

Federal Stimulus Checks: Information For People Coming Out Of Prison

You've probably heard that the federal government is sending stimulus checks to people to help them during the COVID-19 crisis. While people in prison cannot get the check, you can get it once you are released. The stimulus payment is a tax year 2020 refund that is being paid in advance. You have until October 15, 2020 to file for the stimulus check.

Here's some information to help you get the money.

Can I get the \$1,200 stimulus payment?

- You can get the full payment if your income is less than \$75,000 (individual) or \$150,000 (married couples who file taxes jointly)
- You must have a social security number.
- If you have a family and file taxes jointly with your spouse, your spouse must also have a social security number, and so must your children, or everyone is ineligible for the payment.

What about payment for my children?

- If you claim your children as dependents on your taxes, then you can receive an additional \$500 payment for each child under age 17.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR THE STIMULUS PAYMENT?

If you didn't file a tax return in 2018 or 2019

- Apply by going online at irs.gov.
- Click on the box that says: Non-filers enter information here.
- You need to have (or create) an e-mail address to create an account on the site. Follow the instructions to complete the form.
- The check will be mailed to your bank account. If you don't have a bank account, the IRS will mail you a paper check to the address you provide.
- Some people are being mailed a prepaid debit card instead of a check. The debit card arrives in a plain envelop from "Money Network Cardholder Services". There is a letter stating that this is your "Economic Impact Payment" with the card attached. There are instructions about how to activate and use the card. The mailing can look like "junk mail", so be sure to open the envelope!
- If you don't have a permanent address, you can use the address of a trusted family member or friend. You can also find an organization that will allow you to use their address.

If you worked in 2019 and didn't file a tax return yet

If you worked during 2019, you can receive additional tax credits, including the earned income tax credit and for parents the child tax credit, in addition to the \$1,200 payment, but you need to file a full tax return. You can file a full tax return for 2019 through July 15, 2020. VITA sites listed below can help you. You have until July 15 to file a tax return for 2019.

If you filed a tax return in 2018 or 2019

The IRS will automatically process a stimulus check and send it (by direct deposit or paper check or the prepaid debit card) to you. The stimulus check will be mailed to the address on your 2018 or 2019 tax return

If I owe back taxes or child support or have other debts, will that be deducted from my stimulus check?

If you owe child support, that amount can be taken out from your stimulus check. Back taxes, SSI overpayments, student loans, and other debts will not be taken out. If your stimulus payment goes into a bank account, no government agency or individual you owe money to can touch it.

Will the money affect Medicaid coverage or SNAP or cash benefits like RI Works or SSI?

No.

What if I don't have access to the internet to file for the stimulus payment? Or if I need help filing for the payment?

You may be able to get help from a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site. Call to find out.

COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM

311 Doric Ave., Cranston
Receptionist: (401) 467-7013

COMMUNITY CARE ALLIANCE

800 Clinton St., Woonsocket
Josie Byrd: (401) 235-7187

CONNECTING FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

46 Hope St., Woonsocket
Zoya Tseylin: (401) 766-3384

FEDERAL HILL HOUSE

9 Courtland St., Providence
Allori Fernandes: (401) 421-4722

TRI-TOWN COMMUNITY ACTION

11 Emmanuel Street, North Providence
Mary: (401) 519-1915

You can also get assistance from Open Doors. Their resource center on 485 Plainfield Street in Providence is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. (401) 781-5808.