



Economic Stimulus Payments: Resources for Trafficking Survivors and Other Underserved Communities

Background

Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act on March 27, 2020, which provides help to individuals, families, and businesses impacted by Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has started releasing economic impact payments through direct deposit to those whose banking information is on file. However, some individuals — including survivors of human trafficking — may experience difficulties or delays in receiving their payments if:

- They did not file taxes in 2018 or 2019;
- They have outdated or no banking information on their most recently filed tax returns; or
- They do not have a bank account.

How Individuals Can Receive Payments

Those seeking payments may check the status of their economic impact payment or provide additional information needed to receive the payment [on the IRS website](#).

Non-filers: Non-filers may enter their banking information [on the IRS website](#) to receive their payment via direct deposit, or use their [Cash App](#) routing and account numbers to receive their payment in their Cash App balance.

Bank Accounts

25% of U.S. households are unbanked or underbanked according to a 2017 [survey](#) by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC). Of the unbanked households, half cited “not having enough money to keep in an account” as a reason for not having a checking or savings account, and 14% cited “ID, credit, or former bank account problems” as a reason.

In 2018, the Polaris Project published [On-Ramps, Intersections, and Exit Routes: A Roadmap for Systems and Industries to Prevent and Disrupt Human Trafficking](#), which highlighted the importance of having access to a bank account.

A victim’s access to a bank account isn’t just key in the stage where a victim is planning to leave. Access to a simple checking account can be the first step in rebuilding a survivor’s line of credit and therefore his or her road to economic stability.

Survivors of human trafficking may lack access to a checking or savings account if the trafficker had access to their account or if fraud or other financial crimes were committed using their accounts. The [Survivor Inclusion Initiative](#) works to re-integrate survivors into the financial system by providing basic financial services and products through participating banks and service organizations:

Banks

- Bank of America
- Bank of the West
- Barclays
- BMO Financial Group
- Citi
- Erste Group Bank AG
- HSBC
- LCNB National Bank
- Scotiabank
- Truist Bank
- U.S. Bank
- Wells Fargo

Service Organizations

- Catholic Charities of Louisville
- Colorado Organization for Victim Assistance
- Hope for Justice
- Jasmine Road (South Carolina)
- Polaris Project
- The Salvation Army

Survivors of trafficking and other unbanked communities can open safe and affordable banking accounts that meet the [Bank On National Account Standards](#), which include a minimum opening deposit or account balance of \$25 or less, free direct deposit, and monthly maintenance fees of \$10 or less. The following accounts meet the Bank On standards:

- [Bank of America Advantage SafeBalance Banking Account](#)
- [Truist \(formerly BB&T\) MoneyAccount](#)
- [Chase Secure Banking Account](#)
- [Citi Access Account](#)
- [Dollar Bank No Overdraft Checking Account](#)
- [First Commonwealth Bank SmartPay Card Personal Checking Account](#)
- [KeyBank Hassle-Free Account](#)
- [Northwest Bank Compass Digital Account](#)
- [U.S. Bank Safe Debit Account](#)
- [Wells Fargo EasyPay Card](#)

Potential Scams

On April 2, 2020, the IRS issued a warning about COVID-19-related scams, including phone, text, email, and social media schemes related to economic impact payments. [According to the IRS](#), scammers may:

- Emphasize the words "Stimulus Check" or "Stimulus Payment." The official term is economic impact payment.
- Ask the taxpayer to sign over their economic impact payment check to them.

- Ask by phone, email, text or social media for verification of personal and/or banking information saying that the information is needed to receive or speed up their economic impact payment.
- Suggest that they can get a tax refund or economic impact payment faster by working on the taxpayer's behalf. This scam could be conducted by social media or even in person.
- Mail the taxpayer a bogus check, perhaps in an odd amount, then tell the taxpayer to call a number or verify information online in order to cash it.

Visit [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov) for the most up-to-date information.

References

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