

Facing Foreclosure? Start Here

A practical action guide for homeowners in any U.S. state

Start by Contacting Your Mortgage Servicer

If you are experiencing financial hardship or are having difficulty making your mortgage payment, contact your mortgage servicer as early as possible. Early communication is one of the most important steps you can take to understand your options and potentially avoid foreclosure. Do not wait until you are behind several payments. Your servicer can review your situation, explain available loss-mitigation programs, tell you what information or documents are needed, and identify important deadlines that may apply to your loan.

Depending on your loan type, the reason for your hardship, and where you are in the foreclosure process, assistance may include temporary or permanent options designed to help you remain in your home. FHA, VA, USDA, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and individual mortgage servicers have their own eligibility requirements and loss-mitigation processes. Some programs allow servicers to provide early assistance with limited documentation, while other options require a more complete financial review. Contacting your servicer early generally gives you more time to understand and pursue the options that may be available to you.

Loss-Mitigation Options You May Hear About

Your mortgage servicer will determine which programs you qualify for and the order in which they are considered.

Depending on your loan, options may include:

- **Forbearance:** Temporarily pauses or reduces your mortgage payments while you recover from a short-term financial hardship. Missed payments are not automatically forgiven and will need to be resolved through an available repayment or loss-mitigation option.
- **Repayment Plan:** Allows you to repay missed payments over time by adding an additional amount to your regular monthly mortgage payment.
- **Payment Deferral or Partial Claim:** Depending on the loan program, some or all of the past-due amount may be moved to a balance that is generally paid later, such as when the mortgage is paid off, the home is sold, or another triggering event occurs. This may allow the regular monthly principal-and-interest payment to remain unchanged.
- **Loan Modification:** Permanently changes one or more terms of the mortgage to resolve the delinquency and establish a new payment arrangement. Depending on the program, this may include extending the loan term, changing the interest rate, adding past-due amounts to the loan balance, or combining a modification with another form of assistance.
- **Other Home-Retention Options:** Certain loan programs may offer additional assistance based on the homeowner's circumstances and ability to make future payments.
- **Partial Claim:** A zero-interest, non-monthly-payment loan for eligible borrowers with a Federal Housing Administration (FHA)-insured mortgage. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) uses a Partial Claim to bring a delinquent FHA-insured property current or temporarily lower monthly payments.

The exact options available depend on who owns, guarantees, or insures your mortgage and your individual circumstances. Ask your servicer to identify your loan type, explain every option for which you can be evaluated, and tell you what you must submit and by what deadline.

Important: Applying for mortgage assistance does not automatically stop every foreclosure action in every situation. Federal and state protections may restrict certain foreclosure activity while a complete loss-mitigation application is being reviewed, depending on the timing and circumstances. If you have received legal papers or have a foreclosure sale date, act immediately and consider contacting a HUD-approved housing counselor and a licensed attorney or legal-aid organization in your state.

If You Do Only Five Things, Do These First

- ☐ Open and read every letter, email, and legal notice from your mortgage servicer, attorney, trustee, court, or government agency.
- ☐ Call your mortgage servicer using the phone number on your mortgage statement. Tell them you are having difficulty making payments and want to know what loss-mitigation options are available.
- ☐ Ask your servicer whether a foreclosure has been referred, whether a sale date has been scheduled, and what deadlines apply to your account.
- ☐ Gather your financial documents and submit requested information as quickly as possible. Keep copies of everything you send.
- ☐ Get free help from a HUD-approved housing counselor. If you have legal papers or a foreclosure sale date, consider contacting legal aid or a licensed attorney in your state.

Step 1: Understand Where You Are

Write down the facts before deciding what to do. Do not rely on memory or assume that the same foreclosure timeline applies in every state.

Question	Your Answer
Mortgage servicer	
Loan number	
Amount currently past due	
Date of last full payment	
Have you received a notice of default?	
Have you received legal/court papers?	
Has a foreclosure sale date been scheduled?	
If yes, what date?	
Is the home your primary residence?	
What caused the payment problem? Temporary or ongoing?	

Step 2: Call Your Mortgage Servicer

Use the customer-service or loss-mitigation number shown on your mortgage statement or the servicer's official website. Ask for the loss-mitigation or home-retention department if needed.

Suggested Call Script

You can say:

"I am having difficulty making my mortgage payment and I want to understand my options to avoid foreclosure. Please tell me my current account status, whether foreclosure has been referred or a sale date has been scheduled, and what loss-mitigation options I can apply for. Please also tell me exactly what documents you need, the deadline for submitting them, and how I can confirm that my application is complete."

Questions to Ask

- ☐ What is the exact amount needed to bring the loan current today?
- ☐ Has my loan been referred to foreclosure counsel, a trustee, or another foreclosure department?
- ☐ Is there a scheduled foreclosure sale date? If yes, what is it?
- ☐ What loss-mitigation options can I be evaluated for?
- ☐ How do I request a complete loss-mitigation application?
- ☐ What documents are required? What is still missing?
- ☐ How will I know when my application is considered complete?
- ☐ What deadlines apply?
- ☐ Who is my point of contact or assigned representative?
- ☐ What is the reference number for this call?

Step 3: Prepare Your Loss-Mitigation Package

Requirements vary by servicer and loan type. Common items include income documentation, bank statements, a household budget, a description of the hardship, and mortgage-related notices. Use the companion Document Checklist and Servicer Call Worksheet to organize your file.

Step 4: Understand the Types of Help You May Hear About

- Your servicer determines which options are available and whether you qualify. Options can include:
- Repayment plan: Adds an amount to your regular payment for a period of time to catch up missed payments.
- Forbearance: Temporarily reduces or pauses payments, usually followed by another plan for resolving missed amounts.
- Loan modification: Changes one or more loan terms to address delinquency and create a new payment arrangement.
- Refinance: Replaces the existing mortgage with a new loan if the homeowner qualifies.
- Short sale: Allows the home to be sold for less than the amount owed if the servicer approves.
- Deed in lieu of foreclosure: Transfers the property to the lender/servicer under an approved agreement instead of completing foreclosure.
- Do not sign an agreement you do not understand. Ask how the option affects the unpaid balance, monthly payment, interest rate, loan term, credit reporting, taxes, liens, and any amount that may remain due.

Step 5: Track Everything

- ☐ Keep a copy of every document sent or received.
- ☐ Write down every call date, time, representative name, department, and reference number.
- ☐ Save proof of uploads, faxes, certified mail, or other delivery confirmation.
- ☐ Ask the servicer to identify missing documents in writing when possible.
- ☐ Continue reading all mail and legal notices even while an application is under review.

If You Have a Sale Date or Legal Papers

Do not rely on a generic timeline

Foreclosure procedures and deadlines vary by state. Federal mortgage-servicing rules provide important protections in many situations, but exceptions can apply. If a sale date is scheduled or you have received court papers or other legal documents, consider speaking with a licensed attorney or legal-aid organization in your state as soon as possible.

Free National Help

Resource	Contact	Website
HUD-approved housing counseling	800-569-4287	https://www.hud.gov/hud-partners/single-family-about-housing-counseling
HOPE Hotline	888-995-HOPE (4673)	https://995hope.org/
CFPB mortgage help / complaints	855-411-CFPB (2372)	https://www.consumerfinance.gov/mortgagehelp/
Legal Services Corporation	Find legal aid by location	https://www.lsc.gov/about-lsc/what-legal-aid/i-need-legal-help
FHA Resource Center	800-225-5342	https://www.hud.gov/hud-partners/single-family-fha-resource-center
VA Home Loan assistance	877-827-3702	https://www.va.gov/housing-assistance/home-loans/trouble-making-payments/
USDA Rural Development Direct Loan servicing	800-414-1226	https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/help
Fannie Mae / Freddie Mac loan lookup and assistance	Online tools	https://www.fhfa.gov/homeowners-and-homebuyers/mortgage-assistance/resources

Scam Warning

Be cautious if someone guarantees they can stop foreclosure, tells you to stop communicating with your servicer, asks you to send your mortgage payment to them, asks you to sign over the title to your home, or demands upfront payment for foreclosure-relief services. Free help is available through HUD-approved housing counseling agencies.