

Mortgage forbearance during COVID-19: What to know and what to do

Many homeowners are struggling to make mortgage payments as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Here is information you can use, about your options and your rights.

If you are facing money struggles, you are not alone

Help is available. The majority of homeowners are eligible for forbearance for a coronavirus-related financial hardship. Forbearance is when your mortgage servicer or lender allows you to pause or reduce your mortgage payments for a limited time while you regain your financial footing.

Forbearance is not automatic. You must request it from your mortgage servicer. This might seem like a big step to take, but taking action now can help you pause your payments and avoid foreclosure.

Forbearance ends with a payment plan, not a lump-sum payment

Homeowners who receive COVID-19 hardship forbearance are not required to repay their paused payments in a lump sum once the forbearance period ends. You can talk with your mortgage servicer, or start with a HUD-certified housing counselor, to discuss a repayment plan that works for your situation.

Most servicers must offer forbearance, and the others can provide options

COVID-19 hardship forbearance applies to all federally-backed and federally-sponsored mortgages, which includes HUD/FHA, VA, USDA, Fannie Mae, and Freddie Mac mortgage loans. This includes most mortgages. Homeowners with federally-backed loans have the right to ask for and receive a forbearance period for up to 180 days—which means you can pause or reduce your mortgage payments for up to six months. Additionally, you can request an extension of forbearance for up to 180 additional days, for a total of 360 days.

The federal housing agencies are working together during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide additional forbearance extensions—one or two additional three-month extensions. The extensions are available only if you requested initial forbearance by a specified deadline during the pandemic. So don't delay getting started with your forbearance request, and when you talk with your loan servicer, ask about your options and the deadlines.

Other mortgages may also provide similar forbearance options. If you are struggling with payments, servicers are generally required to discuss relief options with you, whether or not your loan is federally insured or backed.

Getting through to your servicer could be easier than you think

In the early days of the pandemic, homeowners reported trouble getting through to servicers by telephone. Now, many mortgage servicers have increased their capacity to respond to customers. Patience is still encouraged, and you may be able to reach your servicer by telephone or online. Some servicers may have websites for you to understand your options and request forbearance.

Mortgage servicers generally cannot ask for proof of hardship

You can ask for forbearance and tell your servicer that you are going through a financial hardship because of the pandemic. If you have a federally backed loan, the mortgage servicer is not permitted to ask you for proof of hardship.

You do not need to pay for help with forbearance options

HUD-approved housing counseling agencies provide their services at no cost to borrowers requesting forbearance. You should steer clear of scams—especially offers to help that come with upfront fees—whether the offer is for your mortgage or for other services, like assistance with unemployment benefits or credit repair.

No need to wait—ask for help now

For mortgages backed by some government agencies, there are deadlines to request initial forbearance. Because the deadlines have changed several times, call your servicer immediately to take advantage of your right to start forbearance on your mortgage.

If you have already requested forbearance and need an extension, it's best to make the request as soon as possible.

Because forbearance deadlines and available help can change, check consumerfinance.gov/coronavirus/mortgage-and-housing-assistance for up-to-date information.

HUD-approved housing counseling agencies

Visit consumerfinance.gov/find-a-housing-counselor or call the CFPB at (855) 411-CFPB (2372) to find a housing counselor at no cost to you.

Submit a complaint

Have an issue with a financial product or service? We'll forward your complaint to the company and work to get you a response—generally within 15 days.

 Online
consumerfinance.gov/complaint

 By phone (180+ languages)
M-F, 8 a.m. - 8 p.m. ET
(855) 411-CFPB (2372)
(855) 729-CFPB (2372) TTY/TDD

 By mail
P.O. Box 2900
Clinton, IA 52733-2900

 By fax
(855) 237-2392