**Financial Resources Template**



Even if you are going to represent yourself, the legal process can be expensive. You may need to pay for filing fees, a parenting evaluation, and other case-related expenses. You may be able to defer, reduce, or waive fees based on your financial situation. Even if that is the case, the cost of childcare, transportation, parking, taking time off from work, etc., may mean you will need to seek out financial assistance.

Below we have included information about reducing your expenses, obtaining financial assistance, and relevant legal protections for survivors. This is just a small sampling of available resources. For more information, we recommend contacting a domestic violence advocate as well as calling insert the number for your community's info and referral line, if one exists information and referral line. Even if you have never asked for financial assistance before, now may be the time to utilize available resources.

**Qualifying for Assistance**

Eligibility and income requirements for the resources listed in this handout vary widely. Some providers may not need any documentation from you while others will need proof of your identity and/or your income or address.

*Many survivors find it difficult to reach out for financial assistance. It can be exhausting or humbling to seek out this type of help. Asking for help when you need it is a sign of strength. When it feels hard, know that doing it anyhow is courageous and admirable. You deserve support. You deserve to have a safe and healthy life.*

- A domestic violence advocate

It can be helpful to gather this information in case you need it to qualify for assistance:

* Photo ID
* Your DSHS award letter, if applicable
* Documentation showing your income, if you do not have a DSHS award letter
* A piece of mail addressed to you to prove your address
* Your most recent bill, if asking for utility assistance
* Your letter from the school district’s nutrition services showing your children qualify for free or reduced lunches, if applicable

**Court Fee Waivers**

If you are unable to afford the court fees and related costs, you may request that the court waive them based on your inability to pay. Insert information about eligibility for fee waivers in your jurisdiction and how to request a fee waiver.

For fee waiver forms and instructions, seeInsert a link to local resources for this.

**Ordering the Other Party to Pay Your Attorney’s Fees**

You can ask the court to order the other party to pay for your attorney’s fees in a dissolution (divorce) or parenting plan (custody case). For more information see insert resource for this, if one exists in your community .

**Financial Assistance**

You can learn about a variety of assistance programs and their eligibility requirements by visiting insert financial assistance website here. The benefits for which you can apply online include Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Refugee Cash Assistance, disability assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or Basic Food), Medicare, and childcare subsidies. Your eligibility is based on the number of people in your household, not on your marital status.

**Financial Empowerment**

Insert description of and links to financial empowerment resources here.

**Clothing**

If you do not have the clothing you need to feel confident and appropriately dressed for court, a domestic violence program may be able to provide you with vouchers to obtain free clothing. Ask your domestic violence advocate for more information.

**Computer / Internet**

It can be difficult to prepare for family law matters without a computer and internet access. While public libraries are a great resource for using a computer and the internet, you may be able to qualify for your own inexpensive computer via the nonprofit organization InterConnection. Learn more at [www.interconnection.org](http://www.interconnection.org).

**Faith Organizations / Clergy / Religious Leaders**

Many faith organizations/clergy/religious leaders have access to discretionary or charitable funds. Sometimes they are able to assist survivors with one-time needs, particularly when the needs relate to safety. You do not necessarily have to belong to a congregation or have particular beliefs to ask for this type of assistance.

**Food**

Many food assistance programs do not have financial eligibility requirements, but will provide food (and sometimes other items as well) to anyone in need. Insert food-related resource info here. Parenting evaluators will want to know that your children are receiving adequate nourishment.

**Healthcare**

You may qualify for free or low cost health insurance. To learn more visit insert local healthcare website here.

**Home Repairs**

If you own your home and need to make repairs to make it a better, safer environment for you and your children, Rebuilding Together may be able to help you. Check [www.rebuildingtogether.org](http://www.rebuildingtogether.org) to see if there is a local chapter near you.

**Housing**

If you need a confidential emergency domestic violence shelter, you can contact domestic violence agencies directly to be screened. If you are homeless, contact insert local resource here for assistance. If you need help to pay move-in costs, rent, or your mortgage, or if you face barriers to renting (for example, a poor credit history), contact insert housing assistance information here to learn about options to obtain assistance.

**Phones**

Having a phone is important for your safety, coordinating appointments, and accessing the information you need to manage your legal case. The Lifeline Program is a federal program that enables telecommunication companies to offer discounted services to people who have a low income. You can find out if you qualify and how to access this program at [www.lifelinesupport.org](http://www.lifelinesupport.org).

If discounted phone service is not something you can afford or if you do not qualify, you may be able to get a free cell phone with minutes via a domestic violence program. Verizon Wireless’ Hopeline Program supplies these phones. Ask your domestic violence advocate about availability.

**Transportation**

Insert descriptions and resource information for local transportation programs for people who have low incomes and people with disabilities.

**Utility Programs**

Depending on your income, you may be able to reduce your utility costs by applying for a utility assistance program. Learn about these programs at insert resource here. Funding for some of these programs runs out periodically, so if it is not available when you call, you may want to ask when it will be available again. Parenting evaluators will expect your home to have utility service.

**Legal Protections**

In insert name of your state, survivors of domestic violence have legal protections related to insert description of legal protections for survivors in your state (such as employment leave and rental protections) that are relevant to survivors' ability to manage economically during the family law process.

Inclusion in this handout is not an endorsement. We encourage you to evaluate if the services and the provider are the right fit for you and to verify that the information listed is still accurate. The content of this handout is current as of the time of publica­tion, but may have since changed. If you are not sure where to start, we recommend discussing your options with a domestic violence advocate.

This tool was adapted from the Domestic Violence and Mental Health

Collaboration Project’s Family Law Toolkit for Survivors.

The original version of this tool can be found at

<http://endgv.org/toolkits/family-law-toolkit-for-domestic-violence-survivors/>.



This project is supported by Grant No. 2014-FW-AX-K010 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.