



# Quarterly Newsletter

August 2004

[www.debthelper.com](http://www.debthelper.com)

## BUDGETING 101

Budgeting is the easiest means of determining financial stability and reaching financial goals. While it may seem like a cumbersome, time-consuming process, budgeting can provide many long-term benefits that far outweigh the time invested. The following steps should be taken to establish a working budget:

### 1. Add up your monthly household income.

This figure should include your net monthly income and your spouse's net monthly income (if applicable) plus any other sources of income, including Social Security, disability pay, etc.

### 2. Estimate your expenses.

Your expenses should be divided into two main categories: fixed and flexible. Fixed expenses are expenses for items that you pay each month and do not vary. Examples include rent, mortgage payments, car payments, etc. Flexible expenses are expenses that may vary by month. Food costs, electric payments and medical expenses are examples of flexible expenses.

### 3. Calculate and review your vital statistics.

Several figures will provide you an accurate view of your financial health. The first, disposable income, is determined by simply subtracting your expenses from your income. If the resulting figure is negative then you have a deficit. A long-term deficit will almost always result in financial distress and therefore expenses should be modified. The second figure, expense-to-income ratio, is determined by dividing your monthly income by your monthly expenses and shows the percentage of your monthly income is used. Ideally, your expense-to-income ratio will not exceed 95%.

### 4. Review your expenses and set limits

If your current budget indicates a deficit or a high expense-to-income ratio, then changes should be made to your budget. To start, identify those flexible expenses that are non-essential. These expenses may include entertainment, Internet, cable TV, etc. Prioritize these expenses and identify areas where expenses can be reduced or eliminated.

### 5. Recalculate

After identifying areas of reduction and/or elimination, recalculate your vital statistics. Remember, you should aim for expense-to-income ratio less than 95%.

### 6. Monitor your expenses every month.

Sticking to your budget takes discipline. It is best that you monitor and review your expenses each month to ensure you are not straying too far from your limits.

The following suggestions should be helpful in simplifying your budgeting process:

#### Establish a filing system

Use statements, bills, receipts etc. in order to provide accuracy.

#### Don't count money you aren't sure you will receive.

Bonuses, tax refunds, etc. should not be included in your in-

come.

#### Use a computer.

Most personal finance software programs, such as *Microsoft Money* or *Quicken*, have built-in budgeting tools that can track and simplify your budget.

#### Open a savings account.

Deposit leftover income into your savings account each month.

If you have any questions regarding budgeting or would like help in establishing your budget, please do not hesitate to contact CCMS. Our certified credit counselors are trained to help you meet your financial goals and would be more than happy to review and analyze your budget.

## CCMS Unveils New Website

CCMS recently completed the transformation of our website [www.debthelper.com](http://www.debthelper.com). The focus of our new site is to provide our clients and website visitors with easy access to educational materials, budgeting tools and credit information. Some of the new features include direct access to Federal Trade Commission (FTC) educational information regarding credit and personal finance topics, an easy-to-use budget worksheet/calculator which can help you measure your financial well-being, and a tutorial on how to analyze your financial health.

Clients who prefer the convenience of paying their bill on the internet can utilize our secured online payment screen. Current clients can also take advantage of our client inquiry forms to contact our Client Service Department regarding their accounts or participate in a live chat session with a certified credit counselor. In the future CCMS plans to implement a convenient client login page that will allow you to view your account information online through our secured server.

CCMS encourages you to visit the new website and provide us with your comments, suggestions and feedback.

### Office Hours

The following are our new office hours as of September 1, 2004:

Counseling Department: Monday—Thursday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET

Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET

Client Service Department: Monday—Thursday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET

Operations Department: Monday—Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET

Also, please note CCMS will be closed for the following days during the upcoming holiday season:

Thursday, November 25th through Sunday, November 28th.

Friday, December 24th through Monday, December 27th.

Friday, December 31st.

## Free Microsoft Money CDs Available

As a result of our strategic partnership with Microsoft®, CCMS recently received a generous donation of *Microsoft Money 2004 Deluxe Trial Edition* CDs.

*Microsoft Money Deluxe* is an easy-to-use personal finance software which helps consumers manage their complete financial picture - from tracking accounts, budgeting and paying bills to monitoring expenses and investments.

The *Deluxe Trial Edition* allows users to use a full version of the *Microsoft Money Deluxe* software free for a 60 day period. At the end of this period you will have the option of upgrading to the full version of *Microsoft Money Standard* or *Microsoft Money Deluxe*.

Those interested in receiving a free copy of the *Microsoft Money 2004 Deluxe Trial Edition* CD are encouraged to contact CCMS. A representative will take your request and forward a copy of this helpful financial tool immediately. For more information on *Microsoft Money* please visit [www.microsoft.com/money](http://www.microsoft.com/money).

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## Payment Policy Reminders

- Recurring automatic payments, check-by-phone payments as well as Internet payments from our website are not disbursed to your creditors until the funds are confirmed as available to CCMS. Allow at least seven business days for these payments to be posted to your CCMS account.
- Personal checks are disbursed six business days after receipt. We suggest mailing your check at least ten calendar days before the CCMS due date.
- Money orders, certified checks or similar same-as-cash payments are disbursed the next business day.
- Never send third-party checks, cash or checks made out to 'Cash'.
- Be sure the due dates with your creditors are at least 15 calendar days *after* your CCMS due date.
- If a creditor is unwilling to change a due date, be sure your payment reaches us with sufficient time to reach the creditor before the due date on your credit card statement.
- If your payment amount is different from the CCMS statement amount, please attach an explanation. Also, if you are sending payments in advance, attach a note indicating the dates the payments are to be made.

If you have any questions or concerns about payment policies or payment dates, please call us and we will be happy to work out the details with you.



**Credit Card Management Services, Inc.**  
4611 Okeechobee Blvd. Suite 114  
West Palm Beach, FL 33417  
Phone: 1-800-920-2262  
Fax: 1-866-561-2622  
Web: [www.debthelper.com](http://www.debthelper.com)

## Fall 2004 Client Satisfaction Survey

We would like to invite you to participate in a survey of CCMS client satisfaction. The survey will help us determine our progress in helping you take control of your credit card debt. CCMS has made many changes in the past year with the goal of providing you compassionate, professional debt management counseling and education with efficient, timely and problem-solving customer support.

We would greatly appreciate you answering the following questions and returning the survey with your payment. Please circle the number of the answer which most closely matches your opinion or write your answers and additional comments on the back of your bill. The results will be combined with all responses; you will not be identified or contacted unless you include your name in the space provided below.

**1. CCMS has helped me managed my financial obligations.**

1 strongly disagree 2 disagree 3 somewhat agree 4 agree  
5 strongly agree

**2. CCMS customer service provides timely and accurate solutions to my account problems.**

1 strongly disagree 2 disagree 3 somewhat agree 4 agree  
5 strongly agree

**3. My CCMS Counselor was compassionate and professional in setting me up on the debt management program.**

1 strongly disagree 2 disagree 3 somewhat agree 4 agree  
5 strongly agree

**4. I would recommend CCMS to my friends, relatives and co-workers.**

1 strongly disagree 2 disagree 3 somewhat agree 4 agree  
5 strongly agree

This survey will give us a report card from which we can gauge our progress and make changes in our continual strive for improvement. If you have specific suggestions, comments, concerns or complements about our program or an individual, please write them on the back of your bill or an additional sheet.

Please contact me to discuss my comments:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

CID \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Again, thanks for your time. If we ever fail to live up to our promise in any area, please don't hesitate to call me personally at 1-800-920-2262, extension 8010 or contact me at [jneve@debthelper.com](mailto:jneve@debthelper.com).

Sincerely,

Jeff Neve  
*Client Service Manager*  
*Quality Assurance Manager*