



The Employee Hardship Fund

Questions & Answers

What is the purpose of the Employee Hardship Fund?

The Employee Hardship Fund (Fund) provides limited financial assistance to employees who experience an unexpected personal emergency resulting in an immediate, severe and temporary financial hardship. An emergency is defined as an event which is unforeseen and beyond the employee's control and has imposed a temporary, sudden, non-recurring economic hardship. The employee is, as a result, unable to meet immediate, essential expenses and has exhausted other available avenues of assistance.

Why has the Employee Hardship Fund been established and where does the money come from?

The YNHHS Senior Management team has become increasingly concerned about the turbulence in the US economy and the impact it may be having on the financial well-being of many employees, especially when unexpected crises occur. YNHHS Senior Management has provided start-up funds to establish the Fund as a vehicle to provide financial assistance to employees during these temporary emergency situations. Employees may also donate to the Fund at any time (see below).

Who is eligible to receive assistance from the Fund?

- Active full time and part-time (24 or more hours/week) employees at Bridgeport, Greenwich, Yale-New Haven Hospitals, Northeast Medical Group, Grimes Center and Health Services Corporation.
- Employees currently on approved Leaves of Absence
- At least one year of continuous employment and in good standing

What emergencies may qualify for financial assistance under the Fund?

The Fund is not intended to provide ongoing financial support, but rather provide limited financial assistance when a sudden, unexpected emergency occurs. Examples of "emergency" situations which may be considered for financial assistance from the Fund include:

- Damage or loss of essential personal property due to fire, flood, hurricane or other natural disasters, theft, etc.
- Unexpected family crisis resulting in the inability to meet essential financial expenses obligations
- Safety issue requiring immediate action (e.g., domestic violence)

What types of situations would not meet the criteria for assistance from the Fund?

The Fund is not intended to provide support for employees who have financial difficulties that are ongoing and not triggered by a specific emergency event. Situations that would not meet the Fund criteria include falling behind on monthly expenses because of becoming overextended on credit card debt, living beyond one's means or missing rent or mortgage payments because of excessive discretionary spending. However, missing one month's rent or mortgage payments because a spouse unexpectedly lost his/her job due to no fault of their own, resulting in a sudden and significant loss of family income, might meet the criteria to receive an award.

What is the maximum award that an employee can receive from the Fund?

An eligible employee can receive one award within a 12-month period and the amount will vary dependent on the hardship. All awards are in the form of payments made directly to a vendor or creditor identified in the Application, not to the employee.

If both husband and wife are employees of Yale New Haven Health System and they experience an emergency that meets the criteria for an award from the Hardship Fund, can they both apply?

No. Only one application per household will be accepted.

How do I apply for a Fund award in the event of an unexpected emergency?

One call begins the process. If you experience an unexpected emergency that results in a severe, temporary financial hardship, contact HRConnect Monday through Friday from 7:30 am to 5:00 pm. You can also find information about the Fund, including the complete application, on the HRConnect Portal.

The application process is as follows:

1. Applicant completes the Fund application and submits to the Employee Hardship Fund Administrator at your local Human Resources office. Make sure to include all required documentation with the application, and label the envelope "PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL."
2. The Fund Administrator reviews the submitted application to ensure completeness, then assigns a case number to the application and removes all personal identifying information from the application prior to distributing the application to the Fund Review Committee.
3. If approved, the applicant is notified and a check is generated in the name of the vendor or creditor specified in the application.

How long does the process take once I submit a completed Application?

The general turnaround time for processing Fund applications is 5-7 business days from the time the completed application is received to the disbursement of award payment, if approved. If the application is not complete or all required financial documentation is not submitted with the application, it will delay the review process.

Who is on the Fund Review Committee?

Representation comes from the following departments:

- Human Resources
- Spiritual Care
- Social Work
- Compensation & Benefits
- Employee Relations

Is the program confidential?

Yes. Information provided by Fund applicants will be treated as confidential and shared only with individuals directly involved in the Fund administration, processing and tax reporting. All applications will be reviewed anonymously by the Review Committee; the names of all applicants will be removed from applications prior to distribution.

What if my application is not approved?

If the Fund Review Committee determines that the application does not meet the criteria set forth in the Fund Guidelines for "an immediate, severe and temporary" financial hardship, the decision of the Committee is final and the employee may not resubmit the application for the same emergency event.

What additional resources are available to help employees deal with financial and other personal issues?

Employee and Family Resources provides free, confidential counseling and support for all employees to help them deal with a wide variety of concerns, including financial issues, relationship and family issues, addictions, depression/anxiety, stress, workplace concerns, etc. The EFR can help employees and their families identify community resources that provide support for specific financial concerns, such as credit counseling, housing options and fuel assistance programs. The EFR can be reached at 877-275-6226.

An additional free community resource available is the United Way of Connecticut's 2-1-1 crisis telephone line. The 2-1-1 line is open 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Simply dial 2-1-1 or 1-800-203-1234 any time day or night. Additional information, tools and resources are available online at www.211ct.org

Employees are encouraged to seek assistance at the first sign of financial difficulties in order to avoid the situation developing into a full crisis. Additional resources focusing on financial well-being (e.g., basic budgeting and money management, paying off credit card debt, etc.) are posted on the HRConnect Portal under Wellness.

Is there any relationship between the Employee Hardship Fund and "Hardship Withdrawals" taken from my Tax Sheltered Annuity Plan (TSA) with Fidelity Investments?

No. The Employee Hardship Fund is a "Special Fund" established by YNHHS with no connection whatsoever to the TSA. The express purpose of the Employee Hardship Fund is to provide temporary financial assistance to employees in crisis situations in order to avoid the need for employees to take a loan or hardship withdrawal from their personal TSA account if at all possible. The TSA is a retirement plan with rules established by the Internal Revenue Service. There are specific criteria for requesting hardship withdrawals from a TSA and significant penalties apply. Therefore hardship withdrawals from your TSA should be considered a "last resort" for meeting immediate financial obligations.

Can employees contribute money to the Fund?

Yes. Employees can make donations to the Employee Hardship Fund through the Positive Difference link on Employee Self Service. All donations to the Hardship Fund are considered tax-deductible by the IRS.

Can I donate PTO directly into the Hardship Fund?

No. PTO cannot be converted as funds to the Hardship Fund.

The information included in this document is intended only to summarize the features of the Employee Hardship Fund. Yale New Haven Health System reserves the right to change or discontinue this program and related policies and procedures at any time, without notice.