

## **Warning Signs of Credit Abuse**

Credit cards make spending easy and may encourage you to spend more than you can repay.

The following are possible warning signs that you have taken on too much debt:

- You have less than one month's take-home pay in savings.
- You can only afford the minimum monthly payments on credit cards.
- You have more income committed to debt repayments each month than you did the month before.
- You are falling behind on payments and receiving late notices.
- You use credit to pay regular living expenses, like utilities.
- You are at or near credit limits on credit cards most of the time.
- Your debt-to-income ratio is more than 20% (or 36%, if mortgage payments are included in the calculation).

At this point, financial counseling is recommended to help initiate a plan of action to reduce debt. Things are reaching the critical stage when an individual or family is:

- Rotating bills by paying some this month, some next month.
- Borrowing or getting cash advances to make payments using credit to pay credit.
- Denied additional credit due to problems on credit reports.
- Hiding bills or being dishonest with family members about debts.
- Seeking additional money from predatory lending sources, such as payday loans or refund anticipation loans.
- Having to rely on a debt-consolidation loan to reduce payments enough to meet monthly living expenses.

At the critical point, financial counseling is essential to establish a plan to reduce debt to a manageable level.

## **SOURCES OF HELP**

- Airman and Family Readiness Center (A&FRC) personal financial counselors and educators
- Your local military credit union's financial counselors
- Nonprofit consumer credit counseling agencies
- Base legal office
- The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB)
- Military OneSource





