



The last few months have been very difficult for many people. One of the stressors more and more people are experiencing is financial challenges. I thought this **Employee Assistance Program** quarterly newsletter should try and help address some financial issues people are facing. I asked Chuck Ritter, Certified financial counselor at CCCS of Madison, to provide financial information that employees may find helpful. He shared his thoughts on what to do when your income decreases.

WHEN YOUR INCOME DECREASES

When your income decreases for what ever reason do not assume that things will improve quickly. Living as though nothing has changed is the number one mistake people make during challenging times. Try to realistically determine a reasonable amount to pay your creditors each month.

Remember that not all of your debts equally impact your family. Pay your rent or mortgage first. You must also make arrangements with your utility companies and you must provide food for your family. Please do not be tempted to allow your insurance to lapse.

First priority: debts include your rent or mortgage, tax liabilities, insurance premiums, auto loans and utilities.

Second priority: debts include secured loans through finance companies.

Third priority: lenders include retailers, hospitals, doctors and credit card issuers.

Once you have a plan, mail a letter to each of the creditors explaining your situation and how you plan to repay your debts. Tell them that you are unable, not unwilling, to repay. Remember, it is

always best to contact your creditors before they have to contact you.

Sit down with your family and discuss ways to cut costs. For example, check out books from the library and rent movies rather than going to the theater. Dining in and avoiding convenience foods can also save you a lot of money very quickly.

In addition to your savings, research other resources you can tap. Do not fall victim to predatory lending tactics; quick cash loans are short-term solutions with long-term consequences.

While cashing your IRA is not desirable, you can take a short-term loan with no penalties. The only requirement is that you pay back the entire amount borrowed within 60 days.

Take a good look around you. Most likely, there are many things in and around your home that you could sell for cash. Remember, one man's junk is another man's treasure. Also, if you have the room, consider taking in a boarder.

Use all available resources. Research all sources of cash. For example you may have a life insurance policy with a cash value. Collect on monies let to family and friends.

In addition to your personal efforts, don't be shy about seeking the help you deserve. Contact your local city offices about benefits such as unemployment pay, food vouchers, and utility discount programs. You can also seek assistance form your local church or United Way.

This newsletter is shared with you by **Family Service**. Family Service provides you with your **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** Your EAP is a benefit provided for you and your family by your employer. This benefit is **FREE** and **CONFIDENTIAL** and is a resource that provides you/your family with short term counseling on personal/family/job related stressors, and assistance with locating community resources.

Your EAP benefit also provides you with a **FREE** initial consultation with Chuck at **CCCS of Madison**, which is located in Family Service building. Please be advised that as of April 1st, CCCS will be owned and operated by new parent company. The parent company is **Money Management International**. (MMI) However, the financial counseling services will remain the same, and they will now be able to provide housing counseling certified through HUD.

Please contact your EAP if you would like to take advantage of the services available. Family Service is located at 128 East Olin Avenue. Please call (608) 316 1171 or 1-866- (YOUR EAP) 968-7327 to speak with EAP Director.

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