

“Empowering and educating people to improve their financial, physical, social, career, and community well being.”



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# Ready, Set, Reset!

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## Get Connected, Get Help with 211

Do you know that many states have a 211 service? That’s right, and it is FREE! By simply dialing 211, those in need can be referred, and sometimes connected, to appropriate agencies and community organizations for many types of services.

211 is available 24/7 to approximately 309 million people in the United States, which is 94.6% of the total U.S. population. Each has a team of highly trained community specialists full of compassion who are available to help you access the **best local resources and services**. Calls to 211 are confidential and can be anonymous.

They are the boots on the ground, the local experts who make finding resources easy. The 211 networks in the United States respond to more than **14 million requests for help each year**. Most calls, web chats, and text messages are from people looking for help meeting basic needs like housing, food, transportation, utilities, family support, suicide prevention. But 211 will assist with calls of sexual assault, domestic violence, human trafficking, homelessness, mental health, substance abuse, evacuation assistance and clean-up and health care. It also serves veterans and

military families. Some states are even able to help anyone who needs prescription assistance.

\* A caller asked about help with out-of-pocket expenses for medications. The 211 Resource Specialist immediately provided the caller with the website for SingleCare, [www.singlecare.com](http://www.singlecare.com) where she could sign up for assistance.

\* Patient Advocate Foundation Co-pay Relief Program (866-512-3861). Provides direct financial support to insured patients, including Medicare Part D beneficiaries, who must financially and medically qualify to access pharmaceutical co-payment assistance. The program offers personal service to all patients through the use of call counselors who guide patients through the enrollment process. [www.copays.org](http://www.copays.org).

\* NeedyMeds - (800) 503-6897 Helpline - NeedyMeds is a 501(c)(3) national nonprofit that connects people to programs that will help them afford their medications and other healthcare costs. [www.needymeds.org](http://www.needymeds.org).

\* RX Outreach - (877) 727-9903 Rx Outreach is a fully licensed,



nonprofit, mail order pharmacy that provides access to affordable medications regardless of insurance status or documentation status. Income guidelines apply. [www.rxoutreach.org](http://www.rxoutreach.org).

When people are in a crisis or emergency, they often are not sure where to turn, and most will call 211. Calls to 211 are routed to a local or regional calling center. The 211 center’s specialist match the callers’ needs to available resources, and link or refer them directly to an agency or organization that can help.

You can also visit their webpage at <http://211.org>. Search by location by simply entering an address or zip code to find a local provider.

If you, or someone you know is in need of services and resources, please do not hesitate to call. Willing and trained team members are always available day or night to assist anyone.



#### The 7 Best Buy Now, Pay Later Sites

- Afterpay.
- Zip Pay
- Quad Pay
- Klarna
- Sezzle
- PayPal Credit
- Affirm

## Beware - Buy Now, Pay Later

Understand the fine print before using installment plans like Afterpay, Quadpay, Klarna and Paypal's 'Pay in 4.'

Installment plans using "buy now, pay later" [spending model](#) have become popular – and more than likely they will gain more favor as the pandemic economy continues.

If you think this may be something you want to try, you will need to decide whether buy now, pay later is a good idea for you. Here are some answers to common questions about installment plans, often referred to as BNPL plans.

There are a lot of installment payment plans out there, and most will allow you to split the payments of a purchase into four equal interest-free installments.

Afterpay is the most well-known of the plans, but there are other big players in this market including Klarna, Quadpay and Affirm.

Here's how it works: If you buy items for example, patio furniture with Afterpay, you'll pay the first installment right at the point of sale. Then the patio furniture will be sent to you. Two weeks later, you'll pay the second interest-free installment. Two weeks after that, the third interest-free installment is due. Four weeks later, you'll pay the fourth and final interest-free installment.

Generally, these BNPL services are only offered for [online shopping](#), but some offer installment plans as an in-store payment.

Walmart uses Affirm if you want to buy now and pay later, and Target

uses Quadpay. In both cases, you can use the BNPL program online or as a payment at the register inside the store.

Some stores use multiple BNPL programs; for instance, Finish Line uses both Afterpay and Klarna. Other stores, like the aforementioned Walmart and Target, exclusively use one service.

There are 10 buy now pay later installment plans out there. Just make sure to read the fine print and understand the concept and terms; some services may have higher fees or spending requirements. Do your homework read the [Pros and Cons of Installment Plans](#) before deciding. BNPL plans might help with back-to-school or holiday shopping.

## Mental Health, Help is Here

Yes, it's been a year and a half of isolation, remote schooling, mask wearing, budget stretching, kids arguing and bored, during the pandemic. Now, add in our nation's political uncertainty and feeling angry and helpless about racial injustice, we are all on edge.

Stress is real and must be acknowledged. Think about people who didn't have a spouse or partner with a job. Whose single income was reduced due to COVID shutdowns.

Who live paycheck to paycheck. Who can't afford food or summer clothes for their children. Who worry when their children go outside. The landlord beating on their door because they

can't pay the rent. These difficult situations are enough to make you want to run and hide.

The reality is we have all experienced stress. The effects of this pandemic have impacted each of us in many ways—from the simple things like not being able to see or hug our loved ones, to working from home while trying to encourage the kids to do their homework. Then add the stress of trying to make ends meet, it's a lot.

But there are so many ways to access help. The National Alliance on Mental Illness offers ways of connecting people to resources or free online support groups so no one struggles

through this difficult time alone. The campaign builds connection and increases awareness through digital tools, such as social media, the [NAMI Blog](#) and the [NAMI COVID-19 Information and Resources](#).

If you, or someone you know is experiencing stress, depression, substance abuse, or other mental health concerns, please reach out to them and let them know they're not alone. And be aware of your own self-care. If you need help seeking relief from stress, make time to find a program that fits your needs. Trained volunteers are ready to assist 24 hours a day 7 days a week, all you have to do is CALL 211.



# Buying a House in 2021 \$\$

We all know that when we play a game of sport like football, tennis, baseball, etc., we must learn the rules and get in shape before the first game. In today's market, if you find a reasonably priced house in good condition, chances are you won't be the only one making an offer — even if it just hit the market. It is a seller's market in most states across the U.S. (meaning there are more prospective buyers than homes for sale).

For buyers, this means you may have to make some concessions and be more flexible. Make sure you understand the risks of **any** concession you include, and don't make any that you can't afford. For example, they may want you to skip the inspection, but that is not wise and could hurt you in the long run. It might also be difficult to focus your search in only one neighborhood. If working with a real estate agent, make sure you have a conversation with him/her about the local market and how to make a strong offer. Make sure your real estate agent knows if you are participating in the Self-Help Housing Purchase Repair program, and if need be, ask your self-help representative to talk with your agent so the agent will know what to expect and how the program works.

If you find that there are no available houses on the market that you desire or in your price range, make sure you talk to your self-help housing representative about self-help **NEW** construction. Some self-help programs only do NEW construction and some only do Purchase Repair, so make sure you know what your local Self-Help Program has to offer.

The prices of existing homes are projected to increase. Prices often vary by season, so when you choose to buy can impact what you'll pay. Homes are generally more expensive in June and July and the least expensive in January and February. Active home listings are also highest in the warm months but demand is high right now, so homes sell

more quickly. Be aware of all the options that the self-help housing program in your area has to offer.

Mortgage rates are expected to remain low for 2021. The USDA Rural Development 502 Direct Loan currently has a note rate of 2.5%, it offers 33 or 38 year terms, and no down payment is required so it is clearly one of the best options for mortgage financing. The maximum loan amount an applicant may qualify for will depend on the applicant's repayment ability and the loan limit in the county. The applicant's ability to repay a loan considers various factors such as income, debt, assets, and the amount of payment assistance applicants may be eligible to receive.

The **Section 502 Direct Loan Program** can assist low and very-low-income applicants to obtain decent, safe, and sanitary housing in eligible rural areas by providing payment assistance (subsidy), to increase an applicant's repayment ability. Funds can be used to build, repair, renovate or relocate a home. Payment assistance is a type of subsidy that reduces the mortgage payment if needed. The amount of assistance is determined by the adjusted family income.

But here is the deal, nothing would be more disappointing than finding your dream home and then getting surprised that your credit score isn't what you thought it was. So, get started now by reviewing your credit reports and work on any items that need to be corrected, which will improve your score.

Work closely with your self-help housing program representative and they will guide you through every step to get you to your desired outcome of owning your very own home.

How long does an application take?

Processing times vary depending on funding availability and program demand in the area

in which an applicant is interested in buying and the completeness of the application package.

## 502 Direct Loan Payment Options

If there is ever a time when you cannot make the payment on time, contact the Rural Development Customer Service Center (CSC) and speak to a counselor. Advise them of your situation, include the reason for the delay, and inform them when you will make the payment. There are two special servicing options with the 502 Direct Loan if needed, a delinquency workout agreement or a moratorium.

- **A Delinquency Workout Agreement (DWA)** is an approved plan to bring the account current. A DWA allows you to pay an additional amount above the regular monthly payment to cure a past due amount. Your repayment ability will be based on an analysis of the financial documents you submit to the CSC, as well as other program eligibility requirements. For more information, please contact the CSC at 800-793-8861.
- **A moratorium** "stops the clock" or suspends regular monthly payments for six months up to two years to enable you to recover from a significant loss of income or unexpected expenses. This servicing action is only considered if your income has been temporarily lost or reduced due to circumstances beyond your control, such as loss of job, accident, illness, injury, or death. When the payments resume, the missed amounts will be added to your total and will be due over the remainder of the loan. This is an excellent option to keep you in your home in an emergency situation, but should only be used when necessary for as short a period of time as possible.



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[financialwellnessinstitute.org](http://financialwellnessinstitute.org)

### ***First Time Homeowners .....***

Sabrina T. Simpkins who is the Site Director at the Holly City Family Success Center of Millville never wanted to buy a home. She had been renting for several years in Cumberland and Gloucester Counties. It was not until her rental home of 4 years, was vandalized twice in a matter of 6 months that she decided it was time for her and her young son to move. They moved in with her parents in February of 2020, and she began planning her next move. Sabrina decided to pay off all her bills while saving money. A few months later, she received a call from an old friend who worked for the Financial Wellness Institute, which is an organization, that helps people purchase and repair homes. This organization partners with the USDA, Purchase & Repair Program. Her friend was promoting the USDA First Time Home Buyers Purchase and Repair Program. After Sabrina learned of the program, she decided to take the next step into homeownership and complete the application.

The biggest draw to the USDA’s Purchase and Repair Program for Sabrina was the no deposit, no down payment as well as the extended time on the loan repayment. Instead of 15-30 years, she qualified for a 38-year mortgage, and the loan paid for all expenses that would normally come out of pocket during a regular home buying experience. The USDA along with the Financial Wellness Institute was there every step of the way to guide and support Sabrina in her home buying journey.

After searching for a few months, Sabrina found the perfect place in the neighborhood where she grew up. She is now close to family and in a safe environment. She went to settlement in November 2020, in her hometown of Hopewell Township in Cumberland County, which is the location she has always wanted to settle down in and raise her son. After Sabrina completed all requirements including the 125+ hours of sweat equity...she became the first person with Financial Wellness Institute to accomplish homeownership through the USDA Self-Help Purchase and Repair Program. She and her son officially moved into their new place in March of 2021.

### ***The Simpkins***

