

# COVID-19 Resources for MI Bridges Community Partners

## ***Stimulus Checks***

The vast majority of Michigan residents are eligible to receive a stimulus check from the federal government this year. **This includes individuals with low or no earnings, who normally don't file taxes.** You could receive up to \$1,200 for yourself (\$2,400 for a married couple filing jointly) and an additional \$500 for each dependent child. [This helpful information](#) has been developed by the University of Michigan to help ensure individuals who have not filed income taxes, or do not have a bank account, are able to receive this stimulus payment.

Income from federal stimulus payments will not affect eligibility for public assistance benefits such as food assistance, according to the Michigan Department of Human Services (MDHHS). Stimulus checks also will not reduce the amount of public assistance benefits that anyone receives. See more information [here](#).

## ***Updated MI Bridges Rack Cards - COVID-19 Information***

We have updated our MI Bridges rack card with additional information on benefits available on the reverse side along with a link to resources for the older adult population. This version is an additional resource to use only during the COVID-19 emergency. A copy of the updated Rack Card is available on our MI Bridges Community Partners [Tools & Resources](#) page under Community Partner Outreach Materials.

## ***Help us help you when applying for benefits!***

Tell us about your circumstances at the end of the application in the "What else would you like us to know?" box. If you've been laid off, what date? When did you get your last paycheck or expect it and the estimated amount? Where did you work? (Employer name, job title, last day of work, date of last check, and employer phone number). If your hours have been reduced, what date? For housing expenses, please provide rent amount, landlord name and phone number.

## ***Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer Program (P-EBT)***

MDHHS announced that Michigan is the first state to provide food to families affected by school closings caused by COVID-19. Families with children who received free, reduced-cost lunches at school will qualify for the new program. You can find the [full press release here](#) with more details of the program.

## ***SER Policy changes***

In response to COVID-19, MDHHS will be making the following changes to SER policy in order to allow for faster processing of emergency requests and to make access to benefits easier to Michigan's most vulnerable households.

Effective Monday, March 30, 2020 the following SER changes will be in effect and should be applied to any case being processed on or after March 30, 2020.

- **A phone interview is no longer required**

- In instances where changes are reported or there are discrepancies that must be resolved, the worker may choose to complete an interview.
- **Suspension of one-time energy assists**
  - SER energy services will no longer be limited to one payment for the remainder of the fiscal year however, the service caps will remain the same:
    - \$1200 for propane and fuel oil
    - \$850 for all other energy types
- **The non-cash asset limit will be increased to \$15,000**
  - The non-cash asset limit will be changed to align with the cash asset limit of \$15,000 for all SER services (except burial when the deceased is the only group member).
  - SER groups who are composed of FIP, SDA, SSI, MA and FAP recipients continue to have automatic eligibility on the basis of non-cash assets.
- **Elimination of the shortfall determination**
  - DHHS will not be making a shortfall determination for any month for energy or utility services until further notice. The required payment amount for electricity, heat, water and sewer services is \$0.

***Medicaid Bulletin MSA 20-19 COVID-19 Response: Suspending all Medicaid Closures*** (issued on April 6, 2020)

Per Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and State recommendations, social distancing is encouraged to slow the spread of COVID-19 and thus preserve the health system capacity for the duration of this pandemic. As a result of the federal emergency health declaration, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is suspending program coverage closures for all Medicaid programs beginning March 18, 2020 and will be in effect through the month of April 2020 or until the first of the month following the termination of the Governor's Declaration of a State of Emergency Order (2020-04, COVID-19), whichever is later. Medicaid coverage will only be closed if the individual moves out of state, requests that their benefits close, or they become deceased.

You can find the [full bulletin here](#).

This bulletin is being sent to Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) Holders. Medicaid bulletins can be accessed on the web at [www.michigan.gov/medicaidproviders](http://www.michigan.gov/medicaidproviders), click on Policy, Letters & Forms.

***Seniors Can Get Meals Safely During COVID-19 Outbreak***

Michigan recently received additional federal dollars to help provide meals to older adults as the state responds to the COVID-19 pandemic and wants to make seniors aware of food delivery programs. These programs – available to Michigan residents over age 60 – provide meals through home delivery and pick up services during the current pandemic.

The need for these services – particularly home-delivered and packaged meals – has increased as community measures to slow transmission of COVID-19 have closed meal sites and left many family caregivers unable to assist older loved ones.

You can find the [full press release here](#).

***Effective immediately: there will be no limit on earning Double Up Food Bucks.***

In response to COVID-19, Fair Food Network has made a change to the Double Up Food Bucks earnings at [participating locations](#). To assist our community in getting the food they need, Double Up Food Bucks has temporarily removed the \$20 daily limit that a customer can earn on fresh fruits and vegetables. Many of our participating grocery stores and all of the farmers markets and farm stands currently open have removed limits.

Please know that this is a temporary change and Fair Food Network will notify you immediately of future changes to the program. We will also keep our website updated here: <https://www.doubleupfoodbucks.org/resources/covid-19/>

If you have any questions, please contact us at [info@doubleupfoodbucks.org](mailto:info@doubleupfoodbucks.org) or at our hotline at 866-586-2796.

***Additional Food Assistance for 350,000 Michigan Families Approved in Response to COVID-19 Emergency***

Approximately 350,000 Michigan families will have access to additional food assistance benefits as a response to the COVID-19 outbreak and about 27,000 individuals will be temporarily exempt from federal work requirements, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) announced March 27, 2020. You can find the more information and the full press release [here](#).

***Additional Food Assistance Benefits in Response to COVID-19 Emergency Extended Through May***

Approximately 350,000 Michigan families will continue to have access to additional food assistance benefits in the month of May in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) announced May 26, 2020. The additional food assistance was initially approved for March and April – and now that is being extended for May. Eligible clients will see additional food assistance benefits on their Bridge Card this week and by May 31. You can find the [full press release here](#).

***Additional Food Assistance for 350,000 Michigan Families in Response to COVID-19 Emergency Extended Through June***

Approximately 350,000 Michigan families will continue to have access to additional food assistance benefits during the month of June as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) announced on Friday, June 5<sup>th</sup>. Michigan previously approved the additional food assistance for March, April and May – and now that is being extended for the month of June with approval from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. Eligible clients will see additional food assistance benefits on their Bridge Card by June 30, with payments beginning for some households on June 20. Additional benefits will be loaded onto Bridge Cards as a separate payment from the assistance that is provided earlier in the month. You can find the [full press release here](#).