

Debt counseling: How it works

Gleaned from www.advantageccs.org

Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Western Pennsylvania, or Advantage Credit Counseling, provides a free budget analysis and action plan, typically after a 60- to 90-minute session in person or by phone. The certified counselor zeroes in on problems that led to the debt, and lists income and expenses -- not just the obvious ones.

Afterward, the counselor usually finds a monthly shortfall that the client has been covering with credit. The counselor suggests changes, by finding new sources of income or cutting expenses.

Using another option, the Supervised Debt Management Plan, the agency works to convince creditors to remove late or over-limit fees, and reduce interest and even some of the total owed. The client makes a monthly payment to the agency, all of which goes toward whittling the debt.

Consumers are entitled to one debt management plan every five years.

A **new online credit counseling service** started September 1, 2005. The service allows consumers to begin their Credit Counseling session in the convenience of their own home any time of the day. The secure site will ask for the individual's contact information, monthly expenses, and their credit card information. Social Security numbers or credit card account numbers are not required. Once a consumer completes these forms, the secure information is transmitted directly into the Credit Soft Management System. At this point, a certified credit counselor will review this information and contact the individual by email or phone in order to complete the Counseling Session. The Online Enrollment is available 24 hours a day on their website.

Advantage Credit Counseling Online Enrollment is 100% free, completely confidential, and secure using Verisign Security. There is no-obligation to enroll in services after the forms are completed.

Website: www.advantageccs.org

Phone: 1-866-699-2227

Please let the counselor know you are in the FSA program with NHCO.

