

SUGGESTED CONTACTS FOR HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY RESIDENTS NEEDING SOCIAL SERVICES

This is not an official communication from the Hillsborough County government. We compiled it as the result of several communications. These programs are being expanded so information changes, sometimes daily. Check their contacts for the most up-to-date information.

The good news is that the County, State, and Federal governments are increasing their funding to support services for people who are in need for services as the result of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The less than good news is that ways to access these services can be cumbersome and the systems are being overwhelmed.

General categories of assistance are social services assistance (such as rent, electric, and water bill assistance), physical health care coverage, and mental health assistance. One of challenges is that there is no “one stop shop” or one application process to address multiple needs. In seeking assistance, one may be required to enroll or register through multiple agencies as they are funded by different sources.

So first, below are ways to get overall guidance and assistance in accessing services and then more detail about the services available. The locations for overall guidance and assistance can help determine what services are needed,

Access for Residents of Hillsborough County:

- For overall guidance on what services are available and how you can find if you are eligible and enroll:
 - Call Crisis Center’s 2-1-1 line or visit www.211atyourfingertips.org (then follow directions to get information about a specific county). For people without children, this may be the best source of information. 2-1-1 is a 24/7 resource for residents of major Florida counties, not just Hillsborough. Individual Counties have different groups answering the 211 dial. Intervention Specialists provide immediate and confidential short-term crisis intervention, and information & referral to over 3,000 human services available in Hillsborough County, including resources for: *basic needs for food, rent, clothing, shelter and utilities, relationship counseling, senior services, health and substance abuse issues, depression and suicide, teenage issues, parenting help, disaster assistance, legal affairs and financial support*. They also have a quick resource guide available on: <https://crisiscenter.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/ResourceGuide2018-AJH-KG.pdf>
 - The Children’s Board of Hillsborough County Family Resource Center provides information, referrals, resources, and may assist with concrete supports for families with children. There are multiple centers throughout the County. Check for the nearest one by using: <https://www.familysupporthc.org/> .

- The Healthy Start Coalition of Hillsborough maintains a comprehensive list of resources for all residents and this list is updated daily and available on their website. It can be accessed by going to www.healthystartcoalition.org and then at the bottom of the page clicking the “Resources for Families during Coronavirus” link.
- The Family Healthcare Foundation provides free application assistance by phone and virtually for multiple options for health care coverage including Florida Kidcare, Florida Medicaid, Health Insurance Marketplace, and Hillsborough County Health Care Plan for low-income residents who do not have access to other insurance. They can be reached by calling 813-995-7005.
- Hillsborough County government has a site to help businesses find resources for information about and links to local, state, and federal resources to respond to their Covid-19 challenges. The site is: <https://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/en/residents/public-safety/emergency-management/stay-safe/business-and-employment-help>
- Hillsborough County Funded Resources:
 - Neighborhood Resource Centers assist low income residents with financial assistance (rent, utilities) at several centers throughout the County. However, The Board of County Commissioners recently approved additional funds to help people who would not otherwise be eligible due to COVID-19. Starting on Monday, April 27, there will be a hotline to call to find out if eligible for assistance from the additional funds and to apply. That number will be 813-274-3710. www.hillsboroughcounty.org/en/residents/social-services/financial-assistance
 - The Hillsborough County Health Care Program is a health care program for low income adult residents of Hillsborough County who are not eligible for Medicaid. They are currently temporarily opening it for residents who need services due to financial problems from the pandemic. Their phone in line is: 813-272-5900. In addition, they are currently working on getting additional services for Covid-19 testing.
 - Services for the eligible elderly, such as delivered meals, are available. The intake telephone number is: 813-272-5242 or 813-272-5160.
- State of Florida: assistance such as food stamps, go to: www.myflfamilies.com/covid19 . In most cases, the State has waived having to reapply for SNAP benefits and Medicaid during this crisis. New enrollments can be done online, however there are currently no face-to-face services being provided. In addition, they have a phone information line: 866-762-2237.
- Food and meal assistance: There is also food assistance available locally through Feeding America Tampa Bay (go to their website for information: www.feedingtampabay.com) Feeding Tampa Bay covers the Tampa Bay area, so this is a resource for more than just Hillsborough. Hillsborough County School District also has done an excellent job in continuing to provide meals to families

with school age children. *For a more extensive list, see the Healthy Start resources list mentioned above.*

Why is the System So Difficult to Access?

For Hillsborough County residents, the County currently has in place programs to assist people with financial need in accessing social services and health care. The current Covid-19 crisis has the County government expanding assistance eligibility for services such as food, rent, electric and water bills, and health care – but it is a work in progress. Therefore, information changes daily.

In general, the high demand will often result in longer than typical waits. Like many program roll-outs, there might even be start-up glitches. Be patient but persistent.

Assistance programs are from the US government, the State of Florida, and local government and each tend to require people to directly sign up with them. Each has their own systems and sign up requirement and each keep their private information protected.

Therefore, a person can feel overwhelmed. The good news is that typically while signing up for one assistance program, they can help you on how to access other programs (even if they cannot actually sign one up).