

Spotlight *On Finance*

Tennessee Department of Financial Institutions

IDENTITY THEFT: ARE YOU PROTECTED?

Imagine having a basket full of groceries to purchase, proceeding through the checkout line, then when you are ready to pay, your card is declined. Instantly you feel panicked. After contacting your bank, you learn that your account has been hacked and you are a victim of identity theft. This is a growing problem in our society today. In the event that you become a victim, would you know what to do?

Hackers are intelligent and resourceful. They can obtain your personal information easily, even if you believe you are taking appropriate measures to be protected. They can find information in dumpsters or pretend to work with a financial institution that you are affiliated with and contact you by phone or email to verify information. They may even work at a business where your information is supposed to be protected but they are able to access it. If your information is obtained, thieves then have access to drain your bank accounts, run up your credit cards, and even file claims on your medical insurance.

What to do if you become affected:

1. Contact one of the credit reporting agencies- Equifax, TransUnion, or Experian- to file a free fraud alert. Which ever company you decide to call will notify the other agencies and each will flag your information. This alert on your report will make it harder for the thief to open new accounts in your name.
2. Contact your personal financial institution to alert them and discuss what options are in place to reimburse your personal account. Create a new account and make sure all passwords are different.
3. File a police report. Get a copy of that report and keep the report number handy to give to creditors or financial institutions for their records. Some companies require a report to verify the crime.
4. Contact the Social Security Administration to report possible misuse of your social security number. In some cases, victims qualify for a new social security number.
5. Understand Tennessee's Credit Security Act of 2007- This allows for the placement of a freeze on an individual's credit file, if they have been, or feel they could be a victim of identity theft. The individual would be assigned a personal PIN code that would have to be provided to any lender checking credit to determine the qualifications for a loan, or other type of transaction that could require the need for a credit bureau file.

Tips for preventing theft:

1. Do not use the same passwords for accounts.
2. Do not leave private information up on your computer.
3. Set up bank alerts. Some banks can email or text you if your account balances are low or having large transactions.
4. Only make purchases on trusted sites.

For more details on what you can do to prevent identity theft or minimize it's affects, please visit the Consumer Affairs Division within the TN State Department of Commerce and Insurance at <http://www.tn.gov/consumer/> or the Federal Trade Commission at <http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/topics/privacy-identity>

19 people a minute fall victim to identity theft.*



Did you know?

You are entitled to a free copy of your credit report from each credit reporting agency once a year. We suggest that you stagger those requests quarterly to obtain maximum financial benefit. For example, in October request your free Equifax report, in February ask for your report from Experian, then in June you should request TransUnion. The cycle begins all over again in October of the following year with Equifax.

Becoming more aware of what is happening with your credit history can help you strengthen or maintain your credit score and will allow you to be quickly aware of fraudulent reporting or identity theft. Go to www.annualcreditreport.com to start your request today!



Are you financially prepared for an emergency?

According to the National Foundation for Credit Counseling, 64% of American's would have to utilize an alternative source other than a savings account to satisfy an unplanned \$1,000 event. The majority of American's are finding themselves in positions of not being able to save money, when in reality, they simply cannot afford not to. Without adequate savings, a financial emergency opens the door to making poor financial decisions which can easily snowball out of control, thus creating worse financial consequences.

The most common excuse among American's to not save money is that there simply is not enough money to do so. Creating a detailed budget, taking a serious look at your spending habits, eliminating frivolous spending and impulse buying, and committing to become more disciplined are all ways to help you keep a tighter grasp on your money. Most people feel like they have gotten a pay raise when they start to see how much money they are actually spending needlessly.

Becoming more disciplined with money can be very difficult if it is new to you. It requires great self-control and absolute honesty about your financial situation. If you can create a goal, visualize it, and truly want it, you may tend to stay more motivated. Hang pictures or messages around your house on mirrors, on the refrigerator, on the dash in your car. Stick to your priorities and understand the difference between a need and a want. Remind yourself constantly why you are packing your lunch everyday or why buying the newest electronic device can wait a little while longer.

A comfortable starter emergency fund would consist of \$1000. A safer place to be financially would include being able to save 3-6 months worth of living expenses in the event of a lost job, family illness or catastrophe. If you are

living paycheck to paycheck, thinking about saving that much money may seem scary and unrealistic. But with discipline, it is achievable.

A report by the American Psychological Association lists money as the number one stressor among adults. Financially stressed individuals are 13 times more likely to lose sleep and twice as likely to suffer with heart problems and migraines. Don't let your financial situation make you sick. Ask for help.

If you need assistance with creating a budget or financial counseling, contact ParTNers for Health at 1-855-437-3486 or www.Here4TN.com



Quick ways to save money:

- *Pack your lunch and eat leftovers– nix the quick convenient fast food.
- *Use cash only– Studies show that we attach to cash more so than our plastic cards– therefore, it becomes harder to spend.
- *Host a garage sale– sell everything you do not need or use anymore– you'll be amazed how much stuff you have when you really start evaluating it.
- *Stick to your budget.
- *Stick to your grocery list.
- *Learn to say "NO". (Your children will be okay if you begin to use this word.)
- *Family game nights rather than costly entertainment.
- *Evaluate every purchase. Is it a need or a want? Become a wise shopper.
- *Reevaluate your cable and cell phone contracts to try to reduce your monthly bill.
- *Temporarily freeze gym memberships or other unnecessary monthly fees until you have your emergency fund in place.

**SMART
SAVING TIP:**
Live within your
means

"The quickest way to double your money is to fold it over and put it back in your pocket."

WILL ROGERS



Attention parents of high school seniors: The deadline for your child to sign up for The Tennessee Promise is November 1st, 2014. The Tennessee Promise offers two years of tuition-free community or technical college to Tennessee high school graduates beginning with the Class of 2015.

For more information or to register your senior for this initiative, please visit <http://driveto55.org/initiatives/tennessee-promise/>



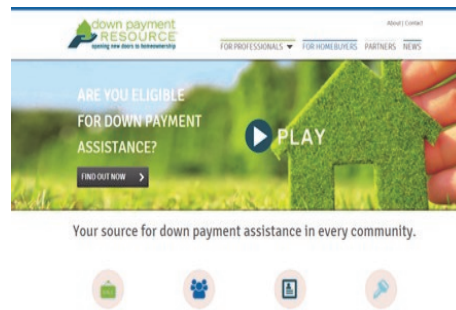
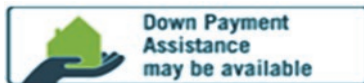
Home Ownership

Buying a home is a continued dream for most people. Owning your own home brings a sense of pride, safety, and stability to hard working families. If you are looking to become a homeowner, but don't have the necessary down payment money to facilitate that transaction, there is still hope.



The Tennessee Department of Financial Institutions wanted to make you aware of a free service that allows you to explore the various down payment assistance programs that may be available in the city, or county, you are intending to live, or purchase a house. Some of these programs are even available if you are not a first-time homebuyer.

Down Payment Resource© is a free tool that allows a potential homebuyer to search via the city or county where the property is located, in order to determine the various down payment assistance programs that may be available. The resource tool can be found at www.downpaymentresource.com. A user of the website can also drill down their search by inputting the neighborhood, property address, or zip code, to learn if any specific down payment programs may be available due to redevelopment grants, etc. Programs for veterans and military service members can also be determined.



To get started, click on the Homebuyer button and then click Check Eligibility. From here, you can search a number of ways to obtain the various programs that may be available.

Are you eligible?

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?

Property Information | Household Information | Special Circumstances

Start your search by entering a street address and zip code if you already have a specific property in mind, or begin typing a neighborhood, city, town or county in the general search box and select an entry from the drop down menu.

Street Address (e.g. 123 Main Street) Zip Code

OR

General Search (Neighborhood, City, County)
Madison, Davidson County, TN (Neighborhood)

Is the property a foreclosure or bank-owned?
 Yes No

Is this a Multi-Family Home?
 Single-Family Multi-Family

What is the estimated sales price of the property you are interested in?

10 Possible program matches
[View Programs](#)

You can review the various programs identified by clicking on the View Programs button and the listing of resources will be provided. This allows the user to learn of the lenders who may support the down payment program, as well as, the education providers, or housing counseling service, that can be contacted, should the down payment program require an education course, or certificate, for program eligibility.

Benefits

THE HOUSING (9 of 10)

Program Highlights

Purpose
Down payment and closing cost assistance.

Maximum Assistance
\$35,000

Benefits
• Do not have to be a first-time homebuyer.
• Can be combined with other programs.

THE HOUSING (9 of 10)

Program Highlights

Purpose
Down payment and closing cost assistance.

Next Steps

Sponsored by eHomeAmerica

Ask your Realtor about programs
[Find a REALTOR >>](#)

Find Eligible Homes On Real Estate Websites
Look for one of these logos when searching for homes online.

Participating Lenders
<http://www.thehousingfund.org/home>

Approved Education Providers
<http://www.thehousingfund.org/homebuyersprograms/homeschool/education.html>

Program Guide/ flyer
http://www.thehousingfund.org/images/1_17_13_13AK_1_flyer_2013_without_ser_3.pdf

Program Provider's Website
<http://www.thehousingfund.org/benefits>

Program Provider's Phone
615-700-7000

A housing counselor may be required to help assist the homebuyer in completing all of the eligibility requirements, but this is a great resource for those considering homeownership, but didn't think they have the funds for the down-payment.