



WCMA
**Washington City/County
Management Association**
A State Affiliate of **ICMA**

**A Guide for Members in
Transition Prepared by the
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First, before beginning to use this guide, remember that finding yourself in transition is a known hazard of our profession and happens to the best. This is a difficult period for you and your family. Grant yourself the time and grace necessary to make the right decisions as you move forward to your next opportunity. Your fellow members are a solid source of support, friendship and ideas. Use them. We're here for each other.

This guide is intended to help you successfully navigate through the days, weeks and months ahead by using the many Manager in Transition (MIT) resources and supportive programs available. As difficult as this time is, using the support network around you and MIT resources, you can not only survive transition, but thrive again as a CM/CA or ACM.

Section 1: Introduction

This guide is meant to serve as a resource for those Washington City Managers/Administrators who are about to be or are "in transition." One must be a member in good standing of the Washington City/County Management Association (WCMA) to receive the benefits of this program as well as a member in good standing of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) to receive the benefits of the ICMA program that is referenced within this document. It is organized into the following sections:

- Leading up to transition
- Negotiating your transition and leaving your organization
- ICMA & WCMA Benefits for Members in Transition
- Job Search Guidance
- WCMA Membership Responsibilities. Keep in mind; **your WCMA & ICMA memberships follow you!** They do not stay with your municipality or county.

Section 2: Leading Up to Being in Transition

A City Manager/Administrator or Assistant City Manager can find themselves in the difficult position of determining when it is time to leave an organization. Knowing when it is time to leave is just as important as how you leave.

If you feel you your work situation has become consistently problematic and/or too adversarial, honestly assess your situation and current status of your relationship with your Council or City Manager/Administrator as well as your mental and physical state. Getting an outside perspective from your close friends, trusted colleagues and an ICMA Senior Advisor can offer a more objective assessment of your current situation. Identifying whether your current situation is an isolated downturn that can be improved through various tactics such as improved communication or redefining/clarifying expectations is critically important. These downturns happen and do not necessary signal "the end". However, if the downturn has been prolonged and your efforts to make adjustments and improvement have not resulted in positive changes, then the situation may not be worth or possible to salvage and acknowledging this is the first step. No job is worth sacrificing your family or your health.

The other challenging aspect of this decision is your connection and commitment to your organization. Although you have led successfully during your tenure, a leader is no longer effective if they are not in sync with their Council or City Manager/Administrator. Sometimes the

right thing for the organization is for a leader to leave, as hard as this may be. Either deciding it is time to leave or learning from your Council or City Manager/Administrator that it is time to discuss an exit strategy, there are important steps you should consider that will help protect you, your family and your reputation and create a successful path to your next opportunity.

Section 3 : Negotiating Your Transition

Now that the decision has been made for you to leave the organization, it is time to focus on your exit strategy. This will not be an easy time and could happen quickly or be protracted. Either way, you need to prepare yourself for this next phase and identify your goals which should be focused on your successful transition out of the organization.

1. Review your employment agreement, the city charter, the ordinance creating your position, and any state statutes that may pertain to your position. If you are like most managers, you are in an at-will position, but sometimes you will find that you have additional legal protection in the form of one or more of those documents—check especially to see if your contract incorporates some or all of the municipality’s personnel policies by reference.

Understand the benefits you are entitled to, even if you are no longer employed by the city. Get what you can get; in many ways the benefits are more important than the cash settlement. COBRA registration deadlines are especially important to understand in order to keep continuous medical insurance coverage for you and your family while you are floating toward your next job.

Also, think about the tax consequences of whatever you agree to. A lump-sum payment of six months’ severance pay issued on December 28 will likely have catastrophic tax implications. Talk to an ICMA representative before deciding to cash in that 457 retirement plan. Their timelines are very tight (within 60 days after termination), and the decision is irrevocable.

2. Hire an attorney versed in employment law to lead the negotiation of a written separation agreement detailing the terms of separation. This is recommended to avoid any misunderstandings and negotiate a separation agreement that most effectively supports you and your transition. Remember, the city attorney may be a good person, may even be someone you consider a friend, but the city attorney—from the instant the council/board or CM/CA has made its decision to separate with you—does not work for you and will endeavor to represent the best interest of the city, which may or may not coincide with your best interests.
3. Think about the tax consequences of whatever you agree to. A lump-sum payment of six months’ severance pay issued on December 28 will likely have catastrophic tax implications. Talk to an ICMA representative before deciding to cash in that 457 retirement plan. Their timelines are very tight (within 60 days after termination), and the decision is irrevocable.
4. Reach out to colleagues for advice; particularly ones that have negotiated a separation agreement and thrived through transition. Their advice, support and understanding are priceless.
5. Do not volunteer your resignation until you have worked out a satisfactory written separation/severance agreement approved by the council or CM/CA;
6. Councils/boards as well as CM/CA usually want a quiet resignation to avoid public controversy);

7. Councils/boards and CM/Cas are usually willing to provide severance benefits if you will voluntarily submit your resignation (with benefits usually larger than those provided for in the employment agreement);

Section 4: Immediate Steps-“The First 24 Hours”

Regardless of whether you saw it coming or not, the critical time is the first 24 hours after your council/board or CM/CA has made their decision and the separation agreement is final and signed by both parties. This short time frame will probably have more impact on your immediate future than anything else you do in your whole transition. Now your whole concentration and effort must be to focus on one objective—taking care of yourself and your family by exiting with grace and professionalism.

Putting your own well-being first is hard to do if you are like most of us in this business. You want to take care of the staff, make sure that your projects are on track, figure out how this can make the least impact on the community, etc. You need to disconnect from all of this and know that all those things will sort themselves out in due time. While they may not get done as completely, or efficiently, or elegantly as you would have done them—they will get done. Your organization will carry on without you, even if that’s heard to hear.

BEWARE!! You will want to defend yourself and your actions. You will want to respond to the outrageous statements and half-truths that your council or board members have uttered in defense of their decision to get rid of you. You will want that public hearing to tell the community the real truth about what has been going on. It may prove satisfying to hold that public hearing, ask for the list of charges, have your say, rally your supporters, etc. Think twice, then think again. Talk with your attorney before you take an action, any action. If you are an Assistant City Manager, we hope the process that lead to your departure was fair and professional, but even if it wasn’t, the above and below advise holds true.

1. **Make no Public Announcements.** No hasty press conferences, no letters to the editors, no talk radio shows, no verbal haranguing in front of the staff. Nothing. No matter how good you think it will make you feel. If you feel bitter and hurt, show them what professionalism is all about. Take the high road. Give them nothing to feed on. It will enhance your reputation and drive them nuts. As a general rule—even if procedures were not followed, even if there was an illegal executive session, even if you can prove it all beyond a shadow of a doubt—your best bet is to use that as leverage in your negotiation.
2. **Accept the Situation.** Unless your elected officials were extraordinarily conscientious, there has been some procedural error they committed in the course of giving you the boot. Trying to use that error to keep your job is a strategic mistake. If they don’t want you there, you don’t want to be there. If you are an ACM, sometimes it just isn’t the right fit, whether that is based on leadership or communication styles or your skills aren’t what is needed by the CM/CA. Understanding and accepting that the CM/CA has the right to and needs an Assistant that they trust and complements them.
3. **Remain Professional.** When it is time to go, do so. Hand in the keys, clean out the office, walk out the door, and don’t look back. As tempting as it is to engage in anger and vengeance, your job is to think about the future. You will have plenty of time to relive the past. Be a professional to the very end. Reflect on the accomplishments you have achieved and the progress the community has made during your tenure. You know you made a difference and

your time and efforts will be remembered and appreciated.

Section 4: Press Relations

- Agree with the council or CM/CA that neither side will speak negatively about the other; cite “philosophical” differences and wish each other well.
- Develop a mutually agreeable press release, if you are able; Otherwise, with your attorney, prepare your own statement for the press if you feel it is necessary.
- Write a letter of resignation in such a way that it says what you want the press to know. Let the letter speak for itself, rather than commenting further to the press.
- Stay away from the press for a couple of days to let things die down. When you do talk have your talking points ready and don’t talk about the council (it won’t help). Talk about the things you are proud of in your tenure. Make no public pronouncements defending yourself; take the high road.
- Remember that your greatest asset is your professional reputation. The way you exit creates a lasting image and reflects on how you value your work and your colleagues and will last for years to come.

Section 5: Next Steps for the Road Ahead

Separations are extraordinarily stressful events for you and your family. In many cases—especially if there has been a long buildup leading up to the separation—one of the first emotions is relief. It is all finally over, and you won’t have to sit through any more of those contentious, withering meetings where you have constantly been in the crosshairs.

There is likely a whole gamut of emotions you will go through in the first weeks. You will likely be in a state of slight shock and unreality, as if all this was happening to someone else. It may feel very uncomfortable to go out of the house. Midnight grocery shopping suddenly becomes appealing. Acknowledge you are experiencing a major life event and give yourself time to process what has happened to you. You are most likely exhausted, both physically and mentally; you deserve a break, so take it for the first few weeks and indulge yourself. Sleep late. Eat ice cream for breakfast. Get a massage. See an afternoon matinee. Go to the museum. Take a long bike ride. If financially feasible take a vacation. Getting out of town and into a different and positive location will accelerate your and your family’s recovery process. Try to devote a month to these activities. Do not begin immediately looking for work, you need to grieve your loss and begin your recovery process.

Your family, friends and colleagues will want to talk to you. Don’t shut them out. It is important to remember that you are not a different person, you just happen to be between jobs at the moment. You are going to have those down times—call a friend, a relative, someone you are close to and tell them what is going on with you. Remember, your job is not who you are, it is only what you do. Despite this, much of our identity can come from our work and status within the community. Begin to find yourself again and remember and do what makes you happy outside of work.

If you have children, they may not know what to do make of you being around the house in the afternoon when they get home—it will seem odd to them. Enjoy this time with them and do things you have been meaning to do, but work got in the way.

Remember that all the family members are uncertain and nervous about what is going to happen next, and financial worries will cause extra stress. Be kind and talk open and honestly with them. Knowing our profession, there is a good chance you may have to move, another major life event.

After about a month or when you feel ready, begin your re-engagement process. There are many resources available to you and the more you avail yourself to them, the easier and more successful your transition period will be. One challenge you will need to face during this time is your self evaluation of what happened in your last position that resulted in your separation. This may not be an easy road to go down, but is necessary for your recovery and ability to successfully secure your next position. The opportunity to learn from this experience cannot be passed up. It will help you grow as a leader to identify what you did well and what you could have done better. Rarely is a Council or CM/CA solely to blame for a separation; owning your part will help you move past the anger and disappointment more quickly, allowing you to let go and move on.

Another difficult but important question to explore at this juncture, is if this is the right profession or job for you. As you have just experienced, being a City Manager/Administrator or ACM is a demanding and challenging job that is not for everyone. We are drawn to public service because we enjoy making our communities a better place to live and improving the lives of our community members – it's a commonality we share. However, having five or more bosses (or working for someone who does), working under constant scrutiny from the community, being the target of relentless media/social media coverage, perpetually dealing with limited resources, and having the right personality traits to lead a complex organization may or may not be the right fit for you. There are other very fulfilling career paths, many that still intersect with local governments, that may be worth exploring. This is an opportunity to consider your options, and again an ICMA Senior Advisor would be a good person to talk to about your options. If you chose the CM/CA/ACM path again, then you know it is right for you and you can be all in again!

Here are some contacts to begin your re-emersion process:

- Call ICMA Member Services at (800)745-8780 or (202)962-3680 or e-mail them at membership@icma.org to notify them of your change in status. ICMA can provide information about positions available throughout the country. You can also seek advice from their members in transition staff. ICMA information is also available at their website at www.icma.org.
- Call WCMA Secretariat at 206-625-1300 or e-mail tburrows@mrsc.org to notify them of your change in status. Give them your updated home address, phone number, and e-mail so you can continue to receive correspondence.
- Contact a Senior Advisor for general support and to have an objective discussion about what happened and what you learned from it. Senior Advisor contact information can be found on the WCMA website, www.wccma.org.
- Apply for unemployment insurance by contacting your local state employment office. Rules vary from time to time. The state can interpret current rules for you.

- Call neighboring members and schedule a few lunches. You are an experienced professional and your advice and expertise could be timely for a colleague while you re-engaging.
- Contact any member of the WCMA Board of Directors found on the WCMA website or any WCMA member with whom you are acquainted for general support and information.
- Network with colleagues, regional councils, non-profits, universities and private sector consulting firms to identify temporary assignments for members in transition (MIT's). This will keep you engaged in the profession but not require full-time engagement so you can begin your job search and devote the necessary time and energy to finding your next, right opportunity.
- Consider counseling for yourself and your family.
- Check into the variety of reading material available regarding life changes and transforming disappointment.

Section 6: WCMA - Member In Transition Benefits

WCMA membership stays with the individual, not with the employing agency. WCMA offers the following benefits for members in transition:

- Your membership dues will be waived while you are in transition and actively seeking local government employment.
- You will continue to receive the WCMA Newsletter.
- You will retain all membership privileges of your current membership category.
- You may receive complimentary registration to the winter and summer conferences. Lodging expenses are not covered; however, employed members are encouraged to invite managers in transition to share a room to help defer expenses. If financially feasible, attend the conferences. You will see colleagues you haven't seen in a while and will feel supported and connected.
- Maintain contact WCMA Senior Advisors (see prior section)

Section 7: ICMA - Member In Transition Benefits

Remember, ICMA membership belongs to the individual, not the local government. Staff at ICMA changes from time to time; therefore, the following number is the general number for Member Services: (800)745-8780 or 202-962-3680. E-mail: membership@icma.org; visit the ICMA website: http://icma.org/en/icma/members/benefits/members_in_transition.

ICMA provides the following:

- Your membership dues may be waived for up to three years (in six month increments) while you are in transition and actively seeking local government employment.
- You will continue to receive the "ICMA Newsletter" and "Public Management" (PM) magazine.
- You will retain all membership privileges of your current membership category.
- ICMA holds bi-monthly conference calls for members in transition. These are an opportunity to connect with other Managers in Transition. Sharing your story and hearing others' experiences makes you feel less alone. You may not be immediately ready to share your story, so just listen in the beginning. When you are ready, you will know that sharing your story will not only help you but others that are experiencing transition.
- You may receive complimentary registration to the next annual conference. Special instructions are on the conference registration form. If financially feasible, you are strongly urged to attend. Meeting up with colleagues is therapeutic and keeping up to speed on the profession and local government issues will help prepare you for your upcoming interviews.
- ICMA provides one 90 minute web conference per month to members in transition. You may not have made time for these while working, but make time while in transition. The topics are relevant and again will offer you relevant information and insights for your interviews.
- You have access to personal support from the ICMA leadership, senior management staff, Senior Advisors and members to deal with issues of severance, relocation and job hunting. ICMA Member Services can direct you to the right place depending on your question.
- You will receive a copy of "Notes from Beachcombers" and the January 1992 issue of "PM" magazine dealing with being in transition.
- At your request, you can be listed, in the "ICMA Newsletter" as being in transition to let your colleagues know where you are and to receive support from them.
- For complete up-to-date information on the ICMA Member in Transition Program visit http://icma.org/en/icma/members/benefits/members_in_transition.

Section 8: Preparing for an Interview

When you are ready, it's time to get back out there and begin applying for positions. Look for positions that you can get excited about and will ignite your passion again. It is important that you have processed through your negative feels and disappointments, as they may show through in your answers. Have your honest and authentic answer to the hardest question ready, "you are not working now, what happened at your last position?" DO NOT lie, formal and informal background checks will ferret out the truth. Your prospective employer will lose respect and faith in you if you lie during the interview process or to the media and that will likely cost you the job. Just be honest and proud of your work and career while also being concise and non-emotional about the reasons behind your departure.

Contact recruiters in the profession and let them know you are ready to begin your job search. Share your updated resume with them and get their feedback about not only your resume but also your skills and current market conditions. Begin to refresh your interview skills, it may have been a while since your last interview. ICMA has a detailed interview manual that is well worth reviewing to refresh your skills and help get you prepared for your first few interviews.

[ICMA Job Hunting Handbook for Local Government Professionals](#)

Section 9: Two Months Have Passed... Where's the Net?

A month or two has passed. You've had all the phone calls of concern. You've read the letters to the editor praising and damning you. Your colleagues have called and offered their support and understanding. People have been kind and said kind things about you and your family and the difference you have made to the community. It's been rewarding and gratifying

The shock is wearing off. You really and truly do not have a job any more, and chances are you don't know when you will have one again. You are having a hard time focusing on what happens next. Your life, which so recently was so busy, is now a big blank.

Your job is to fill it up again.

There are a number of books and articles out on time in transition (Appendix D). Without taking away from their message, some of the lessons learned after reading them are:

- Take time out to get in touch with yourself and what is important to you. Understand your goals and motivations. Know what makes you happy and go after it.
- Enjoy the time this opportunity has given you to get closer to your family. Get involved at school, be a coach for your kid's team, take the family cross-country skiing, go camping. There's a lot you can do that doesn't take a lot of money. It's the time that is important.
- Take up activities that will improve your life, and you, in some way. Explore a hobby, take up golf, play with the kids, write a book, garden, read the ten books you always wanted to but never had time, become a gourmet cook, travel, take up body-building, be a volunteer, do SOMETHING with your time besides mope around the house and watch TV all day.
- If you don't have a new job, don't move. It's expensive, stressful, and an energy-drainer. Stay involved in the community. Just because you are not the manager doesn't mean you resigned your citizenship. Play in the softball league, go to that Rotary lunch, take your turn driving the kids to a soccer meet. You didn't lose your life, just a job.
- You need to stay in touch with your friends, especially those in the business. The phone calls from other managers will drop off dramatically after the first month. It's not that your colleagues don't care, they just have to get on with their lives as well. So call them. Stay in touch about current issues, and remember: you are still a city manager if you say you are.
- As with any wire walker, your ultimate protection is the net(work) you have created throughout your career. Build it, maintain it, and then use it when you need it—like now.

After all, that is what it is there for.

- Search out every opportunity you can find to have some face time with your colleagues. Stay in touch with Senior Advisor. If you are living in the metro area, go to the metro manager meetings. Drop by the Association of Washington Cities Office and have the staff give you an update on what is happening statewide. WCMA offers scholarships to attend both the winter and summer conference for managers in transition. Take advantage of it. It will give you an opportunity to maintain that network and find out the latest skinny on new job opportunities.
- It is also important to take some time to reflect on the gifts received from your most recent experience. You worked hard there and it shows in the improvements that you were able to accomplish for the community and within the organization. Now that you have a little distance from it, you should take this chance to have an honest look back on your performance.

Ask yourself questions like:

- Out of everything that happened, what skills or attributes served me well over the course of your tenure?
- What new skills did I acquire?
- What lessons have I learned about project management, public speaking, consensus building, conflict management, goal setting, etc.?
- What were the biggest frustrations? What can I do, or what skills will I need, to avoid or minimize that frustration next time around?
- If I had it to do over, what would I do over?
- What are my biggest weaknesses? What will I do with this time to improve upon it?
- What was the most fun? What will I do to replicate it next time around?
- And other questions in the same vein.

This is not a formal writing exercise, but it is important to sort through the experience you have just had and cull out the good, the bad, and the strange. Take the time to learn from yourself. It's not often in life that you get chances like this.

Section 10: Five or Six Months Have Passed... Where am I Going?

It's been four or five months now since you've been let go. By now, you have had a chance to look at a lot of things for a living. Some you tried and didn't like as much as you as you thought you would. You might have applied for a couple of positions and didn't make it. Things are getting boring, and perhaps even a little scary. This is no time to give up. In the immortal words of Hunter S. Thompson, "When the going gets tough, the weird turn pro."

Maybe you are in the fortunate situation of having a good severance package that allows you the luxury of considering many options. Maybe you didn't get anything at all, or you are somewhere in between. No matter what the particulars of your situation, there are some universally good rules-of-thumb to follow. Here are a few tips about job hunting:

- Be clear about your professional expectations and **STICK TO THEM**. It is awfully tempting to be out of work for six months and grab the first job offer that comes by, regardless of how it fits with your established goals. My advice is: don't do it. After the joy of being at work again wears off in a few weeks, you will realize you are back again in a job you don't really like. (Didn't you just finish doing that?)

- Know what job-search style works for you and use it. Some people are most comfortable having specific goals and then working to achieve them on a daily or weekly basis—three job contacts a day, two hours a day on Internet search, meet once a week with a colleague, etc. Some people need a just a good menu of activities to choose from and then go from there. There are a thousand books out there on how to get a job, but they don't mean anything if they don't fit your way of problem-solving.
- It never hurts to tune up your interview skills. If you can, seek out your colleagues and have them critique you in a mock interview.
- Be open to possibility. You may find a career possibility far outside your experience that will give you a chance to utilize your talents and expertise in completely unexpected and novel ways. Check those career expectations again and see if they have the words “must be a city or county manager” there. If not, go check it out. You might like it.
- Take a temp job. Many communities need someone for just one project, one study, one community process. It gets you out of the house, back in stir, and being productive at the things you do best. You may like it enough to find yourself suddenly being a consultant.
- This last one is easy to say and incredibly hard to do—stay positive in your outlook and attitude. It is incredibly frustrating to interview, and interview, and interview again but never get the job offer. But being frustrated and angry projects to others much more than you ever realize—especially to those you are interviewing with. It doesn't do much to promote domestic tranquility, either. Stay positive. As a wise city manager once said, “Your next city just hasn't quite gotten itself ready for you yet. But it is working on it, so be a little patient.”
- Somewhere out there right now, one of your colleagues is in trouble, is about to get the boot, or just did. You ought to give them a call and see how they are doing, be a friendly ear. They would appreciate it.

Section 11: Emotional Challenges and Transition Mind Set

Entering the state of Transition for a manager is a mixed bag of emotions. It can be one of the most stressful times of your life. For some it is a shock. Some find it absurd and unfair. For others it's a relief, the pain is finally over. In reality it is all of these things and more. Being in transition is something we don't all go through but it can happen to anyone regardless of skill or tenure.

The loss of a job includes not only a financial decline but also a blow to one's ego. The manager faces losses of self-esteem, daily routine, purposeful activity, predictability and sense of security as well as income. Losing your job through a forced resignation or being fired can be very traumatic. It takes an emotional toll on you and your family much like the grieving process when a loved one dies. There is a finality to it that takes some time to get over. The process takes time and no two individuals respond in the same way or timeline.

Thinking through the loss of your job requires coping skills and recognition of a new beginning. Getting there is the goal but with high emotions it can be difficult to bring an objective view to the forefront. Understanding the stages to coping with the loss may be helpful in moving towards a new beginning.

Shock/Denial

Regardless of your situation or effort prior to the finality of being in transition there is a shock involved with the immediate response to a change. This shock is sometime followed with "I can't believe this happened" or "I don't think they understand what this means" or other such thoughts. The shock response is also one of what happens now and what am I going to do.

Anger and Frustration

Anger is derived from feelings of helplessness or that we have been wronged. There is resentment that this has happened and it is so unfair. We have no power to change it and as such we resort to anger as a coping mechanism. Anger can take the course of guilt, or anger at oneself. It can also become destructive if not kept in check.

Anger is natural and a part of the process of loss. When anger is acknowledged, honored and accepted for what it is, it can be dismissed so that we can move on. Letting go of bitterness and anger is essential for resolving any personal crisis

Introspection

Almost immediately you think about the issues or instances that lead to the change that is upon you. You bargain with yourself about how if this or that would have happened differently you wouldn't be in this situation. You imagine how you could be still doing your job if a person or situation changed. You dwell on the negatives with no real way to change the results. Part of introspection is the understanding that the issues you have had are the result of changing values. A council's values may no longer align with yours and it becomes healthier for the manager to not to continue to work for them. An enlightened council may believe they know better only to find some solutions don't work. Being removed from the situation in hindsight maybe a blessing.

This is perhaps one of the most difficult stages to get through. At times you think you have resolved these issues only to have them creep back into your thoughts. Care must be taken to avoid guilt or intense feelings of remorse. Thinking about these areas dredges up ill feelings and is really nonproductive. You can't change the past, you can only learn from it. You only have control of you in the present. The sooner you recognize these thoughts make you feel bad and work towards the present the sooner this stage can be overcome.

Depression

Not all will deal with this but many will have moments of depression. Feelings of loneliness, isolation, and self-pity are common. Symptoms of depression include lack of energy or concentration, appetite disturbances or excessive sleeping. If these continue over a period of time some professional help maybe warranted. Some people need to go through a period of this to move to a new beginning. Keeping in contact with one's peers and keeping engaged is helpful. Staying busy with fulfilling activities is also important. Depression is temporary if you get busy and take control of your future.

Acceptance

Allow time to get to this point and thoroughly experience your thoughts and feelings to yourself. Acknowledge both positive and negative feelings. Find a place to accept the situation and move on. The process of transition is one of self-discovery, reengaging with your family, and time to

pursue activities that weren't a priority when working. The situation provides an opportunity for growth. Moving towards a new beginning can and will occur when you allow yourself to move on.

Pitfalls:

- Don't avoid or minimize how you feel.
- Accept your emotions and address them. Don't over indulge in drugs or alcohol to self-medicate.
- Don't isolate yourself.

Things that can help:

- Keep a journal or write down how you feel.
- Involve your family in the situation.
- Get together with peers or others in the same situation to talk to concerning your situation.
- Take advantage of employee assistance resources through your health plan or former employer.
- Rebuild your self-esteem by listing your skills and positive attributes. Seek out people who know what you are capable of and get feedback. Find a part time job or volunteer to build your confidence. Think about other rewarding aspects of life which are truly of value.
- List the problems that went away with the job loss. Remember that this situation isn't about you, it's about them.
- Realize that the negative that was handed to you has benefits in that you now have a stressful situation behind you. The situation has created a break from the work routine and allowed you to grow personally and pursue other interests. Enjoy the time off while you have it.
- Recognize that everyone who is successful has setbacks and failures.
- Use this time of Transition to take care of yourself and explore where you truly want to spend your time in the future.
- Your next job will be better than the one you left.

Section 12: Financial Considerations

When a manager is involuntarily terminated from employment the aspect of personal finances becomes one of great concern not only for the manager but also for the family. Serious consideration needs to be made to make adjustments as soon as possible, regardless of a severance package.

It has been suggested that a 3 to 6 month living expense should be a minimum set-a-side for covering living expenses in the event of a job loss. Accomplishing this ahead of time will give you and your family added security but the majority haven't committed resources for this purpose. In the alternate a strategy needs to be implemented that deals with the present situation.

Developing a financial plan and budget needs to be accomplished as soon as possible. This plan should deal with the time during severance as well as post severance. Severance payments can take on different forms such as a lump sum payment or ongoing salary for a period of time. With ongoing salary payments, look towards accumulating cash as well as dealing with your creditors.

First steps include reducing expenses that may not be entirely necessary. Look for any economies that can be gained through changes in services or vendors. Think about *wants* versus *needs* and develop a new mindset. Consider the fact that a change in location may require a move and additional possessions become not only an unnecessary expenses but added items to move.

Your priorities are to deal with the mortgage, utilities, food and health insurance (likely post severance benefits).

Do preserve cash but also look towards the reduction of debt accumulated in higher interest credit cards or loans. Weigh the benefits or detriments of minimum payments versus elimination of debt vehicles. Consider these within your financial plan(s) as they may be difficult to address post severance.

If your plan shows there will be problems do what you can to address them with timely notification to your creditor. Work towards a solution that you can live with and maintain your credit rating.

Your financial plan needs to consider all areas of assistance that can be brought to the table. Do an inventory of what assets you have that can be brought into a solution even if these include "fall back scenarios". Understand the process and expected resources that can be received through unemployment assistance. Severance payments do not automatically preclude you from unemployment benefits. Thoroughly understand how each of your retirement approaches work. A deferred compensation program has different rules than an IRA.

When a lump sum is given for severance the same principles apply but managing the cash flow during the time of transition is a concern. Investment of these funds in some form is advised. Some portion could be used to pay off debt if you determine that to be your best option. The financial plan should address your needs and matching investments with liquidity should be your goal.

The bottom line is knowing where you're going to be financially at a certain point in time prior to getting there. Having resources during a severance period allows for adjustments to be made to minimize the downside during the time of transition and understand what your financial realities are.

Resource: [ICMA RC Employment Transition Resources](#)