

Resources While on Reduced or Unpaid Status

Are you facing a period of reduced or unpaid time off from flying?

The announcement of reduced flying schedules and the subsequent need for leaves of absence and furloughs have many Flight Attendants feeling anxious and concerned. Local Unemployment offices are facing an unprecedented demand for information and assistance. Many states are revising their requirements to make it easier for workers to apply online.

AFA contracts provide answers on pay protections, furlough mitigation, and furlough protections. Remember to review your contract for these items and check updates from AFA at your airline for the latest news on any supplemental agreements or procedures in place as a result of current discussions with airline management. Most of our management teams have pledged not to contest unemployment benefits if you are taking a voluntary Leave of Absence.

Additional benefits for Flight Attendants can be found in the recently passed CARES Act. Because of your many calls and letters to Congress and through AFA's advocacy on Capitol Hill interacting directly with lawmakers, we were able to secure financial relief for individual workers and airlines in a way that promotes direct support of continued paychecks, healthcare, and financial viability of the airlines. All of this was made law while placing restrictions on stock buybacks, dividends, executive bonuses and using funds in any way to undermine worker rights.

The following information has been compiled from AFA EAP and Legal departments., United Way, the AFL-CIO and Union Plus Benefits. Links to several useful flyers are contained within this newsletter which provide additional information.

AFA EAP

We know this is a stressful time for everyone. AFA's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is also available to help you deal with the emotional toll the events of this time are taking. The AFA EAP is a resource for resolving problems through an international network of over 200 professionally-trained, peer support volunteer Flight Attendants overseen by mental health professionals. AFA EAP assists members in accessing appropriate medical help around mental health issues involving family crises, work-related trauma and chemical imbalance, as well as conflict resolution services and response to critical incidents. EAP is totally confidential. [If you would like to contact AFA EAP please call: 1-800-424-2406](tel:1-800-424-2406)

We hope these resources will assist you with this difficult transition. We encourage you to reach out to these experts as soon as possible.

AFL-CIO: State Specific Resources

As a member union in the AFL-CIO we are pleased to direct you to a useful landing page that will allow you to search for resources by state including:

- Resources and benefits to help replace lost wages
- Eligibility for emergency paid leave
- Housing and food assistance programs
- Health insurance and public health services and guidance

<https://aflcio.org/covid-19/state-resources>

Unemployment Benefits

People who take a leave, experience a reduction in hours, lose their job or become furloughed through no fault of their own may be eligible to receive unemployment. Eligibility requirements, statutory wait periods and length of time to collect benefits differ by state. However, the scale and scope of these benefits will vary depending on the state where you are based. It is strongly recommended that you review the unemployment filing requirements and determine if your personal circumstances might allow you the choice of filing with your home state or your domicile state. An important piece of any unemployment filing will be the leave or furlough paperwork you receive from your airline. If the language contains verbiage that the leave or furlough is COVID related, this will be key to securing benefits. Additionally, most airlines have taken the position they will not contest unemployment filings that are COVID related. Make sure you reference COVID as the reason for your leave when filing your unemployment claim.

As part of the COVID-19 Relief Act enacted last week, Congress increased by \$600 the amount of weekly Unemployment Insurance (UI) payments that laid off and furloughed workers can receive through July 31, 2020. If you're eligible for at least \$1 of state unemployment compensation, you get the full \$600, according to the Labor Department. The CARES Act also extends the number of weeks of eligibility for long term unemployed people by 13 weeks to the current state term (normally 26 weeks) to a maximum of 39 weeks, temporarily eliminates work-search requirements and minimum work history (under normal rules, only those who have been employed for a year are eligible), and expands the categories of eligible workers.

Online Unemployment Information and Resources:

- For more information about the changes the CARES Act made to the unemployment insurance, we recommend [this guide](#) put together by our friends at the National Employment Law Project.

- Our AFA website contains up to date information, compiled by the legal department, regarding your questions and answers about unemployment: https://www.afacwa.org/increased_unemployment_covid19

Online Government Resources for Help

Information about unemployment insurance and sources of other governmental assistance programs can be found here:

- www.usa.gov/unemployment
- www.usa.gov/benefits
- www.benefits.gov/

United Way

The United Way is a national partner of the AFL-CIO. They support 2-1-1, a national helpline that assists individuals in identifying services like food finding, bill paying, and other essential services locally and in your community. Get connected now to explore all of the services available by calling 2-1-1 from any phone or visit by visiting www.211.org/.

United Way has also created this helpful flyer to guide you through the process for [When the Paycheck Stops \(Spanish Version\)](#).

UnionPlus

Union Plus is another partner of the AFL-CIO. It is a consumer benefits program for union members and offers specific programs to assist members in times of financial hardship. Visit these websites for additional information:

- [Union Plus has partnered with Freedom Debt Relief](#) to offer a debt settlement program designed to help union members get out of debt as quickly as possible, for one low monthly program payment.
- [Access Money Management International](#), which works with UnionPlus to provide budgeting and credit counseling assistance to union members.
- Participants in the Union Plus Mortgage, Credit Card, Personal Loan, or supplemental insurance programs may be eligible for additional hardship assistance. Visit Union Plus Hardship Help for eligibility requirements at

<https://www.unionplus.org/hardship-help/union-plus-hardship-help-benefits>

Health Care Coverage:

Some MECs have been successful in negotiating continued company paid health care coverage for those taking voluntary leaves or furloughs. For those whose current company health insurance will only continue with cobra election, your airline management should provide you with the COBRA amounts for your specific coverage.

- COBRA rates will vary by individual coverage and family coverage. You may be able to purchase more affordable coverage through the ACA marketplace at <https://www.healthcare.gov/>.
- Evaluate whether your children can receive health coverage under the Federal Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). This program provides no-cost or low-cost health coverage for eligible children. Even if your child has been turned down in the past or you don't know if they qualify, you may be able to get health coverage now. Go to insurekidsnow.gov or call 1-877-KIDS-NOW (1-877-543-7669) to talk to someone.

Retirement Planning and Preparedness

Some airlines are offering Flight Attendants options such as a bridge to retirement or an early out.

It is recommended you review your contract's provisions for retirement and/or 401(k) provisions. Most administrators of these plans have online tools to assist you with retirement planning and preparedness.

Moreover, most financial advisors and/or investment companies —Fidelity, Charles Swaab etc (as well as Credit Unions) provide seminars for retirement preparation.

Loss of Flying

TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR FINANCES NOW

From Your AFA EAP

Given the cutbacks in flying, it is prudent for all flight attendants to assess their personal financial positions in anticipation of income reductions. While every Flight Attendant's situation will vary, below are some general considerations that can help you begin strategizing how best to weather the financial impact of flying cutbacks on your household.

Assess your Financial Status.

- Prepare a household budget and cut any non-essential items.
- Prepare a list of all creditors and a contact person. Make minimum payments.
- Place your money in a bank in which you have no debt.
- Attempt to secure a loan early, so you will have a cash flow.
- Assess your tax situation. You may be owed a refund or need to file an extension.
- Be proactive. Assess your credit card debt. Look into a temporary reduction or abatement in payments.

Contact Your Creditors.

You must communicate with your creditors before any payments become delinquent, and the sooner the better. You can negotiate a lower repayment schedule before you run out of money. Be professional, but assertive. Creditors are easier to work with if they know ahead of time that there's a problem. Also, it shows 'good faith' that you are concerned about your debts and intend to pay.

The goal is to make the amount of money you've saved last as long as possible. Pay what you can on a regular basis, even if it is less than expected. Partial payments may keep collection agents away. Follow-up all telephone conversations with a letter and keep documentation. Even in the worst-case scenario, it takes a long time for collections, repossessions and evictions to occur. Contact credit counselors who can help you sort out your financial affairs. Be sure to remember to contact the creditors that are automatically payroll deducted.

Even if you can't pay creditors the amount they want, make your best effort to pay something regularly. This holds arrears as low as possible and lets the creditor know that you are doing all you can. Partial payment may keep your account from being turned over to a collection agency.

Put your payments in order of importance: this will help you pay first things first when money is short. Generally, your most important payment will be the mortgage or rent payment, followed by utilities, health insurance and car payments.

And after the initial contact, it's important that you keep in contact with creditors – every two weeks or so. This reassures the creditor, shows a responsible attitude toward your obligation and may keep the creditor from 'hounding' you.

Prepare a household budget.

A budget helps you see where you spend your money and where you can save. Your budgeted expenses should include:

- Fixed expenses, including: mortgage, rent, taxes, insurance, loans, installment payments, credit card payments and any other monthly payments.
- Monthly expenses, including: food, gas, repairs, dues, recreation, prescriptions.
- Future expenses, including: income/property tax and any other outstanding debts.

Your *budgeted income* should include:

- Any remaining income · State disability insurance benefits
- Savings · Workers' compensation checks
- Any furlough pay · Social Security
- Unemployment compensation · Other pension funds

Your *assets* may include:

- Cash value of insurance policies · Equity in your home
- Prepaid burial or funeral policy · Resale value of vehicles (including boats and snowmobiles)

Now you are ready to adjust your expenses, negotiate with creditors and use assets in the most effective way possible.

**Remember, to contact AFA's Employee Assistance Program,
call toll free: 1-800-424-2406**

ASSOCIATION OF FLIGHT ATTENDANTS-CWA, AFL-CIO