

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Washtenaw County and United Way Partner to Launch Financial Navigation Program to Serve Residents During COVID-19

Washtenaw County, MI – The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting our community beyond its public health impact. Many workers have been laid off, furloughed, or lost their jobs due to the pandemic's impact on businesses, making it hard for them to make ends meet.

As a challenging time it is critical for residents to receive support navigating financial decisions and connecting to additional services and resources. In response, the Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development (OCED) is partnering with the United Way of Washtenaw County to launch the Financial Navigator program, funded by the national nonprofit organization, the Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund (CFE Fund).

Starting the week of July 27th, individuals will be able to connect with a financial navigator by calling 734-677-7202 or visiting uwwashtenaw.org/financialnavigation. Financial navigation sessions that will take 30 minutes over the phone, and will focus on helping clients:

- Maximize revenue, through accessing benefits, emergency assistance funds, and alternative income options
- Prioritize payments for daily living expenses, like housing, food, and insurance
- Managing debt, avoiding predatory scams, and budgeting for potential income disruptions
- Access other social services

Individuals will receive a follow up message that highlights key takeaways and next steps from their conversation.

“With so many residents struggling to make ends meet right now, we’re glad to be able to offer this program to help individuals prepare and respond to financial instability,” said Jason Morgan, Chair of the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners and Commissioner for District 8. “Having trained financial navigators able to provide free remote assistance to help residents access resources and make major financial decisions is extremely important.”

Washtenaw County is one of 50 local governments receiving support from the CFE fund to offer financial navigation services in response to COVID-19. These new and enhanced financial

navigation and counseling services come in the face of increasing individual and family need. Communities that already administer some sort of CFE-funded financial coaching have reported as much as a 40% increase in demand for these services.

“United Way is here to help and we are proud to be a partner in the Financial Navigation program with the County,” said Pam Smith, CEO of UWWC. “We know that our financial programs are helping people on a daily basis and that helps our community thrive.”

The **Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development (OCED)** is a government agency committed to stepping out of traditional government roles to drive long-term system changes that increase equity and opportunity for all residents. You can learn more by visiting washtenaw.org/oced or by following @washtenawOCED on Facebook and Twitter.

The **United Way of Washtenaw County** connects people, resources, and organizations together to create a thriving community for everyone. You can learn more about their work to fund social services and provide direct assistance to members of our community by visiting www.uwwashtenaw.org/ or by following @uwwashtenaw on Facebook and Twitter.