

Money Management

As tax time comes and goes, most of us are forced to confront the way we handle our money. And, during the current economic upheaval, many families are even more concerned about our income, saving and spending than we have been in the past. We may ask ourselves these questions: How can we make the most of our money? How can we avoid wasting it? How can we stop living paycheck to paycheck? What steps have we taken to achieve our goals?

Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Central Florida and the Florida Gulf Coast is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that helps individuals and families of all backgrounds and income levels avoid and conquer financial crisis. For more than 30 years, the service has provided free and confidential budget, credit and housing counseling, debt management, community outreach and education.

“Our mission is to help financially distressed people move from crisis to control by providing compassionate service with innovative and practical solutions,” says Priscilla Tapp, financial education specialist for CCCS-CF. “We see ourselves as a financial emergency room, creating hope and inspiring lasting change.”

CCCS-CF currently serves families in the Deltona area along with thirteen other office locations throughout Central Florida and the Gulf Coast. Telephone and Internet counseling are also available, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Plus Tapp recommended Web sites containing advice anyone can use. Here are a few tips:

- Set aside 10 percent of your income for savings.
- Keep track of your everyday spending. Those little expenses do add up quickly!
- Set aside an additional 10 percent for retirement.
- Use the rest of your income to pay debts and bills.
- Have the right insurance in place, including auto, health, disability and life insurance.
- Have an emergency fund (see the first tip about savings). “We should all have three to six months of living expenses in a savings account, in case of emergencies.”
- Have a will.
- Seek help before it’s too late.

Local Resources

- **Consumer Credit Counseling Service**
1-800-251-CCCS (2227), info@cccsinc.org
Tapp says the first thing to do when seeking counseling is to call the 800 number, which operates 24/7. She says 90 percent of sessions regarding housing, credit cards and budgeting are conducted by phone, which is usually most convenient for the consumer. If a face-to-face appointment is needed, it would take place at Fifth Third Bank at 2730 Elkcam Blvd. in Deltona.
- **Campaign for Working Families**
386-366-9049, <http://cfwffla.org>
Families in Volusia and Flagler Counties could have up to \$5,600 additional income this year by taking advantage of the earned income tax credit - but they may not know they're eligible. The Campaign for Working Families is a prosperity campaign working to increase the resources available to the working poor, primarily through providing free tax preparation and financial literacy training so they can begin to build assets and become financially secure - giving people the tools to succeed -- changing the way people live.

For more help, go to:

- <http://www.cccsinc.org/> or <http://www.cccsenespanol.org/>
Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Greater Atlanta serves people in financial need in all 50 states via telephone, Internet (the site is offered in English and in Spanish) and at 33 offices. Services are offered in English, Spanish and American Sign Language.



www.deltonaFORyou.org

- <http://www.credibilityu.org>
Tools, calculators, expert tips and training are available here, Online webinars and portable podcasts provide information on managing personal finances with confidence.
- <http://www.bankrate.com/>
This site is about more than just mortgage rates. Check out the home page and click the tabs for details about investments, savings and checking accounts, credit cards, debt management and other topics.
- <http://www.ftc.gov/consumer>
This section of the Federal Trade Commission's site offers practical information to help consumers avoid rip-offs and exercise their rights.