

# Mutual Aid Toolkit

Tactical Manual for Building Lifelines in a Time of State Violence and Trans Survival





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**Mutual aid and bail funds are lifelines for trans activists confronting state violence and systemic oppression.** They are more than charity; they are the rebar of resistance. When cops raid mutual aid feeds. When courts jail, bail funds liberate. These systems operate where the state abandons, or worse, targets us.

Mutual aid is not just groceries and ride-shares, it's housing networks, hormone circles, medkit drops, emergency cashflows, and skill-sharing in hostile terrain. It's how we build resilience when institutions refuse to recognize our humanity.

Bail funds are a form of tactical intervention. They break the carceral pipeline in real time. When a comrade is arrested, it's not just about money, it's about presence, coordination, and defiance. Bail funds signal: *We protect our own. We will not let them vanish you.*

**This toolkit offers hands-on, accessible steps to:**

- Launch a mutual aid pod with or without funds.
- Coordinate across digital platforms securely.
- Set up rapid-response systems for arrests and detainment.
- Sustain a bail fund without institutional dependency.
- Vet requests and redistribute with transparency and trauma-informed care.
- Build accountability practices that don't mirror state punishment.

Whether you're new or already embedded in this work, this guide is designed to scale. You can start with \$10 and two friends or anchor a network that spans cities. Because the goal isn't just survival, it's **an infrastructure for revolution.**



## 1. Understanding Mutual Aid and Bail Funds

### What is Mutual Aid?

- **Solidarity, Not Charity:** Mutual aid involves communities supporting each other to meet immediate needs, often in response to state neglect or violence.
- **Rooted in Collective Survival:** Trans activists and marginalized communities have long practiced mutual aid to ensure survival in hostile environments.

#### ✓ Mutual Aid Examples:

- Providing emergency housing and food.
- Distributing harm reduction supplies and medical assistance.
- Offering emotional and trauma-informed care.

### What are Bail Funds?

- **Abolitionist Strategy:** Bail funds free incarcerated people by paying bail, challenging the cash bail system that disproportionately harms BIPOC, trans, and low-income individuals.
- **Supporting Activists:** Bail funds specifically support activists, ensuring those targeted by police repression can return to their communities.

#### ✓ Bail Fund Examples:

- Posting bail for protesters and marginalized individuals.
- Providing post-release support and resources.



## 2. Building and Sustaining Mutual Aid Networks

### Forming a Mutual Aid Group

#### ✓ Assess Community Needs:

- Conduct surveys or hold community forums to identify immediate and long-term needs.
- Focus on vulnerable groups, including trans individuals, BIPOC communities, and disabled people.

#### ✓ Create a Core Group:

- Build a trusted team with defined roles such as outreach, finance, logistics, and communication.
- Ensure trans voices and marginalized perspectives are prioritized.

#### ✓ Develop Clear Goals and Structures:

- Define the scope of your mutual aid work (housing, food, medical, etc.).
- Establish decision-making processes that prioritize collective input and accountability.

## 3. Funding and Resource Mobilization

#### ✓ Fundraising for Mutual Aid:

- Use platforms like GoFundMe, Open Collective, and Venmo to raise funds.
- Create transparent donation processes and regular financial updates.

#### ✓ In-Kind Donations:

- Seek donations of clothing, food, medical supplies, and other essential items.
- Partnerships with local organizations, community centers, and clinics.

#### ✓ Building Sustainable Funding Streams:

- Explore recurring donor models and monthly contributions.
- Host fundraising events and online donation drives.



## 4. Organizing Bail Funds for Protesters and Vulnerable Communities

### How Bail Funds Work

#### ✓ **Post Bail to Free Incarcerated Individuals:**

- Identify and coordinate with local bail funds.
- Prioritize marginalized activists, including trans, BIPOC, and disabled protesters.

#### ✓ **Post-Release Support:**

- Provide transportation, medical care, and emotional support for released individuals.
- Connect individuals with ongoing legal support and community care.

### Establishing a Bail Fund Network

#### ✓ **Identify Legal Allies:**

- Build partnerships with public defenders, legal aid groups, and community lawyers.
- Work with the **National Lawyers Guild (NLG)** and other advocacy organizations.

#### ✓ **Set Clear Bail Criteria:**

- Prioritize cases involving marginalized activists.
- Maintain records to ensure transparency and accountability.

#### ✓ **Develop Post-Release Protocols:**

- Arrange temporary housing, trauma-informed care, and reentry support.

## 5. Mutual Aid for Trans Communities

### Special Considerations for Trans Mutual Aid

#### ✓ **Focus on Safety and Privacy:**

- Protect the identities and personal information of trans individuals.
- Offer secure communication channels for trans recipients.

#### ✓ **Emergency Housing and Medical Support:**

- Provide safe housing for trans individuals fleeing violence.
- Distribute hormone replacement therapy (HRT), medical supplies, and gender-affirming care.

#### ✓ **Legal and Emotional Support:**

- Offer trauma-informed peer support and counseling.
- Connect trans activists with legal resources to challenge discrimination.



## 6. Digital Security for Mutual Aid and Bail Fund Networks

### Protecting Donor and Recipient Data

#### ✓ Use Encrypted Platforms:

- Communicate securely using **Signal** or **ProtonMail**.
- Protect donation records with encrypted cloud storage.

#### ✓ Secure Digital Fundraising Platforms:

- Use platforms with privacy protections such as Open Collective or Venmo.
- Avoid sharing identifiable information publicly.

## 7. Responding to Government Repression

### Countering State Retaliation

#### ✓ Prepare for State Repression:

- Anticipate surveillance and infiltration attempts.
- Train volunteers on identifying and responding to provocateurs.

#### ✓ Secure Legal Defense:

- Partner with legal organizations like ACLU, **Lambda Legal**, and **NLG** to protect mutual aid networks from government crackdowns.

#### ✓ Create a Crisis Response Plan:

- Develop protocols for responding to police raids or targeted harassment.
- Establish encrypted backup channels for maintaining operations under threat.

## 8. Post-Release and Long-Term Support

### Supporting Released Individuals

#### ✓ Reentry and Healing:

- Provide safe housing, food, and trauma-informed support.
- Facilitate access to healthcare and gender-affirming care for trans individuals.

#### ✓ Legal Advocacy and Court Support:

- Connect individuals with ongoing legal assistance.
- Support dismissed charges and expungement efforts.



## 9. Emergency Mutual Aid and Bail Fund Checklist

### ✓ Before Protests:

- Identify local bail funds and mutual aid networks.
- Pre-plan legal support and post-release resources.

### ✓ During Protests:

- Document arrests and ensure communication with legal observers.
- Coordinate immediate bail and jail support.

### ✓ After Protests:

- Provide emotional, legal, and medical support to released activists.
- Replenish bail fund resources and maintain operational readiness.

## 10. Key Mutual Aid and Bail Fund Resources

1. [National Bail Fund Network](#)  
Connects activists with local bail funds to abolish the money bail system.
2. [LGBTQ Freedom Fund](#)  
Pays bail for LGBTQ+ individuals to address the harm of incarceration.
3. [Emergency Release Fund](#)  
Focuses on trans and BIPOC individuals, providing interest-free loans for bail.
4. [National Lawyers Guild \(NLG\)](#)  
Offers legal support and post-arrest aid for activists and movements.
5. [Mutual Aid Disaster Relief \(MADR\)](#)  
Organizes grassroots aid during crises based on solidarity and mutual aid.



## Build Networks, Sustain Resistance

Mutual aid and bail fund networks are lifelines for trans activists fighting systemic oppression. Build strong, resilient networks that prioritize collective care and long-term survival. Together, we ensure no one is left behind. 🌈💛

**Here's what it means to build these networks like you mean it:**

- **Mutual Aid as Strategy, Not Charity**

This ain't about "helping the less fortunate." It's about redistributing survival. Mutual aid is a practice of solidarity, not saviorism. It's rent paid for someone evicted after a protest, groceries for a trans youth in hiding, meds for someone denied HRT. It's horizontal, not hierarchical. No saviors, just us.
- **Bail Funds as Emergency Lifelines**

When the cops snatch our people, we snatch them back. Bail funds break the carceral chokehold that keeps protesters and community members locked up for daring to exist or resist. A good bail fund is fast, discreet, and accountable to the community, not donors or media narratives.
- **Solidarity Beyond Borders**

Trans survival can't stop at the city limits. Build cross-state, cross-border networks that can move funds, people, meds, and information. Think: encrypted communication channels, digital cash apps, burner phones, backup accounts in multiple currencies. Decentralization = survivability.
- **Resilience Requires Infrastructure**

Google Docs and Venmo aren't enough. Use privacy-first platforms, create shared emergency protocols, have backup contacts and decentralized leadership models. Plan for burnout, surveillance, state infiltration, and plan to outlive it all.
- **Center the Most Impacted**

Black trans femmes, disabled queers, Indigenous Two-Spirit folks, undocumented and houseless trans people, these folks face layered oppression and often carry the heaviest burdens in movements. Make sure they're not just recipients of aid, but leaders, organizers, and shapers of strategy.
- **Long-Term Care, Not Just Crisis Response**

Don't just react to disaster, build the systems that keep us whole through it. That means housing co-ops, food gardens, skillshares, community defense trainings, conflict mediation circles, and trauma-informed healing spaces. The revolution must be sustainable.
- **Transparency + Accountability = Trust**

Keep your books open. Rotate leadership. Make decisions collectively. Protect against burnout and abuse. If you don't have trust, you don't have a network, you have a liability.

**Together, we make it impossible for the state to disappear us quietly. We make it unprofitable to repress us. We build systems that outlast theirs.** This is more than survival, it's strategy, care, resistance, and legacy.





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