

Black Bear Mutual Aid Fund

What is Mutual Aid?

Mutual aid is the act of giving and receiving aid within a community where those who have extra resources may give to those who lack them, with the goal of building community care and resilience in the face of hardships. It is a system of community action between members of a community to meet the needs of all members. Mutual Aid is an idea based in solidarity between equals rather than aid being granted from a place of higher privilege.

What is the Black Bear Mutual Aid Fund?

The Black Bear Mutual Aid Fund is a non-profit organization led by a group of students, faculty, and staff at the University of Maine. The purpose of the Black Bear Mutual Aid Fund is to alleviate economic inequality and hardships in the UMaine community by supporting networks, acts, and norms of mutual aid and community care. Our goals are:

1. To establish a fund where members of the UMaine community can place any disposable dollars or money they do not feel they need, in order to make that money accessible when community members do feel they need it.
2. To practice community care by using this fund to facilitate mutual aid.
3. To use the presence and impact of the fund to assist in modeling norms of mutual aid and community care.

Recently, a student conducted a campus-wide survey with over 300 responses from students, faculty, and staff on campus. Out of these respondents, within the last 12 months,

- 33% had experienced food insecurity
- 11% had experienced housing insecurity
- 31% had experienced medical care insecurity
- 26% had experienced personal care item insecurity

There are many great financial resources at UMaine, and they effectively alleviated a great amount of financial insecurity on campus, but unfortunately, the members of our community are still facing severe economic hardships. Based on these findings, it is imperative to create another resource for those who may have been left behind, not to replace the current resources that exist, but to supplement them.

This is the goal of the **Black Bear Mutual Aid Fund**, which will be housed by a state-recognized nonprofit organization. The fund will be much like the emergency funds that exist on campus, except it will be community-led, available to all students, faculty, and staff, and free of the barriers that make many institutionally-led emergency aid funds difficult to access. We have been working with the Bureau of Labor Education and several student organizations and have built up a strong amount of momentum.

We meet every two weeks. If you or anyone you know (students, faculty, staff, alumni, general community members) are interested, have any questions, or would like to learn more, please email us at blackbearmutualaid@gmail.com or fill out the Black Bear Mutual Aid Fund [Interest Form](#)! This is a project that will need help from as many people from as many backgrounds as possible!

Thank you!