



FINANCIALLY FIT

CHALLENGE your Service members and yourself to use at least one of the recommended resources to manage debt and ensure financial readiness.

FACTS & FIGURES: DID YOU KNOW?

- Credit card balances nationwide have increased by 5.75% compared to a year ago.¹
- Among Service members who reported worsening financial conditions, the most common reason was an increase in debt or unexpected expenses.²
- Excessive credit card debt raises questions about a Service member's ability to execute their wartime responsibilities, affecting security clearance eligibility.³
- Financial problems are the second leading risk factor for suicide among Guard members.⁴



READINESS AT RISK

The stress that comes from unmanageable debt—whether from credit cards, high-interest loans, or unexpected expenses—is a heavy burden that:



Increases Anxiety



Strains Relationships



Reduces Focus



Disrupts Sleep

CONTACT US

For more information on financial readiness or other wellness topics, email:
ngr.ngb.mbx.integrated-prevention-branch@army.mil



CNGB & SEA Corner

Always Ready, Always There

As National Guard members, financial readiness is key to your ability to answer our nation's call. When you are worried about making ends meet at home, you cannot be fully focused on the mission at hand.

Just as we train our bodies and sharpen our skills, we must also stay disciplined in how we manage our money. Strong financial habits give you the freedom, stability, and the confidence to stay focused on the mission.

We urge you to take a proactive approach to your finances. Ensuring you and your family are on solid financial footing is one of the most important ways you can protect your well-being. Take the time to assess your financial health and use the resources available to you.

Stronger Together, Stronger Tomorrow.

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DRAW DOWN DEBT

Credit card debt can feel overwhelming. High interest rates can cause small purchases to quickly snowball into long-term burdens. You can take back control of your financial well-being by taking action early. Use these resources to get started today.⁵

- Create a budget** and use it to track what comes in (income), what goes out (expenses), and what's left over to put toward debt. <https://consumer.gov/your-money/making-budget#:~:text=What%20it%20is>
- Use the line of credit calculator** to see how credit card debt affects you. <https://finred.usalearning.gov/Tools/AndAddRes/Calculators/Loan>
- Pick a strategy for managing debt** to meet your needs and build your personal plan. <https://consumer.ftc.gov/node/78376#Self-Help>
- Get professional help.** Make an appointment with a Personal Financial Counselor (PFC) in your area to get free financial counseling services. <https://finred.usalearning.gov/pfcMap>

TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR FINANCES

What does it mean?

- Financial readiness is a critical component of Guard members' overall well-being and mission effectiveness.

Why does it matter?

- By taking a proactive approach to financial management and utilizing the available resources, Service members can overcome the challenges of credit card debt and enhance readiness.

What can you do?

If you are in credit card debt, you are not alone. There are confidential, no cost resources for Service members that can reduce both debt and the stress associated with financial struggles.

- **Talk to someone.** Keeping financial worries to yourself can worsen anxiety. Share your concerns with your spouse or a trusted friend so you are not carrying the weight alone.
- **Exercise to relieve stress.** Go for a run, lift weights, take a walk or hike to improve mood and reduce stress.
- **Educate yourself.** Read books, listen to podcasts, or take online courses about budgeting, investing, and debt management. The more you learn about personal finance, the less intimidating it becomes.
- **Protect mental health and readiness.** If financial stress is hurting sleep, performance, or relationships, seek help. Reach out to your unit leadership to connect you with the resources to stay mission ready. Seeking help is a sign of strength!

PAY EARLY - SAVE MORE



Many cards use **daily compounding** – each day's interest is added to your balance. Because interest is calculated on your balance each day – **any payment you make reduces the balance and interest charged going forward.**



RESOURCES TO RECOMMEND



Commit to your financial freedom by gaining a better understanding of your debt, then create a plan to work toward paying off what you owe with the MilLife Guide, **Controlling Debt:** <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/resources/millife-guides/paying-off-debt/>



Understand how to check your credit, actively manage it, and improve your scores with the Office of Financial Readiness' **Financial Fundamentals** course on managing and monitoring credit. <https://finred.usalearning.gov/Money/ManagingCredit>



Learn how to get out of debt with FINRED's **Debt Destroyer** course: <https://finred.usalearning.gov/ToolsAndAddRes/Calculators/PersonalFinance/DebtDestroyer>



Download **Sen\$e**, a free financial app for Service members and their families that is packed with timely, factual, and unbiased financial information. [https://finredstage.usalearning.gov/ToolsAndAddRes/Sen\\$e](https://finredstage.usalearning.gov/ToolsAndAddRes/Sen$e)



Assess your current financial fitness across five different focus areas: awareness, mindset, financial stress, decision making, and energy maintenance, using the Human Performance Resources by Champ **Financial Fitness Self-Assessment:** <https://www.hprc-online.org/total-force-fitness/service-specific-resources/space-force/ussf-holistic-health-approach/self-assessment-toolkit#13759>



SPOTLIGHT: TAX SEASON READY WITH MILTAX

- **Military OneSource MilTax** is a suite of free tax services provided by the Department of War. It includes tax prep and filing software tailored for military life and comes with personalized support from tax consultants trained in military-specific tax situations.
- **Reduce tax season stress.** MilTax is now available to ensure that you get all the tax benefits and deductions that you have earned.
- **Consider using your tax refund to pay down debt.** Learn more about this benefit and get started now: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/benefits/miltax-free-tax-services/>

REFERENCES:

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3. Financial issues and losing a security clearance in the military. https://www.army.mil/article/288802/financial_issues_and_losing_a_security_clearance_in_the_military
4. Defense Suicide Prevention Office. https://www.dspo.mil/Portals/113/2024/documents/annual_report/ARSM_CY23_final_508c.pdf
5. Human Performance Resources by CHAMP. <https://www.hprc-online.org/social-fitness/family-optimization/save-more-spend-less-and-reduce-stress>