



FAMILY SERVICES OTTAWA
SERVICES À LA FAMILLE OTTAWA



Financial Literacy Resource Guide

FOR GENDER BASED VIOLENCE SUPPORT WORKERS



Our clients come to us at many stages of their journey. We hope this guide will give you some tips and ideas for supporting their economic independence and feelings of financial control.

Economic Empowerment: An individual's knowledge, skills, and confidence to address her own financial well-being.

Our goal is to provide tools so women and their families can financially recover, heal, and build the financial security they need to remain safe.



Common Concerns

BANK ACCOUNTS

- It is very important that your client opens their own bank account. If their partner took her debit or credit cards, they need to report them lost or stolen.
- **Struggling with payments?** DO NOT bank where you owe money! If they bank where they owe, the bank can seize 100% of the available funds in the account if a payment is past due.

In Canada you have the right to open a bank account at a bank or federally regulated credit union as long as you show proper identification.

YOU CAN OPEN AN ACCOUNT EVEN IF YOU:

- don't have a job
- don't have money to deposit right away
- have been bankrupt
- are not a Canadian citizen

- **NO photo ID?** CIBC allows someone to open a bank account with verification of identity from a CIBC client in good standing. Potential clients will also need to provide a second source of ID such as employment ID, or an ATM card from another bank.
- Federal government cheques can be cashed at a bank where there is no account. The client will need either proper ID, or verification of identity by a client in good standing with the bank. The cheque must be below \$1500.00.

GARNISHMENTS OR FROZEN BANK ACCOUNTS

- Ontario Works and ODSP are creditor proof. This means a creditor cannot seize this money when a client is behind on their payments. If a lender does seize this a client would need to contact the bank and ask for the payment to be reversed back into the clients account.
- Garnishments and frozen bank accounts can be stopped with the help of a Not for Profit credit counselling agency.





FRAUD AND CREDIT REPORTS

Everyone should pull their credit report once per year to check for fraud or inaccurate information. You can get a FREE credit report once per year.

For Equifax go to <https://www.consumer.equifax.ca/personal>
and for Transunion go to <https://www.transunion.ca/>

If fraud is noticed contact the lenders and the credit reporting agencies.

Fraud alerts can be placed with both Transunion and Equifax. This is a monthly charge and it prevents anyone from taking credit out in their name without first going through a series of security questions and verifications.

JOINT DEBT

- The client should call the creditor and confirm if the debt is actually joint or if they are an authorized user. Authorized users are not usually liable for the debt.
- If their spouse/partner is an authorized user on their account they should call the bank and have them removed.
- The only way to get their name off a joint account is for the lender, the client and the other joint debtor to agree. ***Divorce and separation agreements are not applicable in this situation. Even if it is mentioned in the agreement, the bank doesn't have to remove the joint debtor.***
- If the bank agrees to remove the client from the joint debt, the client **NEEDS** to get this decision in writing and keep the letter in a safe place for future reference if needed.
- If the client cannot get their name off the joint debt, they should contact the lender and **CLOSE** the account so the joint debtor cannot continue to use the account and increase the balance owing.



Struggling to maintain payments?

Speak to a certified credit counsellor at a not for profit credit counselling agency to discuss payment options on joint debt.

Credit

JOINT ASSETS

****Seek legal advice re: any large assets such as matrimonial home, pensions, investments etc. Below is a list of options to discuss****

- Sell the matrimonial home and pay off the mortgage
- Buy out the co-owner. If the client doesn't have the money available they would need to be approved for financing
- Have the co-owner buy the client out and then the client would take their name off the title
- It is important to keep the mortgage payments up to date. Three missed mortgage payments and the lender can start the foreclosure proceedings

ESTABLISHING CREDIT

Bad credit or no credit? Start with a secured credit card such as Capital One or Refresh. Pay a deposit of approximately \$300 and get a credit limit of \$300.

Have a monthly charge such as cell phone bill, internet, or hydro come off the credit card monthly. That way a regular payment comes off and the money is in the budget to pay in full.

If they cannot pay the balance in full one month try very hard to keep balance below 30% of the available limit. If the balance goes above **30%** it can look like the client is in financial difficulty and their credit score may decrease

Try to establish some monthly savings. This goes a long way in the eyes of the creditor. Pay themselves first. Have an amount automatically come off their pay the day they are paid and go into a savings account.

GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT (GIS)

- Increases income for those 65 and older, who live in Canada and are collection Old Age Security (OAS)
- Need to apply for the GIS, as not everyone is enrolled automatically
- **Call CRA at 1-800-277-9914 for more information on how to apply**



INCOME TAX AND CHILD TAX BENEFITS

- The child tax benefit is a tax free monthly payment for families to help with the costs of raising children under the age of 18.
- The monthly amount would go to the primary person responsible for the care of the child. This can be split if the parents/guardians are separated/divorced.
- To calculate how much will be received go to this CRA webpage:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/child-family-benefits/canada-child-benefit-overview/canada-child-benefit-we-calculate-your-ccb.html>
- Income tax needs to be up to date for both parents before you can receive child tax benefit. If you have separated and your ex-partner is not up to date on taxes you can call CRA to discuss changing your marital status.
- In Joint custody, both parties are equally entitled to child tax benefit.

Need your Tax slips?

Sign on or create a My Account for Individuals with CRA to get access to previous years tax slips.

They can also call CRA at
1-888-863-8662

The following **FREE** income tax clinic are available year round to help with preparing current and prior years taxes

JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES OTTAWA

Languages:

English, French, Arabic, Russian

Clientele:

Permanent residents and refugees

Returns prepared:

Current and prior years

Primary Contact:

Ella Zabarsky

ezabarsky@jfsottawa.com

(613) 769-5056

CENTRE D'EDUCATION FINANCIERE EBO

Languages:

English, French

Clientele:

General public/All persons

Returns prepared:

Current and prior years

Primary Contact:

Ange Ningabiye

acningabiye@centre-ebo.com

(613) 746-0400

INCOME TAX CLINIC PINECREST-QUEENSWAY COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE (PQCHC)

Languages: English, French, Cantonese, Hindi, Mandarin, Nepali, Russian, Slovak, Vietnamese

Clientele:

Resides within local community

Returns Prepared:

Current and prior years

Primary Contact:

Tax Coordinator

Email:

incometaxcoordinator@pqchc.com

Where to turn for more support

Free consultations are available with non-for-profit agencies, like Resolve Credit & Financial Counselling Services. Avoid for profit or debt settlement companies.

01 | Resolve Credit and Financial Services

<https://resolvecounselling.org/credit-financial-counselling-services/>
1-800-379-5556

Resolve Credit and Financial Counselling is a not for profit charitable organization that has been helping clients manage money and become debt free since 1968. A Certified Credit Counsellor will offer a **FREE** non-judgement financial assessment and provide all options available to get you on your way to financial freedom and empowerment.

Services Include:

- Debt Relief
- **FREE** financial coaching
- **FREE** online assessment
- **FREE** Consumer Education

Services Include:

- Live chat 2x per day to ask legal question. Not answered by a lawyer, but by knowledgeable staff
- Referrals to resources in the community
- Steps to justice – Find legal advice, over 600 questions and answers
- Guided pathways, provides and pre-fills forms needed for various legal services
- Pro-bono lawyer for people with higher income, access to 30 minutes of legal advice

02 | CLEO

Community Legal Education for low income and marginalized communities.

Provides legal advice from lawyers, which is regularly reviewed and revised to stay up to date.

*This program is funded by the Government of Canada and Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) through the Canadian Women's Foundation.

