

# COVID-19 / Coronavirus Crisis Resource Guide for Union Members

(Updated Mar. 23 - 5:42 a.m.)

Compiled by [Working Partnerships](#)

*This document will be updated and edited regularly as new information becomes available. We have done our best to provide the most accurate and current information and links and our goal is to keep this guide up to date. If you see an error or would like to add additional resources, please contact staff member, Graeme Allen, [graeme@minneapolisunions.org](mailto:graeme@minneapolisunions.org)*

**We are in a rapidly changing and very serious public health crisis.** The MRLF recognizes that union members and non-union workers across sectors are facing monumental levels of crisis in some of the most fundamental areas of our lives: health and safety risks, job or pay loss, healthcare insecurity, immigration status, food and water security, childcare shortage, shelter stability and more. The scope of the crisis is overwhelming for those workers on the frontlines and for those unknown numbers who have been left in the lurch of sudden unemployment.

For the most recent statewide updates: [Minnesota Department of Health](#)

## Table of Contents:

- [Unemployment](#) (Pg. 1)
- [Childcare](#) (Pg. 2)
- [Food Assistance](#) (Pg. 3)
- [Housing / Rent / Mortgage Support](#) (Pg. 4-5)
- [Utilities](#) (Pg. 6)
- [Healthcare](#) (Pg. 7)
- [Worker Protections](#) (*Working during the Coronavirus Pandemic*) (Pg. 8-10)
- [Other Resources](#) (Pg. 11)

## Unemployment (Section updated March 23 - 12:32 a.m.)

If you have lost your job, or have had your hours greatly reduced, **you should apply** for Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits. *Because of the increased demand, and closed to public*

# COVID-19 / Coronavirus Crisis Resource Guide for Union Members

(Updated Mar. 23 - 5:42 a.m.)

offices, **applying online is the only way to complete the process, unless you need language/special assistance.**

You can **Apply Sunday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.**

**Customer Service Reps:** Available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Twin Cities: 651-296-3644, Greater Minnesota: 1-877-898-9090, TTY users: 1-866-814-1252

[\\*Click to see Up To Date changes issued by Governor Walz](#)

## What You Will Need to Apply:

- Union name and local number of your hiring hall if you are a union member
- Social Security number
- Driver's license number or other state government identification number
- Contact information (mailing address and telephone number)
- Employment history for the past 18 months, including:
  - Each employer's name, address and telephone number
  - Dates of employment (month and year)
  - Pay rate
  - Reason you no longer work for the employer
- If you want direct deposit, your bank account number and routing number. You can also request direct deposit at a later time - see [Payment Options](#) for instructions.

### You may also need:

- DD-214 Member 4 (not mandatory to apply) if you served in the military in the **past 18 months**
- SF 8 and SF50 if you were a federal employee in the **past 18 months**
- Work authorization document if you are not a U.S. citizen

## Overview of the process:

- Get started by watching this [video](#) (if you haven't been through the process). *Please note that this video doesn't include recent changes due to the Coronavirus. [To read the changes, click here.](#)*
- starting the [Application Process](#) ([Español](#), [Hmoob](#), [Somali](#)). Read the [Information Handbook](#).
- Look for letters in the mail about your benefit amount and how to request benefit payments.
- [Request a benefit payment](#) every week, even if your eligibility is being determined.
- Respond to all requests for information completely, honestly and in a timely manner.

## Childcare (Section updated March 23rd - 2:45 a.m.)

1. School Districts and the YMCA are **required to provide childcare for emergency responders children.** (enacted by Governor Walz on March 12th)

# COVID-19 / Coronavirus Crisis Resource Guide for Union Members

(Updated Mar. 23 - 5:42 a.m.)

- a. **Emergency Workers:** includes healthcare providers, emergency medical services, long-term and post-acute care, law enforcement personnel, correctional workers, public health employees, firefighters, and other first responders, grocery store workers.
  - b. Children, 12 years old and younger, of emergency workers are eligible.
2. The [YMCA](#) offers priority child care for Emergency Workers (Starting Mar. 23rd). Registration is open and accessible at [ymcamn.org/mnchildcare](http://ymcamn.org/mnchildcare) or 612-230-9622.
    - a. kindergarten through sixth grade, 8:30 a.m. through 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday
    - b. The program will be prioritized for children of [emergency workers](#) , including educators, grocery store workers, utility workers, essential state and local government staff, etc.
    - c. A full list of locations is available at [ymcamn.org/mnchildcare](http://ymcamn.org/mnchildcare)
    - d. The cost is \$40 per day
3. [Parent Aware](#): Offering free tools and resources to help families find the quality child care and early education programs. Phone: 888-291-9811
  4. [Greater TwinCities United Way](#): (Dial 211 on your phone)

## Food Assistance (Section updated March 23rd - 3:10 a.m.)

- **Federal Resources:** [Apply for SNAP/Food stamps](#)
- MN Helpline Phone Number (interpreters are available), 1-888-711-1151
- [Food Shelves in Minnesota](#)

### Twin Cities:

#### For Children:

- [Community generated list of free meals for kids across the Twin Cities Metro area](#)
- [Hunger Solutions food resources for children](#)
- [Restaurants offering free lunches to students while K-12 schools are closed](#)

**For Seniors in the Southern Metro:** [Restaurants and churches join to deliver free meals to seniors](#). Contact: 952-435-8102 to connect with organizers or email [ksnyder@popmn.org](mailto:ksnyder@popmn.org)

# COVID-19 / Coronavirus Crisis Resource Guide for Union Members

(Updated Mar. 23 - 5:42 a.m.)

Central Minnesota: [Restaurants offering free lunches to students while K-12 schools are closed](#)

Southern Minnesota: [Restaurants offering free lunches to students while K-12 schools are closed](#)

## Housing / Rent / Mortgage Support (Section updated March 23 - 1:32 a.m.)

**Paying Rent / Mortgage.** Get a copy of the letter from your workplace to let your landlord or mortgage holder know you are out of work.

### Homeowners Assistance:

- [MN Foreclosure Prevention](#)
- HUD (Federal Housing and Urban Development) helpline, available 24 hours a day: 888-995-HOPE
- [Local Mortgage Counselors](#) approved by HUD

### Renters Assistance:

News Updates (KSTP March 20): [The Trump Administration hasn't offered any relief for renters](#)

### Financial Help:

- Apply for [short-term emergency assistance through your county](#).
- If you are looking for ongoing help paying your rent based on your income, [contact your local public housing agency](#) to access Federal rental assistance (Section 8, Public & Indian Housing).
- The Family Homeless Prevention & Assistance Program (FHPAP) is a program available throughout the state that provides assistance to households experiencing homelessness or who are at imminent risk of homelessness. [Find your local program and contact them for assistance](#).

# COVID-19 / Coronavirus Crisis Resource Guide for Union Members

(Updated Mar. 23 - 5:42 a.m.)

## Finding Affordable Housing Help:

- [Visit HousingLink to search by map, city or county](#) for rental properties listed in both the Twin Cities metro and Greater Minnesota. Listings include apartment, house, duplex, townhome and condo rentals.
- Visit [Housing Benefits 101](#), a website built by the Minnesota Department of Human Services to learn about housing options across the state.
- Visit [Disability HUB MN](#) if you are looking for housing resources for people with disabilities.

## Homeless to Housing Help:

- If you are in need of a place to stay tonight because you do not have housing, [contact the county you live in](#) and they will direct you to a shelter.
- [Contact your local coordinated entry provider](#) for an assessment of your housing and service needs. Learn more about coordinated entry by reading this [fact sheet](#).
- If you are in need of a safe place to stay because you are fleeing an unsafe environment at home, call the MN Day One Crisis Hotline at 1.866.223.1111 to speak with an advocate who can guide you to a service provider and safe place.

## Legal Help:

- [Homeline](#) offers free legal assistance for renters. Phone: 612-728-5767
- [LawHelpMN.org](#) helps low-income Minnesotans find general information about their legal rights
- [ProJusticeMN](#) resource for pro bono and legal services practitioners, law students and faculty advising low-income or disadvantaged clients.
- [Minnesota Legal Aid](#) offers free legal assistance (limit number of clients)

## Utilities (Section updated March 23 - 3:52 a.m.)

### 1. Heating and Electric Assistance

- a. [Minnesota Power, Superior Water Light and Power, Xcel Energy and CenterPoint Energy](#) have said that they won't cut off heat or electricity for customers facing economic hardships during the Coronas virus crisis.

# COVID-19 / Coronavirus Crisis Resource Guide for Union Members

(Updated Mar. 23 - 5:42 a.m.)

- b. [The Energy Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#) helps pay for home heating costs and furnace repairs for income-qualified households
- c. Contact your electric and heating utility company if you are having difficulty paying something
  - i. [Xcel Energy's response to customers about Covid-19](#)
  - ii. [Minnesota Power's response to customers about Covid-19](#)
  - iii. [Superior Water, Light and Power's response to customers about Covid-19](#)
  - iv. [Centerpoint Energy's response to customers about Covid-19](#)
  - v. [Connexus Energy's response to customers and members about Covid-19](#)

## 2. Cable / Phone Companies

- a. Lower your bill. If you qualify for any type of assistance from the state or federal government, you can apply for and receive a 12-month low income discount on your cable bill.
- b. Call to negotiate a lower rate. Tell them you will cut off the cable if you can't negotiate a lower rate. They will move you to a different number where you will get new, lower options for your service.

## 3. Municipal services & charges

## 4. Credit & Budget Counseling

- a. [Family Means](#) is a good non-profit resource for assessing your individual or family credit situation and talk to a counselor over the phone about budget planning and options.

## Healthcare (Section updated March 23 - 5:32 a.m.)

*News Update:* [MnSure health coverage enrollment open to anyone without health insurance](#) Gov. Tim Walz and MNSure have announced a 30-day "special enrollment period" for those without health insurance to sign up amid the growing number of coronavirus cases. The enrollment period begins Monday March 21st and runs through Apr. 21, giving uninsured people 30 days to enroll in coverage through MNSure.

[Special enrollment info for those without health insurance due to COVID-19 here.](#)

**Note:** MnSure eligibility also applies to those who have recently lost their health insurance through their employer may also be eligible to enroll so coverage can

# COVID-19 / Coronavirus Crisis Resource Guide for Union Members

(Updated Mar. 23 - 5:42 a.m.)

continue at the end of the individual's work-based insurance. Finally, those who recently marked a marriage, birth of a child or a move might also qualify for enrollment.

## Information on Coronavirus / Covid-19:

- [What is the Coronavirus / Covid-19?](#)
  - [COVID-19 in Amharic \(PDF\),](#)
  - [COVID-19 in Arabic \(PDF\),](#)
  - [COVID-19 in Chinese \(PDF\),](#)
  - [COVID-19 in Hmong \(PDF\),](#)
  - [COVID-19 in Karen \(PDF\),](#)
  - [COVID-19 in Russian \(PDF\),](#)
  - [COVID-19 in Somali \(PDF\),](#)
  - [COVID-19 in Spanish \(PDF\),](#)
  - [COVID-19 in Vietnamese \(PDF\),](#)
- Minnesota Department of Health COVID-19 Hotline:  
**Open:** 7:00 am - 7:00 pm, **Phone:** 651-201-3920 or 1-800-657-3903
- [How to protect yourself](#)
- [Frequently asked Questions](#)

## Worker Protections Related to COVID-19 (Section updated March 23 - 1:32 a.m.)

[Click Here to Get More Information](#) (Mn Dept of Labor)

Collectively bargained contracts often have spelled out policies / practices that apply to your situation. [Industry Specific Advice compiled by the AFL-CIO](#)

Employees are protected by a number of state and federal laws. These protections and employers' legal obligations are discussed in more detail below.

### **Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)**

Under the FMLA, covered employers must provide employees a job-protected, unpaid leave for specified family and medical reasons, which may include COVID-19 where complications arise. Employees on FMLA leave are entitled to the continuation of group health insurance coverage under the same terms as existed before they took FMLA leave. Contact the United States Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, at 1-866-487-9243 with questions.

# COVID-19 / Coronavirus Crisis Resource Guide for Union Members

(Updated Mar. 23 - 5:42 a.m.)

## **Use of Sick Leave**

If your employer allows you to take time off for your own illness, your employer must also allow you to take time off to care for an ill minor child, adult child, spouse, sibling, parent, mother-in-law, father-in-law, grandchild, grandparent or stepparent. Your employer must allow you to use your sick time in the same manner as the employer would allow you to use the leave for yourself. Under current law, this provision may not apply to all employees and all employers. Contact the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry at 651-284-5075, 800-342-5354 or [dli.laborstandards@state.mn.us](mailto:dli.laborstandards@state.mn.us) with questions.

## **Employers cannot discriminate**

The Minnesota Human Rights Act (MHRA) protects employees from discrimination on the basis of disability, race, national origin, age, and other protected classes. Individuals with disabilities have the right to request “reasonable accommodations” from employers who are subject to the Americans with Disabilities Act and/or the MHRA. If you have a disability that affects your risk for contracting COVID-19 or being harmed if you do contract this virus, you should request a reasonable accommodation from your employer.

If you have a disability that affects your risk for contracting COVID-19 or being harmed if you do contract the virus, you have the right to request a reasonable accommodation from your employer. For example, employees with disabilities that put them at high-risk for complications related to COVID-19 may request telework or paid/sick/unpaid leave as a reasonable accommodation to reduce their chances of infection during a pandemic.

Employers may ask employees if they are experiencing influenza-like symptoms, such as fever or chills, and a cough or sore throat. Employers must maintain all information about employee illness as a confidential medical record in compliance with state and federal law.

During a pandemic, employers may not ask employees who do not have known or apparent influenza symptoms whether they have a medical condition that the CDC says could make them vulnerable to influenza complications. Under no circumstances may an employer make decisions based on stereotypes or bias.

If employees voluntarily disclose to their employer that they have a medical condition or a disability that places them at higher risk of COVID-19 complications, the employer must keep this information confidential.

Employers may not assume that employees with known medical conditions or disabilities are at heightened risk of complications from COVID-19. For more information about pandemic preparedness in the workplace and relevant legal requirement for employers, visit [www.eeoc.gov/facts/pandemic\\_flu.html](http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/pandemic_flu.html).



# COVID-19 / Coronavirus Crisis Resource Guide for Union Members

(Updated Mar. 23 - 5:42 a.m.)

The Minnesota Department of Human Rights is the state's civil rights enforcement agency and enforces the MHRA. If you believe you have been discriminated against, contact the department at 651-539-1133, 1-800-657-3704, via email at [info.mdhr@state.mn.us](mailto:info.mdhr@state.mn.us) or complete a consultation inquiry form at <https://mn.gov/mdhr/intake/consultationinquiryform>.

## **Reporting Health Concerns At Work**

Your employer may not retaliate against you for reporting health and safety concerns at work. If you believe your employer retaliated against you, you may file a complaint with Minnesota OSHA within 30 days of the adverse employment action. Contact Minnesota OSHA Compliance at [osha.compliance@state.mn.us](mailto:osha.compliance@state.mn.us), 651-284-5050 or 877-470-6742 with questions.

## **Protections for workers who contract or have been exposed to COVID-19**

Under a state health law, if you have contracted or been exposed to COVID-19, and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) recommends that you stay home (isolate or quarantine yourself), your employer may not discharge, discipline, or penalize you for missing work. This protection also applies if you need to care for a minor or adult family member for whom MDH recommends isolation or quarantine. (The adult family member must have a disability or be a vulnerable adult.) This employment protection is available for 21 workdays. For more information, call the number MDH gave you with its recommendation.

## **Workers' Compensation**

If you contract a disease that arises out of and in the course of your employment, you may be entitled to workers' compensation benefits, including payment of wage loss and medical benefits. However, you must show that you contracted the disease due to your employment.

If an emergency responder contracts an infectious or communicable disease that they are exposed to in the course of employment outside of a hospital, the disease is presumed to be an occupational disease due to the nature of their employment.

If you are not ill, but must stay home from work because you were exposed to the virus, you are not entitled to workers' compensation benefits under current law.

Every case is fact specific. Call the Department of Labor and Industry at 800-342-5354 (press 3) if you have a question about whether you are entitled to workers' compensation benefits.

# COVID-19 / Coronavirus Crisis Resource Guide for Union Members

(Updated Mar. 23 - 5:42 a.m.)

**Other Resources:** (Section updated March 20th - 4:46pm)

## [Minnesota School Closures](#)

Public and private schools have been asked to close after Tuesday (March 17th), meaning NO IN PERSON INSTRUCTION STARTING WEDNESDAY.

Governor Tim Walz and Education Commissioner Mary Cathryn Ricker have announced that [all Minnesota schools serving students prekindergarten through grade 12 will be closed beginning Wednesday, March 18](#). This closure will allow districts and charter schools to develop distance learning plans, in the event of a longer-term closure.

The Minnesota Department of Education is developing guidance for districts and charter schools as they begin developing these plans.

Resumption of INSTRUCTION: All districts and charter schools will be expected to resume instruction, whether in-person or in a distance learning model, on Monday, March 30.

MN Department of Education and COVID-19 Updates:

<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/health/covid19/>

AFT - Resources for online teaching from AFT

<https://sharemylesson.com/teaching-resource/coronavirus-maintaining-healthy-schools-preparing-online-learning>

**Recommendations for educators, support staff and administrators - MN  
Department of Education:**

MDH has posted information on their website at [Information For Schools, Colleges, and Universities on Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#). Please share this information with your school administrators and health personnel, and ask them to share information with parents as they deem appropriate. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has updated COVID-19-specific school preparedness/planning guidance on its website <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/index.html>.

Please also review [CDC's Pandemic Preparedness Resources](#) for more information about what schools and other organizations can be doing to help protect our communities.

## [Federal Relief/Stimulus Package](#)

The Senate unanimously passed a \$2 trillion economic rescue plan Wednesday that will offer assistance to tens of millions of American households affected by the coronavirus. Its

# COVID-19 / Coronavirus Crisis Resource Guide for Union Members

(Updated Mar. 23 - 5:42 a.m.)

components include stimulus payments to individuals, expanded unemployment coverage, student loan changes, different retirement account rules and more.

The House of Representatives was expected to quickly take up the bill and pass it, sending it to President Donald Trump for his signature.

Here are the answers to common questions about what's in the bill.

## Stimulus payments

Q: How large would the payments be?

A: Most adults would get \$1,200, although some would get less. For every child age 16 or under, the payment would be an additional \$500.

Q: How many payments would there be?

A: Just one. Future bills could order up additional payments, though.

Q: How do I know if I will get the full amount?

A: It depends on your income. Single adults with Social Security numbers who are U.S. residents and have an adjusted gross income of \$75,000 or less would get the full amount. Married couples with no children earning \$150,000 or less would receive a total of \$2,400. And taxpayers filing as head of household would get the full payment if they earned \$112,500 or less.