



## **Five things you can say to homeowners facing foreclosure.**

### **1. It's okay to ask for help.**

Why do so many homeowners simply stop paying their mortgages without telling anyone? Homeowners facing foreclosure are often fearful that others will think badly of them. While it's true that, in the past, there's been something of a stigma attached to people who have lost their homes through foreclosure, the current national housing environment has pretty much erased those attitudes. Families facing foreclosure come from all classes, races and religious backgrounds. They may have an adjustable-rate loan or one with unfavorable terms that causes them to get behind on their mortgage payments. A loss of a job, medical expenses or other life-altering circumstances can impact anyone and cause them to have difficulty keeping up.

### **2. Respond to your lender promptly.**

Homeowners behind in their payments should never assume their situation is hopeless. They should never ignore the letters and calls of their lender. Foreclosure is the last step any lender wants to take. But, lenders need the cooperation of homeowners. Caught early enough, late payments do not have to turn into foreclosures. The vast majority of lenders will work with homeowners to explore options and alternatives.

### **3. Visit a housing counselor – for free.**

Housing counseling agencies are on the front line of the foreclosure issue. One of the primary missions of these nonprofit organizations is to help families avoid foreclosure. Housing counselors are on hand to talk with anyone facing the possibility of foreclosure and to provide information on available options. A counselor can offer objective third-party assistance and a wealth of resources that takes much of the fear out of dealing with this potentially devastating issue. And their services are free.

### **4. Assistance is widely available.**

The federal government and just about every state now offer some form of assistance to families facing foreclosure. Government programs are able to help homeowners catch up on missed payments, plan for future payments and restructure loans to create easier repayment terms. Counseling agencies are aware of these programs. Whether the need is financial assistance or reliable information, plentiful resources exist to help families prevent foreclosures.

### **5. Act immediately.**

Time is of the essence for homeowners attempting to stave off foreclosure. The further behind in payments a homeowner gets, the more difficult it is to fix the problem. Interest and penalties can build, digging a deeper hole for homeowners. That's why the time to act is now. Families with mounting delinquencies should call a housing counseling agency immediately to set up an appointment. One phone call can make all the difference between a family saving or losing their home.