

The Employee Assistance Program

The EAP offers assistance in locating a wide range of resources to help you cope with these difficult economic times. Call the EAP at **1-800-322-5327** to discuss your needs with our staff. Below is a list of some general resources that may be of interest to you.

Food and Nutrition:

In order to save money, you might choose to reduce your food costs. Rather than going hungry, there are programs that can help you and your family maintain a proper diet such as food stamps, co-op food program, WIC programs, and food pantries.

1. The Worcester County Food Bank is located in 60 communities throughout Worcester County to provide emergency food assistance to individuals and families. To locate a program in your area, please call the Food Bank at 508-842-3663
2. The WIC program provides nutrition and health education and healthy food free of charge to Massachusetts pregnant women, breastfeeding moms and children under 5 years old. Eligibility requirements apply. WIC has a number of offices across the state. For more information call the Massachusetts WIC Nutrition Program, Mass Department of Public Health at 1-800-942-1007.
3. School breakfast and lunch programs provide nutritionally balanced meals and snacks to children in participating schools. Call your child's school for more information or the Department of Education at 781-338-3000.
4. For information about food pantries in the Boston area, contact: The Project Bread Food Source Hotline at 1-800-645-8333; or in the Central Massachusetts area, call the United Way at 508-757-5631.

Health Insurance:

Massachusetts has several options available to ensure that all citizens have health coverage.

1. Medical Security Program at the Division of Unemployment Assistance, 1-800-908-8801
www.mass.gov/du/misp
2. Massachusetts Health Connector 1-877-MA-Enroll (1-877-623-6765) www.mahealthconnector.org

Heat Assistance:

A recent job loss means you may qualify for the income-eligible Fuel Assistance Program.

1. Worcester Community Action Council, Inc. (WCAC) offers multiple opportunities to heat your home; fuel assistance, weatherization, heating system maintenance. For more information call (508) 754-1176 x110 or visit www.wcac.net
2. The Massachusetts Good Neighbor Energy Fund is available to any Massachusetts resident who, because of temporary financial difficulty, cannot meet a month's energy expense and is not eligible for state or federal energy assistance. To see if you qualify call 800-334-3047

3. Montachusett Opportunity Council, Inc provides for heating system repairs and replacements for homeowners. Also provides referral services to other community agencies focused on fuel efficiency and safety. This program deals with heating emergencies 7 days a week. Clients must be certified eligible for Fuel Assistance. 978-342-7013
4. Distrigas Heat Assistance Program or the Citizens Energy Oil Heat Program has delivered millions of gallons of discount home heating oil to poor and elderly households in Massachusetts since 1979. This unique program helps protect needy families from volatile heating oil prices, which often leave households having to choose between heating the home and paying for other life essentials, such as food, health care, or clothing. Call Joe 4 heating at 1-866-GAS-9918 or visit www.citizensenergy.com
5. Worcester Housing Authority provides safe affordable housing opportunities for families who meet eligibility guideline. Call 508-635-3300 for more information.

Housing:

1. Home Ownership: For assistance in home ownership and foreclosure issues, call the Neighbor Works Home Ownership Center of Worcester at 508-791-2170.
2. Regardless if you rent or own your home, seeking guidance and assistance sooner than later can prevent eviction or foreclosure. For guidance and possible hardship funding, contact Central Mass. Housing Alliance at 508-791-7265 or visit www.cmhaonline.org
3. Foreclosure Prevention Programs from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has a list of approved agencies that offer housing counseling services. These HUD-approved agencies offer counseling services free of charge. Call 1-800-569-4287 or go to www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/hcc/hcs.cfm?webListAction=search&searchstate=ma
4. Homeowner's HOPE of the Homeownership Preservation Foundation is a non-profit counseling organization that helps homeowners keep their homes. All services are free. Counseling services are available in English or Spanish. The Homeowner's Hope Hotline is open 24 hours a day. Call 1-888-995-HOPE or visit their web site at: <http://www.995hope.org/>
5. There are several Worcester-area agencies that offer homelessness prevention services including: Abby's House, Friendly House, Central Mass Housing Alliance, Homeless Prevention Services (Catholic Charities). Call United Way at 211 for more information.

Tax Preparation Assistance:

A change in your income means you may qualify for an Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a refundable federal income tax credit for low to moderate income working individuals and families. Local tax preparers can help determine if you qualify and will assist in preparing your taxes for free. For more information on EITC, including sites to have your taxes prepared, visit www.unitedwaycm.org

General Resources:

To get more information on a wide range of topics on line visit www.mass.gov, the official website of the Massachusetts Office of Health and Human Services, or www.massresources.org