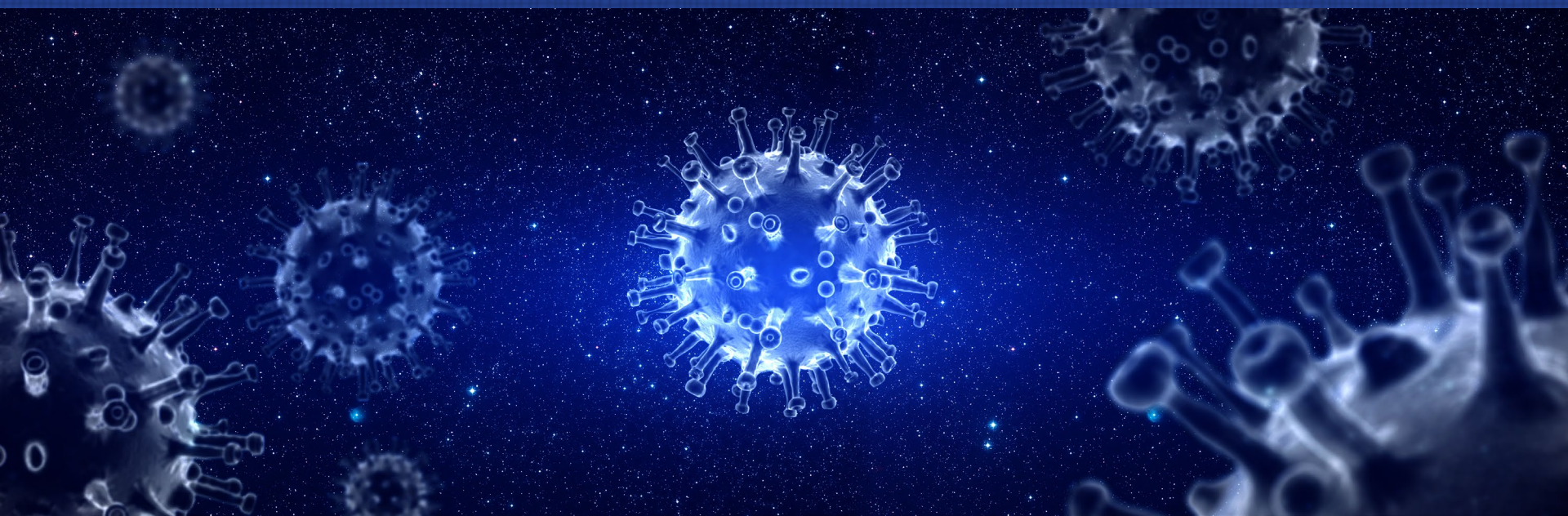
UPCOMING PRESENTATION

- Thursday 4/30 @ 2: **PAF Can Help: Overview of COVID-19 Support Programs**



**Patient Advocate
Foundation**

Thank You!



Questions?

If you have questions, please type them into the Q&A tool, and we will address them as time allows.

Any questions not addressed verbally today will be addressed via the chat box or the email you registered with.

