

COVID-19 is disrupting our safety and wellbeing and if you're worried about your finances, you are Not Alone! Fostering Advocates Arizona (FAAZ) is dedicated to working with state and community partners to provide accessible information for young people, especially those aging out of foster care, during this crisis. In times of adversity, we take action!

## Evaluate Your Expenses

The best way to tackle your finances is to create a budget and stick to it. If you are concerned about not having enough money to pay your bills, it is time to look for ways to cut expenses.

- Start by making a **[list of your monthly expenses](#)**. Include all the necessities like rent, utilities, transportation, insurance, loan payments, food and laundry. Review your bank statements and transaction history to determine how much more you are spending on entertainment, subscriptions, etc.
- Next, **assess your income**. Add up all the money you receive in a month from things like paychecks, independent living subsidy, government assistance disability payments, death benefits etc.
- If your monthly income is less than your monthly expenses it is time to **[evaluate your expenses](#)**. Consider cooking at home instead of eating out, canceling unnecessary subscriptions (Netflix, Amazon Prime, etc.), carpooling with a friend, picking up a local food box, etc.

## Having Trouble Paying Your Bills?

Not being able to pay your bills and being in debt is stressful. Coming up with a plan to pay what you owe, and communicating with those you owe money to, are the keys to protecting your credit, relationships and opportunities.

- Once you've created your budget, contact the companies or people you owe money to and **ask about alternative payment arrangements**. You may be able to pay less per month or wait to pay at a later time with little to no penalty.
- If you have **student loans**, there is good news. Since COVID-19, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) has suspended loan payments, stopped collections on defaulted loans, and set interest rates to 0% for all ED-held federal student loans until December 31, 2020. For updates and information check out [the Office of Federal Student Aid](#).
- If you **lost your job**, or your income has been cut to less than \$240 per week as a result of COVID-19, you may be eligible for Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits. To learn more and apply, go to the [Arizona Department of Economic Security](#).
- Apply for **assistance programs** such as Childcare Assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or food stamps), Utility Assistance, etc. You can check your eligibility across 40 different cash, medical, and nutrition assistance programs at [ArizonaSelfHelp.org](#)
- Seek support through the **Young Adult Program**. The Department of Child Safety (DCS) provides case management and financial support for young people age 18 up to 21, who were in foster care at age 16 or older. For more information on eligibility and how to apply, check out the [Transitional Independent living Program \(TILP\)](#)



## Concerned About Your Credit?

Maintaining good credit matters. **A credit report** is a detailed record of your borrowing history that shows your accounts, if you owe anything in collections, and if your past payments have been made on time. **A credit score** is a value between 300 and 850, with a higher score being better. Your score is based on several factors including whether you pay your bills on time, the number of accounts you have, length of credit history, etc.

It can take a long time to build new credit or bring up a low score, so it is important to start thinking about this. **Your credit can affect you in many ways you may not expect**, such as home or car loan interest rates, apartment rental applications, deposits when starting electricity or internet service, and even your job search.

It is important to check your credit report to **catch signs of identity theft and correct errors**. Federal law allows you to get a free copy of your credit report every 12 months from each of the three major consumer reporting companies (Equifax, Experian and TransUnion). During these times of COVID-19, the consumer reporting companies are offering free weekly online reports through April 2021. Request your reports at [AnnualCreditReport.com](https://AnnualCreditReport.com)

## Figuring Out Your Financial Future

It's easy to get freaked out by finances but fortunately there are great tools to help you get started and stay on track toward your goals. Here are a couple of our favorites:

- The [Consumer Financial Protection Bureau](#) has a lot of easy to read information about credit, how to avoid scams and excellent [tools to help pay bills](#).
- Check out the [Your Money, Your Goals](#) toolkit.
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation has a [Keys to Your Financial Future](#) guide created by experts and young adults who shared what they wished they had known about personal finances.

**Remember that you are not alone.**

**Stay connected.**



**Access all the links in this Fast Facts sheet at:**  
[https://linktr.ee/\\_FAAZ](https://linktr.ee/_FAAZ)

