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September 2006 Newsletter

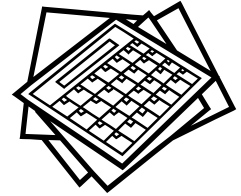
September, 2006

Budgeting Tips

With energy and gasoline prices constantly fluctuating you may be noticing a strain on your monthly budget. Here are a few tips to help you budget your money.

- Track all of your expense for one month. Write down every purchase made in a note book and keep all receipts. Track everything no matter how small! This can give you a good idea of where your money is going every month, and you can determine where you are overspending and where you need to cut back.
- Make sure you are determining the difference between a need vs. a want. Almost anyone can take a want and turn it into a need, so be careful!
- Use an envelope system to keep yourself on your budget. Have an envelope for every household item, and divide your money into each envelope. Then you can see that if you take \$40 from the grocery envelope, something else in your budget will suffer.
- Prioritize your bills. All secured debt must come first, such as your house or rent payment, or car payment. Food, clothing, and shelter are a necessity, but the type of food and clothing you purchase can make a big difference in your budget.

These are just a few tips to help you out with your budget. If you are still having trouble developing a monthly budget, contact your counselor for assistance.



Dates to Remember

* **CCCC is closed every Thursday from 9:00—10:00.**

* **CCCC is closed from 9:00—10:00 Wednesday September 27th.**

* **CCCC will be closed September 4th.**

* **CWCID Module 2 September 18th 10:00—11:00 and 5:30—6:30.**

* **CWCID Module 3 September 25th 10:00—11:00 and 5:30—6:30.**

* **CCCC will be closed Friday September 29th.**

Holiday Shopping?

I know, I know, it does seem a bit early. But really is it? With kids back in school and everyone getting back into a new routine it is easy to forget that holidays are only a few months away. Try to avoid that ever haunting question when December arrives; how am I going to afford to buy gifts? Start shopping now! You can take advantage of great sales on summer items that can be used next year, and you can take advantage of the great back to school specials on items that can be used throughout the year. Don't wait until the last minute and put your budget in a crunch. Working on your shopping little by little can relieve a lot of stress come Holiday time!



CONSUMER ADVISORY

September 2006

By Attorney General Tom Miller

How to Deal With Credit Card Offers

Have you received a solicitation by mail or telephone offering you a new credit card? Should you sign up -- or tear it up? If you're interested, how do you "shop" for credit cards?

First of all, consider the "just-say-NO" approach. Use a minimum number of credit cards to lower the danger of unwittingly falling into expensive credit card debt. (It is not a good idea to sign up for a credit card just to get so-called "free" items.) If you want to reduce credit card solicitations by mail or phone, ask the credit reporting agencies not to sell your name to credit card marketers and others. Call 1-888-567-8688 (1-888-5-OPT OUT.) You can opt out of solicitations for two years, or permanently.

Second, if you are considering a card, remember to "shop" and compare. Take your time. Get all the information before you decide whether to apply and which card to pick. For many more tips on how to avoid credit card hazards and how to choose the best credit card for you, go to: .

Key questions when you consider getting a credit card:

What are the interest rates? Cards often have multiple rates, stated as the APR, or annual percentage rate of interest. Very low advertised rates are usually only "teaser" rates, and a much higher regular rate kicks in after a few months.

Are there steep "penalty" rates? Penalty rates may be triggered by as little as one late payment, and they can soar as high as 24% to 30% APR for some out-of-state card issuers. Check what triggers penalty rates and how long they apply.

Are there other hidden fees? Most cards have cash-advance fees with no "grace period" -- the interest clock starts ticking at once. Late fees and over-the-limit fees can go as high as \$30 on some out-of-state cards. (Cards from Iowa issuers can't go that high -- another reason to consider cards from Iowa credit unions and banks.) See if the card charges an annual fee. Also, avoid expensive "add-on" items such as credit card protection plans, insurance, or buyers' clubs.

Manage your credit cards carefully to avoid expensive credit card debt. Pay on time and pay the full balance each month if you possibly can. Most credit card companies will not impose a finance charge (except on cash advances) if you pay in full before the due-date on your bill. Avoid "maxing-out" on cards or paying only the minimum amount due.

Contact the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Div., D.M., IA 50319. Call 281-5926 or 888-777-4590 (toll-free.) On the web: www.iowaattorneygeneral.org