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## Questions & Answers about the Local Love Global Crisis Relief Fund

### What is this initiative?

- Today, United Way Leeds & Grenville is asking the community to help support the most vulnerable, as we continue to coordinate social service supports in response to the Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) across our region.

### Why are you launching this initiative?

- We know that, in our region, many people cannot afford to prepare, and do not have a support system around them if they contract COVID-19, or need to preventatively self-isolate.
- Though needs will continue to evolve, we know that those who live in poverty, homeless youth and seniors are at-risk. Mental health struggles are affecting us all.

### What will donations support?

The needs will continue to evolve but in the near-term, we are looking to donors for their support in providing:

- Basic needs – ensuring people have access to life’s essentials, such as food
- Help for seniors – while our most vulnerable are isolated, they must not feel alone
- Capacity for community services – so community partners can deliver vital local work
- Mental health support – Enabling crisis lines and system navigation services that benefit us all
- Support for volunteers – There are amazing people rallying to support others – they need our help too.

### What kinds of things are you hearing from social service agencies about those most vulnerable?

While it is too soon to share exact numbers, what I can tell you from our coordination with agencies from across the community that provide vital supports such as food, mental health supports and support to isolated seniors, is that given to COVID-19

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response requirements, we will need community support to continue to help the most vulnerable - who are disproportionately affected by this crisis.

These agencies are responding as necessary and adjusting their options for services in real time, but their capacity will be stretched in the coming days, weeks and months.

- **Seniors** - Are the most vulnerable in terms of exposure and whose main source of interaction is group programs and public spaces (libraries, stores). Fear is also emerging, driving seniors into further isolation.
  - (1) Many volunteers in our communities are seniors, which also poses a risk to the capacity at which agencies are able to operate.
  
- **Poverty & homelessness** - Vulnerable people and families cannot afford to stock up on supplies, and are more likely to be severely impacted by closed schools and reduced work. Food banks and shelter services will be critical to supporting these individuals.
  - (1) Unsheltered youth are already experiencing challenges due to restrictions on public spaces (libraries, community services, YMCA) and fewer opportunities to attend group sessions, where both food and socialization are normally available.
  
- **Mental Health** - Psycho-social supports are always critical in a crisis. Access to immediate counselling supports goes hand in hand with a drastic shift in our normal routines, especially something as unprecedented as extended self-isolation. Isolation can trigger anxieties, as well as force people into uncomfortable or unsafe environments.

The needs continue to change and we are working closely with public health authorities, community agencies, community groups and others to assist with social services as this health crisis escalates.

### How quickly can you support agencies and these vulnerable groups?

The needs continue to change and we are working closely with public health authorities, community agencies, community groups and others to assist with social services as this health crisis escalates.

- We will be ramping up negotiations and investment as soon as funds are available for the areas that we've identified.
- Once funds are available, investments can be out within days for areas with high urgency.
- As this is likely to have a long window, we will also be working with our partners to scale appropriately so that we have resources as they are needed.
- As the service delivery requirements of our agency partners evolves, we will be nimble as well, adjusting our strategy accordingly to meet the changing demands of this crisis.

United Way Leeds & Grenville will first and foremost play an important role in convening the social services sector as a whole. We continue to coordinate with local public health authorities, to ensure that together we are applying our resources to address the greatest need, while having the greatest impact for those in need.

### But how much can you do in the near-term to help those most in need?

- Our capacity to support will depend on the generosity of the community, and our partners during this difficult time. We've already seen incredible moments of generosity over the weekend across the globe: people donating their time, talents and funds because they know that the most vulnerable need our help during this difficult time.
- By supporting United Way you can provide:
  - (1) Basic needs – ensuring people have access to life's essentials, such as food
  - (2) Help for seniors – while our most vulnerable are isolated, they must not feel alone
  - (3) Capacity for community services – so community partners can deliver vital local work

- (4) Mental health support – Enabling crisis lines and system navigation services that benefit us all
- (5) Support for volunteers – There are amazing people rallying to support others – they need our help too.

### How will you meet to coordinate efforts?

- This is a constantly evolving issue. We will look at conference calls and leveraging technology to limit in-person meetings.

### What exactly is United Way’s role in a disaster like this?

- United Way is here 365 days a year to improve lives, break down barriers and create opportunities for people across our communities.
- We’re here to ensure people have the support they need through social services and if they require support long after the immediate needs are met.
- We are committed to standing with those most affected with the community: today, next month -- and beyond.

### How much are you hoping to raise?

Our capacity to support in this time of need will depend on the generosity of our donors and partners, and the ability of the community to be generous during this difficult time.

At United Way Leeds & Grenville, we know that when we stand up for one another, we can make a difference.

Our hope is that just as we have in the past, that this community will rally in this time of crisis to support the most vulnerable.

### I have things that can help (TP, hand sanitizer, health aids, mobility devices, etc.) - where should I bring them?

- Given the risk of spreading this illness, many organizations are not currently accepting gifts of donated items.

- You can try to call your local community health and resource centre but the situation is changing all the time and agencies are updating their guidelines daily.
- The Food Banks across Leeds & Grenville are accepting donations to make sure people don't have an interruption in the food they're able to access.

### I want to volunteer. Who should I reach out to?

- At the moment, we are advising anyone interested in volunteering to register as an individual with The Volunteer Centre of Rideau St Lawrence.
- From an informal perspective, take care of those closest to you. Check in on your neighbours and offer support if you are able, while heeding the advice of public health authorities related to social distancing. Organize support groups in your neighbourhoods/communities to make sure seniors or people with health issues have what they need. Now is the time to, safely, strengthen bonds with those in need.
- We will provide more information about formal volunteer opportunities as we receive it.

### I personally need help to support my family. Where do I go for assistance?

- If the situation is a medical emergency, you should call 9-1-1.
- If you are experiencing symptoms, please refer to the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit website at <https://healthunit.org/>
- You can also find the latest updates on prevention and information on that site.
- For information on community programs and services that can help you, please try the community information line 2-1-1.
- If you are experiencing distress and need to talk to someone you can call the Mental Health Crisis line at 1 (866) 281-2911 or the Distress Centre at 1 (800) 465-4442

### Will United Way be making grants to people like me?

- United Way provides funding directly to agencies in the community supporting the most vulnerable i.e. organizations helping seniors and people in crisis. United Way does not provide funding to individuals.

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- The provincial and federal government continue to introduce measures to support people who are precariously employed and to help our economy as a whole.
  - With limited resources, United Way will continue to watch our levels of government to align our work where there may be gaps.
  - If you need immediate assistance for food and other supports, we recommend you call 2-1-1 for a list of resources that can help you.