



Behind on Your Mortgage? How to Navigate Getting Help from Your Lender.

Falling behind on mortgage payments can feel overwhelming, but you are *not alone* and you have options. Mortgage servicers handle thousands of calls from homeowners in your situation, and they want to help you avoid foreclosure. This guide will help you prepare to talk to your mortgage company (your servicer) and empower you to find solutions.

Many homeowners face financial hardships due to job loss, no income, medical bills, or other life events. It's more common than you think and help is available. Lenders would rather work with you than foreclose on your home.

Contact Your Mortgage Servicer Early

Don't wait to get help. By law, in many cases **the formal foreclosure process can begin after you're 120+ days (about 4 months) past due**, and in Arizona foreclosures can proceed without a court, sometimes as quickly as **four to five months after the first notice**. The **earlier you call**, the better your chance to **stop foreclosure and find a solution**.

Most mortgage companies have dedicated "loss mitigation" teams whose job is to help borrowers in trouble. Foreclosure is expensive and slow, so servicers would rather find a workable plan with you than foreclose. Reaching out early shows you're serious about resolving the situation and lets them offer more options before deadlines pass.

What to Tell Your Servicer (Be Prepared)

When you call, **be ready with key information** and talk honestly about your situation.

- **Have your loan account number and recent statements handy.**
- **Explain your hardship clearly and honestly.** Briefly state **why you fell behind** (job loss, reduced hours, medical emergency, etc.). Let them know **if the hardship is temporary or permanent**.
- **Share your current income and expenses.** Provide a general picture of **what you can afford right now**.
- **Emphasize that you want to avoid foreclosure and keep your home.** Let them know **you're committed to finding a solution**.



- It's okay to say you're struggling and need help learning about options.
- **Ask to speak with the "loss mitigation" department as soon as you call.** This team specializes in **helping people with hardships**, like forbearance, repayment plans, and loan modifications.

Key Questions to Ask Your Mortgage Servicer

Use **questions** to guide the conversation and gather all the information you need. Here are important questions to **ask your servicer**:

- **"What options do I have?"** – Ask the servicer to **list all the available relief options** (to catch up or reduce payments) and **explain each one**.
- **"How would each option handle my missed payments?"** – For example, **if I get a forbearance, will I owe the skipped payments in a lump sum, or can they be added to the end of the loan?** Understanding repayment terms up front will prevent surprises.
- **"What are the requirements and next steps for each option?"** – Find out **what you need to do** to apply or qualify. Do you need to submit any **documents or forms**? What **deadlines** are involved?
- **"Are there fees, extra interest, or credit impacts I should know about?"** – It's okay to ask how the solution might affect you financially in the long run.
- **"Can I have time to review any agreement?"** – **Don't feel pressured to agree on the spot.** Ask for time to review any offers or written terms.
- **"Will you send me confirmation in writing of any agreement or offer?"** – It's important to get any offer or plan in writing (by **mail or email**) for your records.

Common Mortgage Relief Options

Your servicer will determine which programs you qualify for, but **some of the most common solutions** include:

- **Repayment Plan (Catch-Up Plan):** *Resume regular payments plus an extra amount* to gradually catch up on missed payments over time. This works best if your hardship was **temporary** and you can afford your normal payment again.
- **Forbearance:** *A temporary pause or reduction of your mortgage payments* for a set period. **Forbearance gives you breathing room** during a short-term hardship. **Important:** ask **how you'll repay the paused payments** (some plans require a lump sum later, others might extend your loan or increase future payments).



- **Loan Modification:** *A permanent change to your loan terms** if your **income has been reduced long-term**. The lender may **lower your interest rate, extend your loan term, or even add missed payments to the balance to reduce your monthly payment**. A modification takes longer (it involves paperwork and approval) but can **make your payment more affordable** permanently.
- **Partial Claim** – deferment. Ask for details.
- **Bankruptcy.** A Bankruptcy filing can stop a foreclosure if there are no other options. Contact a bankruptcy attorney for a consultation.
- **Other Options if Needed:** If **staying in your home isn't possible**, there are last-resort options like a **short sale** (selling your home, possibly with the **lender's approval to settle the debt**) or a **deed-in-lieu of foreclosure** (voluntarily transferring the home to the lender) to avoid the full foreclosure process. These are **only considered after exploring all ways to keep your home**.

Next Steps & Staying Empowered

1. Take a deep breath and gather your information. Pull together your **mortgage statements, loan number, and a simple budget** of your income and expenses. Being prepared will make you feel more confident and help the servicer assess your situation quickly.

****2. Call your mortgage servicer** (the company you send payments to) **as soon as possible** – sooner is better. **Ask for the “Loss Mitigation” or “Home Retention”** department, and start the conversation about your options. Remember, **there is no shame in asking for help**; it's part of the process.

3. Take notes during the call. **Write down the date, the name** of the representative, and what was said or promised. Keep a folder of any letters or emails from your servicer.

4. Follow through on next steps. If your servicer asks for documents (like pay stubs or a hardship letter), try to **submit them quickly** to avoid delays. Stay in regular contact – **keep the communication going** so they know you're actively working on a resolution.

5. Stay alert and avoid scams. Never pay upfront for mortgage help – legitimate foreclosure help is **free**. Be wary of anyone guaranteeing to **“save” your home for a fee** – **instead, work directly with your servicer or a HUD-approved counselor**.