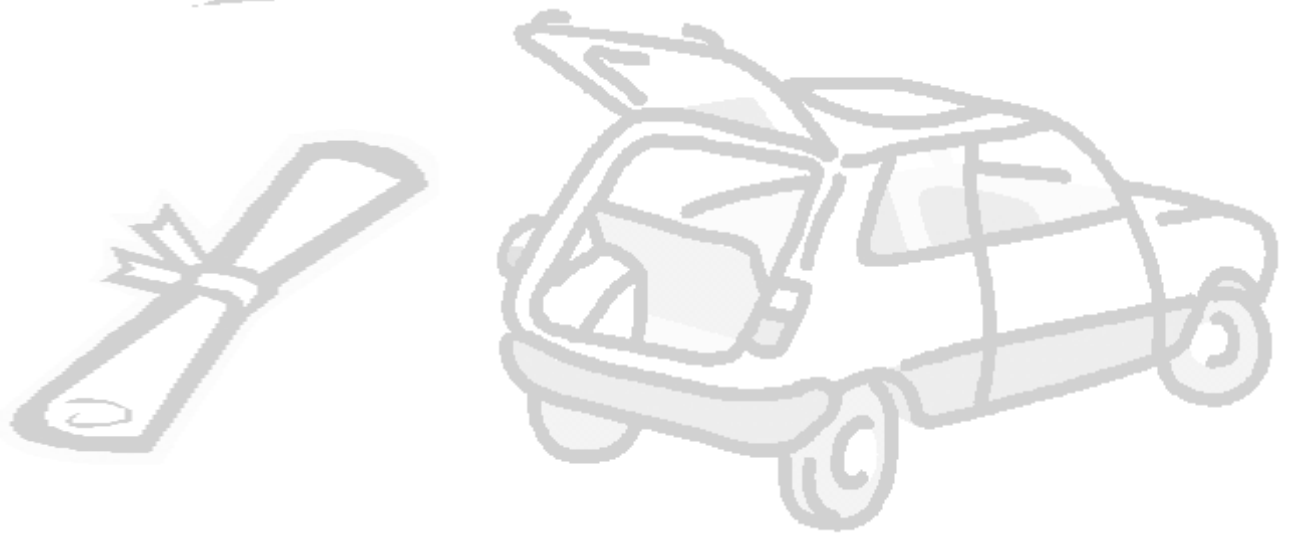


Your Family's Money

Simple Ways to Build a Better Future

A Handbook for Hartford Families



CAHS

Connecticut Association for Human Services

Connecticut Association for Human Services

110 Bartholomew Avenue – Suite 4030
Hartford, CT 06106
(860) 951-2212

The Connecticut Association for Human Services
is a not-for-profit organization working
to strengthen low-income families and children.

We wish to thank the Annie E. Casey Foundation
for making this publication possible.

Your Family's Money

Simple Ways to Build a Better Future

A Handbook for Hartford Families

Claudia L. Keeley

CAHS
Published by
Connecticut Association for Human Services, Inc.
Hartford, CT

The contents of this book may be duplicated so long as the Connecticut Association for Human Services is cited as the source of the information.

Suggested Citation:

Keeley, Claudia L. (2003)
Your Family's Money: Simple Ways to Build a Better Future, A Handbook for Hartford Families
Family Economic Security Series
Hartford, CT: Connecticut Association for Human Services.

For additional copies, further information, technical assistance, or presentations, contact:

Connecticut Association for Human Services
110 Bartholomew Avenue, Suite 4030
Hartford, CT 06106
(860) 951-2212
email: info@cahs.org <http://www.cahs.org>

Foreword

Your Family's Money is the first book in a series of handbooks devoted to Family Economic Security. I would like to thank the Annie E. Casey Foundation for their continued commitment to Connecticut's families and for their support in the development of this book. I would also like to give special thanks to Amy E. Sampson, Ph.D. for her expert advice and guidance.

- *Claudia Keeley*

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-------|
| What are the important parts? | 3 |
| Building assets | 4 |
| Saving for your future | 5 |
| Hartford neighborhood banks and credit unions | 6 |
| Using your neighborhood bank | 7 |
| Renting vs. buying | 8 |
| Buying a house | 9 |
| Home buyer education | 10 |
| Special programs for home buyers | 11 |
| Education | 12 |
| Higher education is for everybody! | 13 |
| Can my family afford college? | 14 |
| Hartford area education programs | 15-17 |
| Using your money | 18 |
| Building and keeping good credit | 19 |
| Credit cards – what’s all the “fine print” | 20 |
| Using your money in smart ways | 21 |
| Check-Cashers: A high-cost way to get your money! | 22 |
| Rent-To-Own: It’s not such a good deal! | 23 |
| Making credit work for you | 24 |
| Buying a car | 25 |
| Credit “repair” | 26 |
| Beware of predatory lenders | 27 |
| Reverse mortgages | 28 |
| Planning | 29 |
| Planning for the future | 30 |
| Retirement – Start saving now! | 31 |
| Why budget? | 32 |
| Sample budget | 33 |
| Notes | 34 |



What are the important parts?

1) Building Assets – Assets are different from income.

Income is how much you or your family earns. Assets are things such as a home, car, retirement account, or savings account. Assets are used to measure the wealth of people or families. Two families can have the same income but the family with assets is said to have more wealth than the family without assets even though they make the same money.



2) Education – A good education is the best investment of all.

Education is the key to getting a good job. The time spent studying and the money spent on education will come back to families as better jobs and better opportunities.

3) Using your money - Think smart when you use your money.

Every time you spend your money you make a choice. Knowing what's a smart way to use your money and what's not will help you and your family to have more money left to build assets. Some of the parts of thinking about your money include:

- \$ Why it is important to save – even if you think you can't.
- \$ Making your credit work for you.
- \$ Why using check cashers and rent-to-own stores is not a good idea.
- \$ Other ways you can be in control of your money.

4) Planning – Making a plan can help you reach your goals.

Take the time to write down what your goals are and to figure out what you will need to do to reach your goals. Making a written plan will also help you decide what things you need to do right away and what things can be done later. Putting things in writing can also give you a clear picture of what you spend and make it easier to see where you can cut back so you can save.

The Hartford Public Library can help you find books or Internet sites that can give you more information on the topics in this book.



Building Assets-

Assets can be left to your children as an inheritance.

Assets are something you can borrow against when you need money.

Assets can be money, a home, or investments.



Saving for your future-

Why is it important to save?

- ▶ Saving money can give you and your family a “cushion” when you have unplanned bills or if you lose a job. It’s a good idea to save enough money so that you can pay your bills for three months.
- ▶ If you save money to buy something, such as a new TV, you will be able to buy at a store that has the TV on sale and end up with more money for your family.
- ▶ Regular saving can give your family the chance to own a home, buy a car for work, get a better education, or start a business.

What kinds of savings are there?

- ▶ Many banks and credit unions now have starter savings accounts.
- ▶ You can buy U.S. Savings Bonds at any bank. They take several years to earn all they will be worth but they are a safe way to save.
- ▶ Some community agencies or employers have new savings plans called “Individual Development Accounts (IDAs)”. These plans can only be used for certain things, like buying a house or saving for school. The great thing about IDAs is that your savings are matched. For example, if you are in an IDA program with a 2 to 1 match, every \$1 that you save earns another \$2. Plus, you go to class about how to handle your money.
- ▶ Some employers offer savings plans called 401(k) plans to save for retirement or you can put money in an “IRA” plan at your bank. You might even be able to take an income tax deduction.

Who needs savings?

EVERYBODY!

- ▶ Just a few dollars saved every week will add up!
- ▶ Having savings makes you less dependent on others!
- ▶ Having savings lets you make more choices!
- ▶ Saving can change your family’s life!



Before you pay everybody else, pay YOURSELF first by saving!

Check out your local bank or credit union – compare their savings plans!

Get some good information at your public library!

Start a regular savings plan and stick to it!

Hartford Neighborhood Banks and Credit Unions

How should you choose a bank or credit union? First, figure out what kind of services you need and check the prices. Shop around and think about your future needs. After you know what you need, then think about things like location, number of ATMs, and branch hours. Call or visit your local bank or find out about them on the computer.

First Union National Bank 30 State House Square – 522-7464 – www.wachovia.com
114 Woodland Street – 278-2264

Low-cost checking and starter savings accounts are available as well as many types of loans. Customers can also use ATM service and online banking.

Fleet Bank 1-800-841-4000 (All Branches) – www.fleet.com

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 185 Asylum Street | 777 Main Street (Main Branch) |
| 273 Barbour Street (Unity Plaza) | 2775 Main Street |
| 790 Maple Avenue | 701 Blue Hills Avenue |
| 85 Seymour Street | 550 Farmington Avenue |
| 919 Albany Avenue | 70 Farmington Avenue |

Fleet Bank has many ATM sites in Hartford

Fleet offers several types of checking and savings accounts, including a low-cost basic checking account. In addition to ATMs at the branch locations, Fleet has many ATMs located throughout Hartford. Many types of loans are available including car loans, mortgages, small business loans, and home improvement loans. Online and telephone banking.

Hartford Federal Credit Union 964 Asylum Avenue - 527-6663 – www.hartfordfcu.com

Hartford residents can join this member-owned, not-for-profit credit union for a small fee. Full lines of banking products are offered and are competitive with the major banks. On-line access is available and membership is open to anyone who lives, works, or goes to church or school in Hartford.

People's Bank 1700 Park Street – 233-3671 – www.peoples.com
290 Franklin Avenue – 296-6573
Super Stop & Shop, 150 New Park Avenue – 236-1141

People's has several low- or no-cost checking plans available. There is a savings plan for children and a low-minimum savings account for adults as well as college and retirement savings plans. Consumer loans, car loans, mortgage, and home improvement/home equity loans are available. The Stop & Shop location offers expanded hours.

Sovereign Bank 768-2265 (all branches) – www.sovereignbank.com
568 Franklin Avenue
100 Pearl Street
90 State House Square

Sovereign's services include low-cost checking, savings, and a full range of loans. On-line banking is also available. There are ATMs in four other locations in Hartford.

Webster Bank 324 Franklin Avenue – 692-1500 – www.websterbank.com
680 Park Street – 244-8002
108 Farmington Avenue – 723-5440
410 Homestead Avenue – 692-1400
185 Asylum Street (City Place) – 692-1454

Webster Bank has several checking packages, including low-cost, and has many types of loans and other services including on-line banking. There are ATMs in six other locations in Hartford.

Using your neighborhood bank

Start with a savings account-

Many Hartford banks and credit unions offer starter savings accounts that don't have to have a minimum amount in them. Open an account and pick something small you want to save for such as a microwave. Set up a savings plan such as \$1 or \$5 a week and stick with it. You can also try ways to save extra money by putting in money you won't miss:



- \$ At the end of each day put all your loose change in a jar. Once a week add the loose change to the amount you already planned to save.
- \$ Stop buying lottery or scratch-off tickets and add that amount to your savings OR don't buy as many tickets and put the money in your savings.
- \$ Bring your lunch to work more often and put the savings in your account.
- \$ Make coffee at work or get a thermos bottle and bring it with you – put the savings in your account.

Even a small amount saved regularly will build up!

| | Saving \$1 a day | | Saving \$5 a day | |
|---------|------------------|----------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| | No interest | 5% Daily Compounding | No Interest | 5% Daily Compounding |
| Year 1 | \$365 | \$374 | \$1,825 | \$1,871 |
| Year 5 | \$1,825 | \$2,073 | \$9,125 | \$10,366 |
| Year 10 | \$3,650 | \$4,735 | \$18,250 | \$23,677 |
| Year 30 | \$10,950 | \$25,415 | \$54,750 | \$127,077 |

Source: FDIC Money Smart

Checking accounts don't cost as much as you think!

Most Hartford banks and credit unions have starter checking accounts that are either very low-cost or free. These accounts cost less than check cashers as long as you're careful. Any bank will show you how to use a checking account. If you are careless with a checking account it will cost you extra fees but if you carefully log everything in and balance your account every month you will save money. You also will not have to spend time and money going to check cashers and it costs a lot less to write checks than it does to buy money orders. PLUS, you will get to know the people at your bank and they will know you.



Renting vs. Buying

Should I keep renting or buy a house?



There are good and bad sides to both:

| | The Good Side | The Bad Side |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Buying a House | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You own something that has value after you make your monthly payment You can make changes to the house or yard whenever you want. You don't have to depend on a landlord to take care of the property. You might get a tax deduction. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You could lose your house if you don't make the payments or pay the property taxes. You are responsible for taking care of the property. It's not as easy to move. |
| Renting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You don't have to take care of the house or yard. Moving is easier. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You don't get any tax deductions. You don't own anything of value after you pay your monthly rent. Your rent can be raised and you can be evicted |

Is My Family Ready to Buy a Home?

- Is my family's income steady?
- Have the people in the family who will need the loan been working for 2-3 years?
- Does our family have good credit?
- Are we able to pay our bills?
- Can we afford the mortgage AND all the other things like insurance and repairs?
- Do we have any money saved for a downpayment?

If you said "yes" to these, you may be ready to buy a home.
 If you said "no" to any, you need to work on getting better on those.

First Steps:











- Get a copy of your credit report so you can correct errors or work on weak spots. (See the page called "Credit Repair" for addresses and phone numbers.)
- Visit a local bank. They have a way for you to see how big a loan you can pay for.
- Visit the Hartford Public Library for more information. Use their computers to visit helpful web sites like www.fanniemae.com

Buying a House

You've made the decision to buy a house. If you've spent some time planning and saving, you probably have put together a downpayment. If you don't have much saved for a downpayment, there still may be ways you can buy a house. If you've decided you're ready to start looking, here are some tips and some places to get good information.



What are some of the words you'll need to know? These are just a few:

-  **Broker** – A mortgage broker is in business to help a buyer find financing. A broker can be a lender or a real estate agent. A broker wants to make money and is not necessarily looking out for the best deal for the buyer, so choose a broker carefully.
-  **Closing costs** – The charges for the actual transfer of the house from one person to another. These costs have to be paid when you sign the papers, are not part of the monthly mortgage payment, and can be quite costly.
-  **Conventional Loan** – A mortgage loan that is not made or insured by the federal government.
-  **Downpayment** – The downpayment is the part of the home's price that the buyer pays. The larger the downpayment, the less money has to be borrowed.
-  **Fixed Rate Loan** – A mortgage loan that has a payment amount and interest rate that stays the same for the term of the loan.
-  **Mortgage Payment** – Your monthly mortgage payment usually has four parts: principal (the amount you actually borrowed), interest (the monthly finance charge for the loan), taxes (most lenders ask you to pay your property taxes as part of your monthly mortgage payment), and insurance (insurance on the property that is paid as part of your monthly mortgage payment).
-  **Point** – A point is a dollar amount that equals one percent of the loan. It is a fee that is paid to the mortgage broker or the lender and is often tied to the interest rate. For example, two points on a \$50,000 mortgage is \$1,000.
-  **Pre-Approved** – A lender has already agreed to a mortgage. You will know how much you can spend and sellers will know you're serious.
-  **Pre-Qualified** – A lender gives an informal, basic idea of what you might be able to afford, if all information is verified. It is not the same as being pre-approved.
-  **Variable Rate Loan (sometimes called Adjustable Rate Mortgages)** – This kind of mortgage loan has an interest rate that might change during the term of the loan.

There are several websites that have “mortgage calculators”. These calculators will allow you to figure out a monthly mortgage payment you can afford. Try www.fanniemae.com, <http://houseandhome.msn.com/homes/homesoverview>, or www.hud.gov/buying/index. These web sites will also give you lots of useful information. Your bank or credit union will also give you this information. You might consider taking a homebuyer education course. After all, this is probably the biggest purchase you'll ever make so it's smart to get as much information as you can.



Home Buyer Education

Why would I need home buyer education? Buying a house isn't easy! There are contracts, mortgages, special terms (like "points"), lawyers to be hired, inspectors to be hired, real estate people to deal with, deadlines, and lots of other likely headaches. Your best weapon in this battle is to come armed with education so you'll know what the steps are and be able to make smart choices. Making the wrong choice on a mortgage can cost you a lot of money so spend some time on homebuyer education. Some programs also offer special deals plus you get to ask questions!

Hartford area home buyer education classes:

Christian Activities Council

47 Vine Street - Hartford, CT 06112 (860) 527-9860
Services: Special landlease training program

Consumer Credit Counseling Service (CCCS) of Southern New England

111 Founders Plaza (800) 208-2227
East Hartford, CT 06108 Classes in English
Services: Pre-purchase/Home Buyer Education, Credit Counseling, Default/Delinquency Assistance, and Reverse Mortgage/LD

Co-op Initiatives

20-28 Sargent St. #102 - Hartford 06105 (860) 724-4940
Services: Pre-purchase and support services for people with disabilities

Co-opportunity

117 Murphy Road - Hartford, CT 06114 (860) 236-3617
Services: Pre-purchase and post-purchase counseling, IDAs

Hartford Areas Rally Together (H.A.R.T.)

423 Washington Street (860) 525-3449
Hartford, CT 06106 Classes in English and Spanish
Services: Pre-purchase/Home Buyer Education, Credit Counseling, and How to be a Landlord

Housing Education Resource Center

901 Wethersfield Avenue (860) 296-4242
Hartford, CT 06114 Classes in English and Spanish
Services: Pre-purchase/Home Buyer Education, Credit Counseling, Default/Delinquency Assistance, How to be a Landlord, and Rural Home Buyer Education/Assistance

Urban League of Greater Hartford

140 Woodland Street (860) 527-0147
Hartford, CT 06105 Classes in English and Spanish
Services: Pre-purchase/Home Buyer Education, Credit Counseling, Default/Delinquency Assistance, and How to Be a Landlord

Contact the Hartford office of Fannie Mae at 278-3936 to see if any special homebuyer adult-education classes are being offered near you.



Special programs for home buyers

There are several programs available to help low- and middle-income homebuyers. Some are available statewide and others are special programs designed for people interested in buying a home in Hartford.

- ✘ **HouseHartford** – offers homebuyers help with downpayment and closing costs for a home purchase in Hartford. Income limits apply. Call 522-4888 for more information.
- ✘ **Christian Activities Council** – urban/suburban program provides downpayment assistance for first time homebuyers in 22 towns in greater Hartford. Certain restrictions apply. Call 527-9860 for more information.
- ✘ **Hartford Housing Authority – New Community Program.** Duplexes for low income families who must purchase their home within five years. Contact 723-8463 for information.
- ✘ **Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA)** –Low interest rate loans to assist first time homebuyers of low to moderate incomes. CHFA may have a special program available that fits your needs, including programs for homes that need rehabilitation. The Downpayment Assistance Program (DAP) is also available to certain borrowers. Call 721-9501 or www.chfa.org.
- ✘ **Hartford Area Habitat for Humanity** – need-based homeownership program combining reduced mortgage costs, owner sweat equity, and volunteer contractors. Office is at 780-C Windsor Street in Hartford. Interested persons should call 541-2208 for the schedule of the next required applicant information meeting.
- ✘ **FannieMae HouseConnecticut** - Fannie Mae offers a range of loan programs including: Flexible 97 and Flexible 100 programs, HomeStyle Renovations Program and the Community Solutions program for teachers, police officers, firefighters, and healthcare workers. Information on these programs is available on their website at www.fanniemae.com. Call 797-9015 for information about the Fannie Mae City of Hartford Down Payment and Closing Cost Assistance Program and 757-9014 for the Fannie Mae Hartford Multi-Family Home Program.
- ✘ **City of Hartford** – Several programs are available for Hartford residents. For example, Hartford Remodeler, a partnership between the City of Hartford, Webster Bank, and Fannie Mae, offers lower cost second mortgage loans to city residents who need to rehab their home. Call Housing & Community Development at 757-9005 for more information.
- ✘ **Individual Development Accounts** –Special “matched” savings accounts geared for homeownership are available through Co-Opportunity, 117 Murphy Rd. – Hartford (236-3617) or through the Community Renewal Team (CRT) office in East Hartford (568-0315)

These are only some of the programs available. The Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) website at www.chfa.org or the Fannie Mae website at www.fanniemae.com are two of the best sources of information.

Education-

A good education is the key to getting a good job.

Everybody can afford to improve his or her education.

If you improve your education, your children are more likely to succeed in school.

Higher education is for everybody!

Do you mean everybody should go to college? No, what everyone needs is higher education! Higher education isn't just college, it's getting the skills for a better job. There are lots of higher education programs in or near Hartford. Higher education includes college, nurse's training, learning to be a plumber, or other technical jobs.



How do I find out about different kinds of training and how I can pay for school?

If you're still in high school, talk to your guidance counselor. Most guidance offices have loads of information on colleges, technical schools, and training programs. Guidance offices also will have computers so you can visit many of the helpful web sites. If you're going back to school, go to your branch of the Hartford Public Library. They have lots of information and computers you can use.

Places you can get more information:

www.ctdhe.org/EEIC - Connecticut Dept. of Higher Education – Education and Employment Center contains information for older and younger students. The web site has many links including links to all colleges and universities in Connecticut. You can also reach them by calling 947-1810, weekdays between 9 and 4.

www.cttech.org - Connecticut Regional and Vocational-Technical School System. This web site is good for both high school and adult students interested in technical or vocational schools. You can also reach them toll-free at 1-800-822-6832.

www.finaid.org - The Smart Student's Guide to Financial Aid – This is one of the best sites for information about financial aid.

www.students.gov - U. S. Dept. of Education - This is a great site for all types of general information for students. There is also a Spanish language link available.

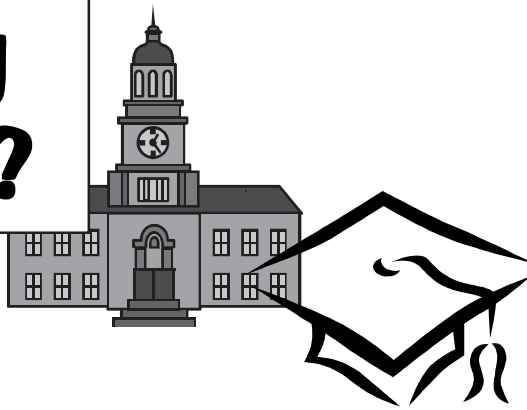
www.back2college.com - Back to College – General information web site for returning or non-traditional students.

www.ed.gov/finaid.html - Federal Student Financial Aid Information Center - U. S. Dept. of Education (Spanish available). You can also call toll-free at 1-800-4-FED-AID.

www.fafsa.ed.gov - FAFSA on the Web – Federal financial information and on-line application forms.



Can my family afford college?



But doesn't college cost \$30,000 a year? **SOME** colleges can cost a lot of money BUT high-priced schools are not the only place you can go. There are ways to find a way to pay for almost ANY kind of education you want after high school. It's not easy, but any student who is willing to work hard can go to school.

College can cost less money than you think! Most private schools give the most financial aid to the students who need it the most. Also, Connecticut has excellent state university and community college systems. Fill out the "FAFSA" form for the U. S. Dept. of Education and you may qualify for a Pell Grant (which doesn't have to be repaid) or low interest student loans. It doesn't cost much to apply to school and you might be surprised about the amount of aid you can get.

How can anyone ever pay off student loans? It's not easy, but the amount you might have to borrow for school should be more than paid back because you will be able to earn more money. Also, the federal student loan program gives many kinds of help to meet the needs of almost anyone who needs a loan. If you have a hard time with your loan payments, lots of lenders will work with you to work on a payment plan – after all, they want you to be able to pay back your loans, too.

Aren't private schools better than state schools? That's hard to say and a lot depends on what you're going to study. Many state schools do a great job and a college degree from a state school is sure better than no degree at all! Students who think they can't afford private school could go to a public school for the first year or two and then transfer to a private school. Students that have very good records at state colleges might get more financial aid if the private school likes a state college student because they have proven they can do well.

Who can I ask about school? Lots of people! If you're still in high school, talk to your guidance counselor. Call a college that you might be interested in and ask them what kind of classes they would like you to take in high school to improve your chances of getting into their school. Ask your librarian! The Hartford Public Library is one of the best sources of information about education. If you have a computer or can use one at the library, try going to the U. S. Department of Education's web site at www.student.gov for all kinds of facts. If you've been out of school for a while, there are lots of new programs for returning adults – check it out!

Hartford Area Education Programs

There are lots of places where adults can go to improve their education. Some are in Hartford, like Capital Community College, and others are easy to get to in other nearby towns. There's no reason why you can't find something to fit your needs!

Literacy- If you know someone who doesn't know how to read or who only reads a little, there are free reading classes in Hartford:

Greater Hartford Literacy Council

99 Pratt Street, 5th Fl. - Hartford
522-7323 or 722-READ

Rambuh Family Center

16 Coventry Street – Hartford - 543-8840

YMCA – Greater Hartford

Read to Succeed Adult Reading Clinic

160 Jewell Street – Hartford – 522-9622

Loaves and Fishes Ministries

360 Farmington Avenue – Hartford - 524-1730

Hartford Public Schools Adult Ed

Sends residents looking for literacy class to:
Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford

Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford

30 Arbor Street – Hartford-233-3853

Trust House

155 Wyllys Street – Hartford - 278-8387

El Paraiso Infantil Day Care Center

80 Jefferson Street - Hartford 524-6853

John C. Clark School

Family Resource Center

75 Clark Street - Hartford – 722-8058

Capitol Region Education Council Hartford

Technical Training Facility

111 Charter Oak Avenue–Hartford-247-2732

English as a Second Language (ESL or ESOL) – English classes for adults whose first language is not English. These classes can help you get ready to start school, get a better job, or just make communication easier.

Adult Basic Education (ABE) or General Educational Development (GED)- Basic high school skills leading to a GED diploma.

There are lots of places in Hartford for free ESL, ABE, or GED classes:

Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford

30 Arbor Street – Hartford – 233-3853

Capitol Region Education Council

111 Charter Oak Avenue –Hartford –247-2732

Family Resource Centers:

Rambuh – 2 Holcomb Street – 543-8840

Annie Fisher – 280 Plainfield Street - 695-3552

Burns – 195 Putnam Street – 727-0666

Centro De Desarrollo Y Reafirmacion Familiar

80 Jefferson Street – 524-6853 Betances– 42 Charter

Oak Avenue – 706-2237

Clark- 75 Clark Street – 722-8058

M.D.Fox-470 Maple Avenue – 695-3650

Mary Hooker – 200 Sherbrooke Ave. –722-8938

M.L.King- 25 Ridgefield Street –722-8862

Sanchez- 176 Babcock Street –335-1503

House of Bread H.O.M.E. Program

1453 Main Street – Hartford – 549-4188

Hartford Public Schools Adult Ed

245 Locust Street – Hartford – 695-5840

Family Resource Centers:

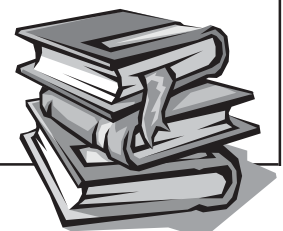
SAND Elementary–1750 Main Street – 722-8889

Southside Family House – 15 Newfield Ave. –
953-0113

Trust House – 155 Wyllys St. – 278-8387

Village for Families & Children

1680 Albany Avenue- 236-4511



Hartford Area Education Programs

English as a Second Language (ESL or ESOL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), or General Education Development (GED) programs in Hartford (cont'd.):

Connecticut Puerto Rican Forum

95 Park Street – Hartford
247-3227

Hartford Public Library

ESOL only

Central, Campfield, and Dwight branches
695-6337

Goodwin College

745 Burnside Avenue - East Hartford
528-4111

A.I. Prince Technical School

500 Brookfield Street – Hartford
951-7112 x 230

Urban League of Greater Hartford

140 Woodland Street - Hartford
527-0147

Capitol Community College-

ESL Program

950 Main Street – Hartford
906-5203

Jubilee House

40 Clifford Street – Hartford
247-3030

Capitol Region Career Services

3850 Main Street – Hartford
522-6550



Computer classes – learn the basic computer skills to help get a better job or go to school. Free classes are available in Hartford at:

Family Resource Centers

Rambuh – 2 Holcomb Street – 543-8840
Annie Fisher – 280 Plainfield Street - 695-3552
Burns – 195 Putnam Street – 727-0666
Centro De Desarrollo Y Reafirmacion Familiar
80 Jefferson Street – 524-6853
Betances– 42 Charter Oak Avenue – 706-2237
Clark- 75 Clark Street – 722-8058
M.D.Fox-470 Maple Avenue – 695-3650
Mary Hooker – 200 Sherbrooke Avenue–
722-8938
M.L.King- 25 Ridgefield Street –722-8862
Sanchez- 176 Babcock Street –335-1503
SAND Elementary–1750 Main Street –722-8889
Southside Family House – 15 Newfield Avenue -
953-0113
Trust House – 155 Wyllys Street – 278-8387
Village for Families & Children
1680 Albany Avenue - 236-4511

Liberty Technology Outreach Center

23 Vine Street – Hartford 522-3296 x 14

21st Century Community Learning

Hartford Public High School

55 Forest Street – Hartford – 695-1326

Hartford Public Library

Neighborhood Technology Centers:

Central Library- 500 Main Street - 695-6295
Albany Branch – 1550 Albany Avenue– 695-7310
SAND/Ropkins – 1750 Main Street – 695-7520

San Juan Center

1297 Main Street – Hartford 522-2205

Together We Can

305 Greenfield Street – Hartford 527-5812

Trinfo.Café

Trinity College neighborhood computer center.
1300 Broad Street – Hartford 987-6200
Programs for Hartford residents living within a ½ mile radius of Trinity College

A.I. Prince Technical School

500 Brookfield Street – Hartford 951-7112 x 330

Capitol Region Education Council Hartford Technical Training Facility

111 Charter Oak Avenue – Hartford - 247-2732

Hartford Area Education Programs

Training is available in many skilled trades either through local schools, trade unions, the Department of Labor or through many job-training programs. Contacts for Hartford programs are:

Hartford Connecticut Works Center

3580 Main Street - Hartford
566-5771 or 522-6550

Connecticut Dept. of Higher EdEducation and Employment Center

1-800-842-0229 www.ctdhe.org/EEIC
Offers full list of approved private vocational schools and a search by program feature at www.ctdhe.org/posa/POSA.htm

Hartford Job Corps

560-2077

**Capitol Region Education Council
Hartford Technical Training Facility**

111 Charter Oak Avenue – Hartford
247-2732

These local colleges, universities, and technical schools offer a wide variety of programs ranging from non-credit certificate programs to advanced degrees:

Capital Community College

950 Main Street - Hartford
906-5130 www.ccc.commnet.edu

Goodwin College

745 Main Street - East Hartford
528-4111 www.goodwincollege.org

**Connecticut Dept. of Higher Education
Education and Employment Center**

1-800-842-0229 or www.ctdhe.org/EEIC also offers full list of approved private vocational schools and a search by program feature at www.ctdhe.org/posa/POSA.htm

Hartford College for Women

1265 Asylum Avenue - Hartford
768-5600 www.uhaweb.hartford.edu/hcw/

Rensselaer at Hartford

275 Windsor Street – Hartford
548-2800 www.rh.edu

Central Connecticut State University

1615 Stanley Street - New Britain
832-CCSU or www.ccsu.edu

Manchester Community College

Great Path- Manchester
512-3000 www.mcc.commnet.edu

University of Hartford

200 Bloomfield Avenue – West Hartford
768-4801 www.hartford.edu

University of Connecticut

Hartford Campus
85 Lawler Road- West Hartford
570-9214 www.hartford.uconn.edu

St. Joseph's College

238 Steele Road – West Hartford
232-4571 www.sjc.edu

Trinity College

300 Summit Street – Hartford
297-2000 www.trincoll.edu

Charter Oak State College

On-line and video-based courses
832-3800 or www.charteroak.edu



This is only a partial list of the many education programs available in and around Hartford. Your local branch of the Hartford Public Library has computers for visiting the websites listed above and can give you other information on education or training programs.

Using your money-

It is important to build and keep good credit.

Rent-to-own stores, lottery tickets, and other bad ideas.

You can be in control of your money instead of your money controlling you!

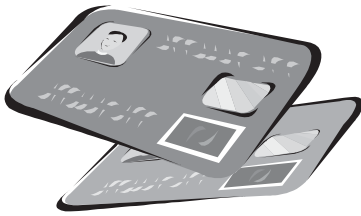
Building and Keeping Good Credit

Having bad credit can mean you can't buy important things like a house or a car. It can also mean that if someone will loan you money, to buy a car for example, it will cost you a lot more money than someone with good credit will pay. The first step toward building good credit is to get a copy of your credit report. The addresses for the credit reporting agencies are on page **25**, titled "Credit Repair". Once you have gotten your credit report and made sure that all the information is correct, you can plan ways to rebuild your bad credit or to keep your good credit. Here are some things that will help:



- ➊ **Pay your bills on time!** This is the single most important thing you can do to build and keep your credit. Pay your bills as early as you can. The credit companies keep track of whether you pay your bills early or at the last minute.
- ➋ If you have no credit and you need to build credit, try putting a large down payment on a purchase and financing the rest of the cost. You could also open checking and savings accounts at a bank and then apply for a small personal loan. A department store might be more willing to give you a credit card than a national company. Try asking a lender to look at your history of making rent and utility payments as a "credit history" for a small loan.
- ➌ Making no payments on a bill, until you save enough money to pay off a past-due balance, will hurt your credit more than contacting the lender and trying to set up a payment plan. If you are having trouble doing this or you have many problems to be straightened out, consider credit counseling.
- ➍ Identity theft has ruined many people's credit and is a growing problem. When a thief gets your Social Security number, bank account, or credit card information, he or she might make purchases or open accounts in your name. Never give your personal information to someone you don't know or are not sure about. Be extra suspicious of people who ask for information over the telephone if they are not someone you called. For more information, check out the Federal Trade Commission's website at www.consumer.gov/idtheft.
- ➎ No one can have correct information taken off your credit report and no one can create a new identity for you. A credit counselor who will do these things is not honest.
- ➏ Always shop around for the best prices or loan rates. Be very careful before you take out any loan that uses your house for security. You could lose your house.
- ➐ Don't apply for every credit card you're offered. Too much available credit will be counted against you if you apply for a mortgage.

Good credit can be the difference between buying a house and living in an apartment. Protect your credit and take care of it the way you would take care of a new car.



Credit cards – what's all the "fine print"?

What you don't know can cost you! Are credit card companies sending you lots of offers for cards? Wow! They say you're pre-approved for a high credit line and all you have to do is mail in the reply form?

What's important? Why?

- ▶ **Annual Percentage Rate (APR)** – The cost of credit written as a yearly rate. Many cards charge different rates when you buy something than they do when you take out cash (a cash advance). Be sure to read the rate **AFTER** you receive a credit card. You might send in a reply for a credit card but be given a card at a higher APR so check the rate before you activate the new card. If it's not what you want – send it back and cancel the account. If the card is offering an introductory rate be sure to check how many months the rate lasts and check what the APR will be after the introductory period. Some credit cards charge a very low rate for the first 6 months and assume that either you won't notice the new rate when it goes into effect or you'll charge so much that you will have to carry a balance regardless of the rate.
- ▶ **Annual fee** - Some credit cards charge you once a year (usually \$25 to \$75) just to have the card. This cost needs to be included in the overall price of the card when comparing offers.
- ▶ **Late-payment fee** – The price for paying your bill late. Not only will you get charged a high price (usually \$25-35) each time you are late but the company might also raise your APR if you are late.
- ▶ **Over-the-credit-limit fee** – The price for letting your balance go over your credit card limit. You should not allow your balance to get close to your credit limit. You will get charged a high fee (usually \$25-35) each time you go over the limit and the company might also raise your APR. **DON'T** assume that the credit card company will not o.k. a purchase that brings your balance a little over the limit because they make a lot of money by approving purchases and then charging fees and raising rates.
- ▶ **Penalty rate** – The APR charged if you make late payments or go over the credit limit on your account.
- ▶ **"Other"**- There is lots of "fine print" to read. Don't sign up for something you don't understand or haven't read. It can cost you lots of money!

Example: The cost of 1 year of credit for an account paid on time and not going over the limit.

| | Card 1 | Card 2 | Card 3 | Card 4 |
|--------------------------------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| Annual fee | \$ 00 | \$00 | \$50 | \$50 |
| Average balance | \$1500 | \$1500 | \$1500 | \$1500 |
| Introductory rate | 0% | None | 0% | None |
| #Months intro rate | 3 months | | 3 months | |
| Final APR | 19% | 6% | 19% | 6% |
| 1 st Year Card Cost | \$214 | \$90 | \$264 | \$140 |
| Net Interest Rate* | 14.25% | 6% | 17.58% | 9.33% |

•What the APR would be if some of the extra costs were included (higher if you counted late fees or over-limit fees!)

Using your money in smart ways will give you more money to spend!

Shop around for the best deal before you buy.

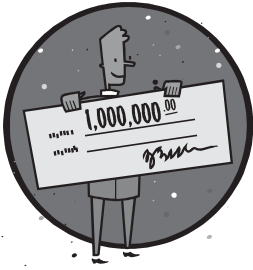
You can save a lot just by reading sale flyers. Try to stick to stores that have familiar names – if you're not sure, call the Better Business Bureau of Connecticut at (203)269-2700 or visit their web site at www.connecticut.bbb.org to see if the business has any complaints filed against it. You can also contact the Department of Consumer Protection at (860) 713-6300 or on line at www.state.ct.gov/dcp. This is very important if you are buying something from someone who must have a license. If you're not sure, ask someone you trust if they know about the store.

These are some easy rules to remember:

- ✖ Read all the fine print
- ✖ Don't buy something just because it's on sale unless it's something you use all the time!
- ✖ Check to make sure what a store's return policy is in case you need to return an item.
- ✖ Watch out for hidden charges like delivery or set up.
- ✖ If a deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- ✖ Beware of salespeople who try to get you to decide fast.
- ✖ Extended warranties are usually not worth the cost.
- ✖ Don't let salespeople talk you into expensive "extras" you don't need.



Do your homework. If you are buying an appliance or other expensive item, see if you can find out about the different brands from a testing agency. For example, *Consumer Reports* is a magazine that tests items and reports on which items are the best to buy. Consumer Reports also has a web site at www.consumerreports.org. Take the time to go to the Hartford Public Library and see what the consumer magazines say or check the item out on the Internet.



Check-Cashers: A high-cost way to get your money!

What's a check-casher?

- ✗ A check-casher is a store that **charges money** to cash checks or money orders.

How much can they charge?

- ✗ The State of Connecticut tells check cashers how much they can charge.
- ✗ Most checks and money orders will be cashed for 2% of the total that is on the check. It isn't supposed to cost more. This means all checks from people, the place you work, and U.S. government checks like Social Security. So, it costs \$6 to cash a check for \$300.
- ✗ Check-cashers can only charge 1% to cash a State of Connecticut welfare (TFA) check. So, it costs \$4.25 to cash a welfare check for \$425.

Is there a better way? Yes! Go to a bank!

- ✗ You can cash a welfare check for **free** at Fleet Bank. Be sure to bring your I.D.
- ✗ **Open your own checking account!** Most banks have low-cost or free checking. Most banks have people that speak Spanish, if you need them, and they all have ways that you can find out how to use your checks. You can get many kinds of checks, like pay checks, welfare checks, Social Security checks, and others put into your checking account (it's called direct deposit). You will save money and not have to stand in line to buy money orders. Having a bank account can help you in other ways, too, like building savings or getting a loan.
- ✗ **Take a money class!** There are free classes at banks and other places that will teach you how to use your money in smart ways. Call the Hartford Public Library at 695-6295 to see if they know of any classes near you.





What is rent-to-own? A rent-to-own business rents mostly home goods like furniture, appliances like microwaves or washers and dryers, other home things like TVs or stereos, and jewelry. Often the rent-to-own will let you rent without a down payment or a credit check.

How does rent-to-own work? Rent-to-own businesses rent home goods for weekly or monthly rental prices. A customer can rent an item for a short period of time or can buy the item after renting it. The rent-to-own store delivers and picks up the items.

How much does it cost? If you are planning on buying or renting something, rent-to-own is a high cost way to buy. When you use rent-to-own stores, you have to sign a rental contract (a lease) for the items you are renting, even if you plan on buying them in the future. People pay a much higher rental interest rate at a rent-to-own store than they would if they were buying at a department store or a discount store. Dealers may charge a “processing fee” to sign up (not over \$10). Rent-to-own dealers also will try to get customers to buy a “liability damage waiver” which is just another name for insurance on the thing you’re renting and you probably don’t need it. All these extra fees add up to make the lease cost even more.

Are there laws that cover rent-to-own stores? Connecticut has laws that just cover rent-to-own stores. If you have problems, call the CT Department of Banking, Consumer Credit Division in Hartford at 248-8200. These are only some important parts of the laws:

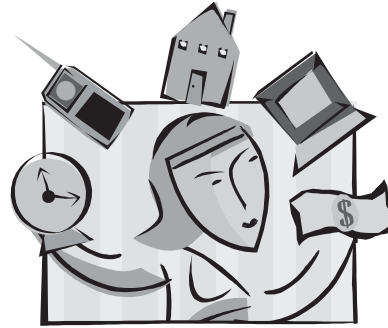
- ▶ The rent-to-own paper must be written in simple words and you can cancel any time for free.
- ▶ All charges must be listed one-by-one and be easy to read. The total price **MUST** have **ALL** the charges in it, and the cost to bring the item to your home. The store can’t add things on later. The store must also write how much the payments are and when they’re due.
- ▶ The papers also have to say what the difference is between the price to rent the item and the price to buy it from them. The price to rent something **cannot** be more than 2 times what it would cost to buy it from the rent-to-own store. But, the price to buy an item at this store is probably higher anyway.

Are there better ways to buy? Sure! Start saving at a bank or credit union. If you save every week, you will spend less money than you would if you paid a rent-to-own dealer. You also will be able to buy things when they are on sale and have money left over. You can also start a savings plan for bigger things like a car or a home with the money you save. Many banks and credit unions now have starter savings accounts. If you begin saving money now, the money will be there when you need to buy something and you won’t have to wait. Even if you take out a **Consumer Loan**, the cost will still be lower. For example:

| Consumer Loan | Rent-to-Own |
|---|---|
| Advertised price = \$500 10% APR for 1 year $\$43.96 \times 12 \text{ months} = \527.52 Savings \$252.48!!! | Advertised price = \$15 per week Rented for 1 year (52 weeks) $\$15 \times 52 \text{ weeks} = \780.00 |

Source: FDIC Money Smart

Making Credit Work for You



Think before you charge it! Is this something I really need or can I wait until I have money? Putting something on a credit card is really just taking out a loan. Is what you were going to buy something you would take out a loan for?

Pay as much as you can every month! Lots of people think they just need to make the minimum payment on a credit card bill. That's what credit card companies WANT you to do because they make lots of money!

Look what you pay if you only make the minimum payment:

| Item | Price | APR | Interest Paid | How Much You Really Pay for the Item | Total Years to Pay Off |
|-----------|---------|-----|---------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| TV | \$500 | 18% | \$439 | \$939 | 8 |
| Computer | \$1,000 | 18% | \$1,899 | \$2,899 | 19 |
| Furniture | \$2,500 | 18% | \$6,281 | \$8,781 | 34 |

Source: FDIC Money Smart

- Pay your bills on time - you won't get charged late fees!
- Pay off the cards with the highest interest first!
- Don't carry your credit card if you don't need it!
- Cancel cards you don't need – extra credit will count against you on your credit report if you want to buy something big like a house.



Credit "Repair"

Remember! There is NO quick fix for credit problems! If you are told that someone can fix your credit if you just pay them \$50 or \$1000, DON'T BELIEVE IT! Even if they give you a "money back guarantee", it's not worth anything if the company goes away.

A credit-reporting company keeps your credit history. Whenever you try to get any kind of credit, such as a credit card or a car loan, the lender called one of these companies for a credit report. The three biggest credit-reporting companies are:

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Equifax P.O. Box 740241 Atlanta, GA 30374-0241 (800) 685-1111 | Experian P.O. Box 2104 Allen, TX 75013-2104 (888) 397-3742 | Trans Union P.O. Box 1000 Chester, PA 19022 (800) 916-8800 |
|---|--|--|

If you have been turned down for credit, you **MUST** be given the name of the credit-reporting company. You have the right to get a free credit report if you are turned down for credit. If you haven't been turned down but just want a copy of your report, it might cost about \$8.50 for a copy. Remember, you have the right to get **ALL** the information in your credit report.

What if your credit report says some things that are wrong? The credit reporting company will tell you to send a letter to them telling them which things you think are wrong. Send them copies of any papers you think will help. **NEVER** send original papers, always send copies and keep a copy of the letter you write. It takes about 30 days for the company to check into your letter. If anything **IS** wrong, the credit-reporting company **MUST** tell all other companies **AND** you can ask them to tell anyone who has asked for your report in the last six months about the changes.

What if the information is right and my credit is bad? Only time and hard work can repair your credit. Credit-reporting companies hold information for seven years, ten years if you've had a bankruptcy. If you think you need help, call one of the state-licensed credit/debt adjustors in Connecticut. Only non-profit debt/credit adjustors can be licensed by the State of Connecticut Department of Banking.

A complete list of state-licensed credit/debt adjustors is available through the Department of Banking. If you live in Hartford, you can call:

Consumer Credit Coalition of CT, Inc.
645 Farmington Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105
(860) 236-7726

or

Consumer Credit Counseling Service
of Southern New England, Inc.
111 Founders Plaza, Suite 1400
East Hartford, CT 06108
(800) 208-2227

Buying a Car



New Car? Used Car?

- ☞ If you plan on keeping a car for just a couple of years, it is probably best to get a new car because the resale value will be much higher. If you're going to keep a car for a long period (such as 8-10 years) you are probably better off getting last year's model.

Should I Lease or Buy?

- ☞ There are lots of things to weigh so you need to do your homework ahead of time.
- ☞ If you drive a lot of miles every year, you should look at the lease mileage limits.
- ☞ It usually costs more for insurance on a leased car so get a price before you decide.
- ☞ The down payment and the monthly payments on a leased car are lower BUT you don't own the car at the end of the lease.

Tips to Save Money:

- ☞ Get a copy of your credit report a few months ahead of time and correct any errors.
- ☞ Arrange for financing before you look for a car. Spending time looking for the best rates will really pay off in the end. Don't assume that dealer financing is the cheapest. Usually you have to have excellent credit to get the low or 0% rates.
- ☞ Figure out what things you really need in a car ahead of time (like 2 or 4 doors).
- ☞ You can find out about different kinds of cars on the Internet. If you don't have a computer, you can get pricing books at the library and you can use their computers. It will save you money if you know what kinds of cars fit your needs, are the safest, and are the best value.
- ☞ Make the biggest downpayment you can. The less you have to borrow and the shorter the payback time, the less money you will end up spending.
- ☞ Get everything in writing. Don't accept verbal promises!
- ☞ Don't be pressured to make a choice. If the salesman won't let you think or read the terms, go somewhere else. Chances are you'll get a better deal.
- ☞ If you leave a deposit, make sure you find out if it can be refunded.
- ☞ Don't buy extras you don't need like service contracts, extended warranties, credit insurance, and other options that are not required and just raise the cost of your loan.

Do your car buying homework and save money!



Beware of Predatory Lenders

Many lenders are honest business people but there are others who are waiting to take advantage of Hartford families. The best way to avoid being taken advantage of, and perhaps losing your home, is to know how dishonest lenders work and to stay away from them. Use extra care on home equity loans or debt consolidation loans.

Avoid any lender who:

- ❶ Offers you a “bargain loan”, takes applications over the phone, guarantees you a low-interest loan, or asks for fees up-front to get you a loan.
- ❷ Pressures you into signing papers you don’t understand or asks you to sign blank papers to be filled in later.
- ❸ Tells you that a loan offer is only good for a short time to keep you from shopping around.
- ❹ Shows up at your house or calls you with offers unless you called them first. Most good lenders don’t do business this way.
- ❺ Won’t answer all your questions or tells you “don’t worry about it” when you ask a question or won’t give you copies of things that you’ve signed.
- ❻ Tries to get you to borrow more money than you need or sets payments higher than you can afford to pay back.
- ❼ Tells you to write false information on a loan application because you’ll have a better chance of getting the loan.
- ❽ Has you apply for one set of loan terms but gives you another set when it’s time to sign.
- ❾ Packs your loan agreement with lots of extra fees and tells you they are all “required”.

What steps can help find a good lender?

- ❶ Do some homework. Visit the Fannie Mae Foundation’s website at www.homebuyingguide.org for free information to guide you through the lending process and define all the terms you will hear. The publications are available in several languages and can be downloaded off the computer or ordered through the mail. The Hartford Public Library can help you find good books on buying or renovating homes.
- ❷ Shop around because loan costs can vary widely. The best places to start are local banks. Compare the types of loans and the costs. There are different kinds of mortgages and the homeowner needs to find the right type of loan for their own circumstances. Ask lots of questions!
- ❸ Ask trusted friends if they have had a good experience with a lender. Consider taking a trusted friend with you to the bank or finance company, especially if you are concerned about how well you might speak or understand English.

The bottom line is you can’t be too careful and a good lender will not try to rush you into making a decision. Be prepared so you won’t be sorry!

A Reverse Mortgage

Is it right for your family?











What is a reverse mortgage? A reverse mortgage is a loan for homeowners who are at least 62 years old and still live in their home. A borrower takes out a loan on their home that does not have to be paid back while they live in the home. When the borrower dies, moves out, or sells the home, the loan must be paid back.

How could a reverse mortgage help my family? A reverse mortgage might give an older homeowner more money to live on or help to make needed repairs.

What would my family get? The money can be paid to you all at once, as a monthly payment, as a line of credit that you can use as you need it, or as a mixture of these payments.

This sounds like a good deal! What's the problem? A reverse mortgage loan can be complex and may not be a good idea for your family. No one should take out a reverse mortgage loan unless they have looked into it carefully. You are borrowing money that must be paid back by someone and will decrease your family's assets because it decreases the equity in your home. At the same time that the equity is decreasing, your debt is increasing. Even though you are getting money from your house, you are still taking out a loan.

What should our family think about?

-  Have you thought about other ways to meet your money needs?
-  Have you thought about moving to a less expensive home, an apartment, or other kind of housing?
-  Are you getting all the benefits you are allowed to? The National Council on Aging can help check and make sure you're getting everything you should. Contact them at www.benefitscheckup.org.
-  Make sure payments from a reverse mortgage won't put you over the earnings limit for public benefits such as SSI or Medicaid.
-  There are three kinds of reverse mortgages and you should check each kind carefully.
-  You do NOT need to purchase an "annuity" in order to get the most from a Home Equity Conversion Mortgage (HECM). Some insurance agents will push you to buy an annuity.
-  Be careful of anyone who seems to be too quick to push you into getting a reverse mortgage, especially if they have ideas about what you should do with the money.
-  Learn all you can about reverse mortgages before you make up your mind. Talk to someone you trust.

You worked hard to buy your home – don't borrow against it without getting good advice. AARP has a great website that will help you! Take the time to visit it at www.aarp.org/revmort. The Hartford Public Library can help you use the calculators on the AARP website and will also have other information.

Planning-

Goals aren't just for the wealthy.

Planning will help you spend less money.

Planning will help your children learn good money skills.

Planning for the future-

No business would do well without planning. The kind of planning that successful business people do is a lot like the planning that a family needs to do. Family economic security rarely happens by accident.

What are the kinds of things you need to plan for?



Retirement
Higher Education
Buying a Home
Starting a Business
Taking a Trip
Buying a Car



Here are some ideas to help you plan:

- ✓ **Plan as a family.** Talk together about what is important to everyone.
- ✓ **Set realistic family goals.** “We’re all going to be millionaires” is not a realistic goal. “We want our children to go to college” is a realistic goal.
- ✓ **Set your time frame.** How soon do you want to meet your goal? Remember to be realistic; some goals will take longer than others.
- ✓ **Write it down.** Don’t just talk; write down your family’s goals and the plan for reaching them. It will be more important to everyone.
- ✓ **Take a financial literacy class.** The Urban League, Mutual Housing, and Fleet Bank all offer some classes. If you can’t find a class, contact the Hartford Public Library or your local community center about putting on a program.
- ✓ **Make the whole family part of the plan.** Have each family member make a spending diary for a week or longer so there is a clear picture of how much money your family really spends. Have each family member find ways they can spend less money.
- ✓ **Make a budget.** A budget is your plan for spending. It is also your plan for meeting your family’s goals.
- ✓ **Have family meetings.** Let the whole family check out how the plan is going. Make needed changes to the budget.

Don’t let your family’s future depend on winning the lottery! Most families who really look at how they spend money will find ways to cut back (like not buying lottery tickets). Setting family financial goals will give your family more control over its future. There are many good books that can help you and many websites. CNN and *Money Magazine* have a useful site at www.money.cnn.com/pf/101 and VISA sponsors an easy-to-use site at www.practicalmoneyskills.com.



Retirement – Start saving now!

If you think that the government will pay you enough money to live on comfortably in your old age, you're wrong. Most people trying to live on Social Security alone will tell you that it's almost impossible. Every dollar you can save for your retirement is important. There are many ways to save for retirement, and most are tax-deductible. Also, saving for your children's college education instead of retirement is a bad idea. There is lots of financial aid available for school but not for retirement, so if you can only save for one thing, save for your retirement. Here are some good things to know:

- ✓ You need about 70% of what you earned before you retired in order to keep the same standard of living. You will need up to 90% if your wages were low in the first place.*
- ✓ Social Security will pay about 40% of what you earned before you retired. You can get a copy of "Your Social Security Statement" that tells you about your personal benefits by calling 1-800-772-1213 or going on-line at www.ssa.gov/mystatement.*
- ✓ Find out if your employer offers a retirement plan. Get a benefits statement and be sure to think about retirement plans if you are thinking about changing jobs.
- ✓ If your employer offers a retirement savings plan, like a 401(k), sign up for it and put as much money in it as you can. Some employers will match the money you put in and you will save tax money.
- ✓ Open an Individual Retirement Account (IRA). There are two kinds of retirement IRAs. One is called a Traditional IRA and the other is a Roth IRA. Your local bank or credit union can give you information on the differences between these accounts and how to set one up. Some people will qualify for an income tax deduction for money they put in an IRA. The interest earned in an IRA is not taxable unless you take it out early.
- ✓ The amount of money you can put in an IRA has gone up and will continue to go up.
- ✓ Don't touch your retirement savings! You will lose money and you will have to pay taxes on money you take out early. If you change jobs, you can "roll" money from your old plan either into an IRA or your new employer's plan.
- ✓ The sooner you start saving, the more money you will have. Make a retirement savings plan and stick to it.



* Source: American Savings Education Council

There are many good places to get information about retirement. Your Hartford Public Library branch can help you find information. There are also good websites where you can get information such as the AARP website at www.aarp.org, the Social Security Administration at www.ssa.gov, and the American Savings Education Council at www.asec.org.

Why Budget?



What is a budget? A budget is a written savings and spending plan.

Why does my family need a budget? A budget will help you to be in charge of your money. When you are in charge of your money, you end up with more money. For example:

- ✓ A budget will let you see where your money is going.
- ✓ People with a budget don't worry as much about having money to pay bills.
- ✓ Budgeting will help you save and might help you buy a home or a new car.

How do I make a budget? Start by writing down everything you buy for a week. Then take a piece of paper and put a line down the middle. Write "IN" on the top of one side and "OUT" on the top of the other. Put all the money you earn on the "IN" side and all the money you spend on the "OUT" side. Be sure to put rent, car payments, credit card payments, phone, food, insurance, and all other bills on the "OUT" side plus the other items you listed the week that you wrote things down. Add the totals. If the "OUT" side is more than the "IN" side, you need to spend less money.

What are good ways to spend less?

- ✓ Only bring small amounts of cash with you so you won't spend it.
- ✓ Use a grocery shopping list and coupons and don't shop when you're hungry.
- ✓ Sign up for direct deposit into a checking account so you don't carry your money.
- ✓ Don't buy things on your credit card that you don't need.
- ✓ Take your lunch to work.
- ✓ Before you buy something, shop around for the best price.
- ✓ Don't buy things you don't need just because they're on sale.
- ✓ Make a chart for paying your regular bills so you'll be on time & won't have late charges.

Set a savings goal and stick to it! Pick a dollar amount you want to save or pick an item you're saving for. Write your goal down and carry it with you. Look at it when you're thinking about buying something. EVERYONE buys things they don't need. Keep writing down what you buy until you have a good idea of the easiest place to cut back BUT don't spend that money, save it.

Having a budget can help you to Pay Yourself First!

Sample Budget-

Change this form to make it fit your needs.

| Monthly Income How much money comes in | |
|---|-----------|
| Your Pay (after taxes) | \$ |
| Other Family Member's Pay (after taxes) | \$ |
| Child Support , Alimony, or Other Payments | \$ |
| All Other Kinds of Income | \$ |
| Total Monthly Income | \$ |

| Monthly Expenses What is spent | |
|---|-----------|
| Rent or Mortgage | \$ |
| Utilities: (Gas, Oil Water, Electricity) | \$ |
| All Telephones: House & Cell | \$ |
| Cable TV & Internet | \$ |
| Food | \$ |
| Loans | \$ |
| Rent-to-Own | \$ |
| Home Maintenance | \$ |
| Clothing | \$ |
| Child Care | \$ |
| Medical/Dental | \$ |
| Insurance (car, life, home, life, renter) | \$ |
| Transportation (bus, car loan, gas, taxi, car repair, parking) | \$ |
| Laundry & Dry Cleaning | \$ |
| Property tax | \$ |
| Church, other donations & Gifts | \$ |
| Pet Food & Care | \$ |
| Restaurant & Take-Out | |
| Meals (coffee, too) | \$ |
| Credit Card Debt | \$ |
| Recreation (vacations, health or sports clubs) | \$ |
| Entertainment (CDs, movies, video rental, lottery tickets, etc.) | \$ |
| Personal items (smoking) | \$ |
| Other | \$ |
| Total Monthly Expenses | \$ |

Total Monthly Income \$ _____

Subtract your Total Monthly Expenses \$ _____

Equals What's Left for Savings \$ _____

