



# How To Set Up A Mutual Aid Network

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In times like these, we need to be able to depend on each other. Community is more important now than it has ever been in our living memory. This is a shorthand guide to help you build a safe community and local mutual aid network.

## What Is Mutual Aid?

Mutual aid is a way for people to help each other in difficult times. It is voluntary and peer-to-peer, meaning that people share their skills, time or resources to support one another.

Mutual aid does not require money. For example, you fix a friend's phone, and they cook you a meal in return. Both people help. Both people benefit. This is mutual aid.

## Finding Mutual Aid Near You

Many mutual aid groups already exist. Joining an existing group can be a great option. A good place to start is [mutualaidhub.org](http://mutualaidhub.org).

## What If I Can't Find a Group?

If you cannot find a mutual aid group near you — or if the groups you find do not feel safe for you—that is okay. The resources in this packet are here to help you **start something small of your own**.

Mutual aid does not need to be big or perfect. It starts with a few people who are willing to show up for each other. **Building community is possible and necessary**. And it will help you get through the hard times.

## Tips for Building Your Own Mutual Aid Network

### 1. Rethink how you value your own labor

- Your skills, time, niche experience, and resources are all unique and valuable. Others will also have uniquely valuable skills. Learning how to measure value in realistic trading of services or resources will be invaluable, and being able to exemplify and teach them will be a true strength. For instance, perhaps you have an experience with small motor repair, a valuable and unusual skill set that many others may not have.

### 2. Build your community.

- **Know your community.** One of the most critical aspects of setting up a mutual aid network is knowing who is near your geographic area, and who is safe, and who isn't.
- **Host a gathering.** Whether it's a block party, a cul-de-sac BBQ, or a mobile home park potluck, any event that brings neighbors together with a shared goal can be beneficial for creating community. Maybe everyone brings a dish, a game, or a book to share.
- **Create pseudo-community environments.** You can pick up a soccer ball, a knitting pattern, or a puzzle, and then invite neighbors, encourage them to invite others, and build a community from there.
- **Be pro-social.** In our increasingly paranoid society, there is benefit and value in not only knowing how to survive, but also who you can survive with. Everyone needs to give a little energy to receive a little energy in return.
- **Be patient.** Remember that communities take time to build, and building them well is crucial for the community to withstand pressure. Investing in the people around you will leave you with friends in emergencies and difficult times, while isolation will leave you without.

### 3. Encourage local trading and bartering.

- **Host item swap parties** for items like clothing, kitchen supplies, or books.
- **Host community yard sales** for members to pick out items they need, bring items they don't, and donate or recycle the remainder.
- **Host skill trade events.** Maybe you can fix a neighbor's PC while they change your oil. Identify what you can do, what your neighbors can do, and make sure that those actions are accessible as well as food, childcare, and other essential material needs.

Pairing all of these items with the resources in this packet, you can begin building an extended network of support, and so many people, including yourself, will be better off for it.



## Food Resources

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Organization	Contact Information	Purpose
Help Find	findhelp.org	Free or RC Resources, food, housing, fin. aid.
feedingamerica	feedingamerica.org/need-help-find-food	Find local food bank
foodfinder.	foodfinder.us	Find local food bank
freedge	freedge.org	Find community fridge
.littlefreepantry	mapping.littlefreepantry.org	Find Little Free Pantry in your area
mutualaidhub	mutualaidhub.org	Find local mutual aid network
This Pilgrim Life	thispilgrimlife.com	Budget meals
Super Cook	supercook.com	Recipes for what you have/No waste
olioap	olioapp.com	Local food share app
PoorForDummies	YouTube.com/PoorForDummies @zielzebub on TikTok	Budgeting and food stretching methods

## Abortion Care Resources

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Organization	Contact Information	Purpose
National Network of Abortion Funds	abortionfunds.org	Financial and logistics support
Abortion Finder	abortionfinder.org	Information about providers by state
National Abortion Hotline	800.772.9100	Provider information and financial assistance in the United States
The Brigid Alliance	brigidalliance.org	Travel, food, lodging, childcare, and other logistics support

## Mental Health Resources

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Organization	Contact Information	Purpose
Lifeline	dial 988	Text or call for suicide prevention
Crisis Text Line	text HOME to 741741	Mental health text line
Postpartum Support International	text HELP to 800.944.4773	Postpartum mental health support
SAGE LBGT Elder Hotline	call 877.360.5428	LGBT-specific mental health assistance
Black Line	callblackline.com or call 800.604.5841	BIPOC mental health assistance
Child Help. National Hotline	text or call 800.422.4453	Minor-specific mental health assistance

## Legal Resources

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Organization	Contact Information	Purpose
Immigrant Defenders Law Center	immdef.org	Immigration aid
National Immigration Law Center	nilc.org	Immigration aid
National Immigration Legal Services Directory	immigrationadvocates.org	Directory of immigration assistance
Community Justice Exchange	communityjusticeexchange.org	Bond aid
LGBTQ Freedom Fund	lgbtfund.org	Bond aid
Black Immigrants Bail Fund	blackimmigrantsbailfund.com	Bond aid

Yameena Ansari , Ansari Immigration : [ansari.ca](http://ansari.ca)  
 (\*\*Paid service)

Felipe Jorquera , Global Expat Support : [globalexpactsupport.com](http://globalexpactsupport.com)  
 (\*\*Paid/Flexible—Inquire with Help Me Leave)

## Healthcare Resources

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Organization	Contact Information	Purpose
HRSA Data Warehouse	findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov	Local health centers
The National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics	nafclinics.org/find-clinic/	Free and charitable clinic database
New Eyes	new-eyes.org	Eyecare costs
Patient Advocate Foundation	copays.org	Direct payment for co-pays, coinsurance, and deductibles

## Housing Resources

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Organization	Contact Information	Purpose
Just Shelter	justshelter.org	Housing assistance resources, tenant's rights resources, legal aid
Legal Help FAQs	legalfaq.org	Connect with housing assistance in your area
Find Help	findhelp.org	Assistance with rental and utility costs

## Mutual Aid Resources

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Organization	Contact Information	Purpose
Project Okra	theokraproject.com or contactus@theokraproject.com	BIPOC/Queer relocation and support resource
Ten Of Spades	helpmeleave.engulf909@passmail.net	Relocation aid
Mutual Aid Hub	mutualaidhub.org	Find mutual aid in your area or start your own mutual aid network
Lifelines For Liberty	lifelinesofliberty.squarespace.com/contact	Mutual aid, relocation resources
Rainbow Railroad	rainbowrailroad.org	Relocation aid and resources

## Other Resources

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Resources	Guide Links	Purpose
Guides to Basic Garment Assembly	ia601705.us.archive.org	Clothes making
Micro Engine Repair Manual	smallenginesuppliers.com	Small engine repair
Skipping Stone	www.skippingstone.ca	CA Trans Support Org

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## About Help Me Leave

Help Me Leave is a volunteer-run, not-for-profit platform helping people find safe pathways out of countries where their rights are under threat. We provide practical visa and relocation information, connect people with legal and community support, and advocate for fairer global migration systems.

For press inquiries or expert comment, visit [helpmeleave.us](http://helpmeleave.us)