



COVID-19: Selected Financial and Social Service Resources for Older Americans

Updated March 10, 2021

This Insight provides links to selected financial and social service resources for older Americans who may have suffered economic distress due to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

Social Security

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Social Security Administration (SSA) is [continuing to pay benefits](#). Although Social Security offices are [closed for walk-in service](#), many services are available [online](#). Additional guidance appears on [SSA's Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\)](#) and [SSA's blog](#).

Individuals may also consult

- SSA (Workers): [Your Options: Working, Applying for Retirement, or Both?](#);
- SSA (Workers): [Benefits Planner, Retirement](#);
- CRS Report R44948, *Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI): Eligibility, Benefits, and Financing*; and
- CRS Report R44670, *The Social Security Retirement Age*.

Retirement Income

The CARES Act allowed for penalty-free coronavirus-related distributions (CRDs) from certain retirement accounts in 2020 and suspended required minimum distributions for 2020, among other provisions. The deadline to take a CRD was December 30, 2020; however, individuals with employer-sponsored plans may be able to take a hardship distribution or loan (if the plan permits).

Participants in the federal Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) can find revisions to plan operations at the TSP's [COVID-19: Latest Information](#). Information is also available from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) at [Coronavirus-related relief for retirement plans and IRAs questions and answers](#).

Other resources include

Congressional Research Service

<https://crsreports.congress.gov>

IN11410

- Department of Labor, Employee Benefits Security Administration: [COVID-19 FAQs for Participants and Beneficiaries](#) (April 28, 2020);
- TSP: [Changes to Required Minimum Distribution](#) (for 2020);
- TSP: [COVID-19 Withdrawals and Repayments](#);
- CRS In Focus IF11482, *Retirement and Pension Provisions in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act)*;
- CRS Insight IN11349, *The CARES Act and Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs): Options for Certain Individuals*;
- CRS Insight IN11441, *Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Guidance for Coronavirus-Related Distributions, Plan Loans, and Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) Rollovers*; and
- CRS In Focus IF11369, *Early Withdrawals from Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) and 401(k) Plans*.

Unemployment Compensation

Older Americans may face job loss due to COVID-19. To cushion lost wages, older workers may be eligible for [Unemployment Compensation \(UC\)](#), a joint federal-state program. Additionally, unemployed workers, including self-employed or contract workers, may be eligible for [expanded temporary UC benefits](#) authorized by the CARES Act. To receive benefits, individuals apply through the [UC office](#) in the state where they worked.

UC benefits may be affected by other sources of income. According to CRS Report R46617, *Potential Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Income Security of Older Americans*:

[Federal law requires](#) that states reduce an individual’s weekly UC benefit “[by the amount](#), allocated weekly, of any governmental or other pension, retirement or retired pay, annuity, or any other similar periodic payment which is based on the previous work of such individual.” States may reduce UC benefits on less than a full offset basis by considering any employee contributions to the retirement plan. But states may not reduce UC benefits based on any [rollover distributions from pension plans](#). In addition, states may reduce the UC benefits of workers receiving [Social Security or SSDI payments](#).

For more information, see

- DOL: Guidance, [UI Relief During COVID-19](#);
- SSA: FAQ, [Will unemployment benefits affect my Social Security benefits?](#);
- CRS Report R46687, *Current Status of Unemployment Insurance (UI) Benefits: Permanent-Law Programs and COVID-19 Pandemic Response*; and
- CRS In Focus IF11723, *Unemployment Insurance Provisions in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Division N, Title II, Subtitle A, the Continued Assistance for Unemployed Workers Act of 2020)*.

Community-Based Long-Term Services and Supports and Social Services

The [Administration for Community Living \(ACL\)](#) administers grants to states to support a range of community-based [long-term services and supports \(LTSS\)](#) and other social services for individuals aged 60 and older, among other activities. These include supportive services (such as personal care, chore services, and rides to medical appointments), home-delivered nutrition (sometimes informally known as “Meals on Wheels”), and family caregiver support. The Older Americans Act (OAA) authorizes these

grant programs. Congress provided ACL supplemental funding under OAA in response to COVID-19. For more information, see CRS Report R43414, *Older Americans Act: Overview and Funding*.

Constituents interested in OAA services should contact their local Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), which oversee the delivery of most OAA services and other community-based LTSS to older individuals. Constituents can find their AAAs through the Eldercare Locator, <https://eldercare.acl.gov>, 1-800-677-1116. The Eldercare Locator is an information and referral service that connects older persons and caregivers with local resources, benefits, and services, including OAA programs. For more resources to connect constituents to LTSS, see CRS In Focus IF11694, *Connecting Older Adults and Individuals with Disabilities to Health Services: Resources for Constituents*.

ACL also funds resource centers that assist with benefits and financial issues.

- [Benefits Check-Up](#) (1-800-794-6559) helps older persons identify benefits for which they may be eligible.
- [Benefits Enrollment Centers](#) help Medicare beneficiaries identify and apply for other programs for which they may be eligible, including Medicaid.
- [National Pension Assistance Resource Center](#) helps constituents with pension-related questions and problems.
- [National Resource Center on Women and Retirement](#) produces consumer guides and fact sheets on retirement planning and other financial topics.
- [Aging and Disability Resource Centers](#) provide personalized assistance with planning for and accessing LTSS.

Economic Impact Payments

Older Americans may benefit from direct payments authorized by the CARES Act and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021. These payments, referred to as economic impact payments by the IRS, or “stimulus payments” in some media reports, are described in CRS Insight IN11576, *COVID-19 and Direct Payments to Individuals: Comparison of the Second Round of “Stimulus Checks” in P.L. 116-260 to the First Round in the CARES Act (P.L. 116-136)* and IRS’s [“Recovery Rebate Credits and Economic Impact Payments.”](#)

Frauds and Scams

Several federal agencies have provided guidance relevant for older Americans who may be targeted by scams. SSA has compiled information on how to “Be Aware of Fraud and Scams” (see [menu](#)). The ACL has gathered information on “Protecting Personal Finances” on its [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#) web page. In addition, CRS Insight IN11359, *COVID-19: Financial Relief and Assistance Resources for Consumers* includes a “Frauds and Scams” section.

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