



Resources for Connecticut Residents Affected by the Government Shutdown

Categories : [Active Military/Veterans](#), [Children and Families](#), [Consumer Services](#), [Income Assistance](#)

The current partial shutdown of the United States government began after midnight on December 21, 2018. Essential federal employees continue to work throughout the shutdown, but many without pay. Other federal employees are on furlough – not working and not receiving pay. In Connecticut, there are an estimated 1,500 federal employees who work for the Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, Transportation Security Administration, Environmental Protection Agency and other federal agencies, who are impacted by the shutdown. Additionally, there are other Connecticut residents who rely on federal benefit programs and services, who may also be affected. Below is information and resources for those affected, as well as for those who want to help.

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RESOURCES FOR FEDERAL WORKERS IMPACTED BY THE SHUTDOWN

Unemployment Insurance

Federal employees who work in Connecticut and is furloughed and not working due to the shutdown, can file for unemployment benefits. Employees who are required to work without pay throughout the shutdown are not eligible to file for unemployment. Eligible individuals can file new unemployment claims online at www.filectui.com. For additional in person assistance, these American Job Center locations, Bridgeport, Hartford, Hamden, Montville, or Waterbury will provide a Benefits Specialist who can assist – visit [American Job Centers](#) for the location of these centers. For more information on the guidelines regarding unemployment insurance eligibility, see the CT Department of Labor's press release [here](#).

Financial Assistance – Loans

- [Webster Bank/People's United](#): Webster Bank and People's United, in partnership with the Governor's Office, is providing interest-free loans to essential federal workers who are not eligible for unemployment benefits. Interested individuals can visit their local Webster Bank or People's United Branch or dial Webster at 1-800-325-2424, and People's at 1-800-894-0300.
- [Other Banks & Credit Unions](#): Other banks and credit unions are also providing personalized financial assistance to federal employees. Federal employees who are members of credit unions or other banks should check with their credit union/bank to see if they are offering no-interest loans or other assistance to those affected by the shutdown.

If you need assistance locating a participating financial institution, please contact the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority at customer.service@chfa.org or 860-721-9501/1-844-CT1-HOME (toll free).

Temporary Financial Assistance

- [Military Relief Fund](#): Current service members or their family members, who are experiencing a financial hardship, may be eligible for financial assistance in the form of a grant through this fund. To download the application, visit [https://www.ct.gov/mil/lib/mil/ctmd_form_7-1_\(mrf_application\).pdf](https://www.ct.gov/mil/lib/mil/ctmd_form_7-1_(mrf_application).pdf) or call 860-524-4968 for



more information.

- **Community Based Organizations:** Some charitable agencies and other community non-profits provide financial assistance to certain groups experiencing hardship. To view the list of these organizations, visit www.211ct.org and search the keyword ? **'Temporary Financial Assistance'** for the zip code or town you need.

Income Tax Refunds & Assistance

The IRS will begin processing tax returns on January 28th, regardless of the shutdown. The Treasury Department funds are paid out of a 'permanent, indefinite appropriation' that is not affected by the shutdown. Federal workers impacted by the shutdown who will be eligible for a tax refund should file their taxes as quickly as they can. Free tax preparation services are available from the following programs:

- **VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance):** VITA offers free, individualized tax preparation by certified volunteers. Individuals affected by the shutdown are encouraged to have their taxes prepared for free through VITA instead of using a paid preparer. To find a VITA site in your area and/or to book your own tax appointment online, visit www.211ct.org/taxhelp or dial 2-1-1 for assistance.
- **MyFreeTaxes:** Individuals with incomes less than \$66,000 are eligible to use the MyFreeTaxes software for free (courtesy of United Way) to prepare their taxes online themselves at <http://www.myfreetaxes.com>
- **AARP:** Individuals age 60 and older may have their taxes prepared for free at an AARP Tax-Aide Site between February 1st and April 15th. To find an AARP tax site, visit <http://www.aarp.org/applications/VMISLocator/searchTaxAideLocations.action>

Tuition Assistance

The Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system is postponing tuition payments from federal workers and their families until after the shutdown is over. UConn is also allowing students to defer payments and encourages affected students to contact the Office of the Bursar.

Basic Needs

Employees affected by the shutdown may need to supplement their lost income by accessing some of the available safety net programs that provide free groceries and meals, help with utility bills, and other basic needs.

- **Heating Bills:** Affected families may be eligible for assistance paying their primary heat source bills (electric, gas, oil, propane) from the Connecticut Energy Assistance Program (CEAP). To locate a CEAP application site, dial 2-1-1 or visit www.211ct.org and search the keyword ? **'CEAP'** for the zip code/town where you live. Individuals can also text keyword CTWARM to 898211 to receive the information about their local CEAP site via text. Households may also be eligible for heating assistance through the Operation Fuel program. To find a fuel bank in your area to apply for Operation Fuel, dial 2-1-1 or visit <http://www.operationfuel.org/get-help/residents/>.
- **Water Bills:** Connecticut Water, Avon Water, and Heritage Village Water will work with affected government employees to maintain their water service throughout the shutdown. Federal workers who get water from these companies should call 800-286-5700 to notify them of their situation. To view the full list of water payment assistance programs in the state, visit www.211ct.org and search the keyword ? **'Water Service Payment Assistance.'**
- **Cellphone Bills:** Cellphone providers like AT&T, Sprint, Verizon, and T-Mobile, are helping government workers affected by the shutdown by offering flexible payments and waiving late fees in many cases.
- **Food Pantries:** Food pantries provide free grocery items. A pop-up food pantry for affected Coast Guard families has been set up at Leamy Hall at the Coast Guard Academy in New London – affected families can



pick up food, pet supplies and household items at Leamy Hall. To find other pantries located throughout the state, dial 2-1-1 or visit www.211ct.org and search the keyword ? **'Food Pantries'** for the zip code or town where you are seeking help.

- **Foodshare is offering two temporary food pantries to federal employees in need of food during the partial government shutdown.** 1) A food pantry will be open every Wednesday from 4-7pm at the Foodshare building, 450 Woodland Avenue, Bloomfield; and 2) A TSA Mobile Pantry will be open every Thursday from 7-9am at the TSA offices, 336 Ella Grasso Turnpike, Windsor Locks. Foodshare will provide the food pantries throughout the duration of the partial government shutdown. Employees are requested to bring their federal photo IDs and reusable shopping bags.
- **Soup Kitchens:** To find a location to get a free meal, dial 2-1-1 or visit www.211ct.org and search the keyword ? **'Soup Kitchens'** for the zip code or town where you are seeking help.
- **Pet Food/Supplies:** Food and supplies are a significant expense for families with pets. To find an organization that can provide free food/supplies, dial 2-1-1 or visit www.211ct.org and search the keyword ? **'Pet Food'** for the zip code or town where you are seeking help.
- **Legal Aid:** Can help with navigating landlord/tenant, eviction issues that may arise from the shutdown. To find an organization that can provide assistance, dial 2-1-1 or visit www.211ct.org and search the keyword **"Legal Representation"** for the zip code or town where you are seeking help.

INFORMATION REGARDING FEDERAL BENEFIT PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Connecticut residents who receive benefits that are funded, at least in part, by federal dollars may be worried about how those benefits will be impacted by the current shutdown. Listed below is information regarding some of the federal benefit programs, as well as federal services.

- **SNAP/Food Stamps:** The federal agency (USDA) that administers the SNAP program has sufficient resources to fund SNAP benefits through February 2019. USDA, in cooperation with CT Department of Social Services, will distribute the full SNAP allotment for February on or before January 20th to CT residents receiving benefits. There's no need for SNAP enrollees to access and 'spend' their February SNAP allocation early (Rumor not true, benefits do not have to be used by February 1st). The benefits will be there in February, too. Families are encouraged to budget their early allotment of February SNAP benefits carefully as the benefits they receive early in January will have to last until the end of February.
- **Child Nutrition and WIC programs:** School meals, summer and afterschool programs, and WIC have sufficient funds to operate through February 2019.
- **Housing Choice Voucher Program/Section 8:** Funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Housing Choice Voucher/Section 8 program runs out in March 2019, at which point state and local public housing agencies will stop receiving money to operate, which would affect these benefits.
- **Federal courts:** Connecticut court funding is available until Jan. 18. After that, individual courts and judges will decide how to proceed.
- **Social Security:** Individuals will continue to receive their Social Security checks. However, new applications may experience a delay.
- **Medicare and Medicaid:** These health programs will continue to operate uninterrupted.

HOW TO HELP

United Way Worldwide, along with corporate partners, organized labor, the United Way network and nonprofits launched a coalition to help those impacted by the government shutdown, where individuals can donate to assist furloughed federal workers and others impacted by the ongoing government shutdown. For more details and how to help, click the following link: United Way Worldwide: <https://www.unitedway.org/the-latest/press/united-way-launches-coalition-to-help-those-impacted-by-government-shutdown>.



Individuals interested in helping and getting involved can also reach out to their local United Way. To find your local United Way, visit <https://www.ctunitedway.org/ctuways/>. United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut's *Neighbors in Need* fund will help affected government employees. Donations to the fund can be made here: <https://app.mobilecause.com/form/x-2T8w>.

Food pantries and other community-based organizations that are helping affected employees also need donated items. For a list of programs that accept food donations, visit www.211ct.org and search the keyword ? '**Food Donation Programs**' for your zip code or town.

PREPARED BY: 211/tb

CONTENT LAST REVIEWED: January2019