



HOME | HEALTH | HOPE

## FINANCIAL SERVICES

### Free Tax and Financial Services

**Ladder Up** 312-409-1555 [www.goladderup.org](http://www.goladderup.org)

Ladder Up provides free financial services to help people move towards financial stability. Through their programs, [TAP](#) (Tax Assistance Program) and [LIFT](#) (Life-Improving Financial Tools), Ladder Up helps low-income clients get the tax refunds they deserve, secure the financial aid that makes higher education a reality, or gain the knowledge needed to make sound financial decisions.

Ladder Up provides free tax preparation assistance at sites throughout the Chicago area to households earning up to \$45,000 and individuals earning up to \$20,000 annually. See a list of all [TAP Locations](#). All sites operate on a first come, first served basis, so please arrive early, as many sites will be full well before the official closing time. Please see the [Eligibility Requirements](#) and [What to bring to the sites](#) before visiting one of the TAP sites.

Ladder Up offers free financial aid assistance to the public. Knowledgeable staff and volunteers can assist you with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and help you secure valuable funding for college. They have no income or age limits for clients. See a list of all [LIFT Locations](#).

### Center for Economic Progress

29 E. Madison, Suite 900

Chicago, IL 60602

Tel: (312) 252-0280

Email: [info@economicprogress.org](mailto:info@economicprogress.org)

[www.economicprogress.org](http://www.economicprogress.org)

The Center for Economic Progress (CEP) offers free tax services for low income individuals and families. Families with income less than \$50,000 and individuals with income less than \$25,000 are eligible for free tax help. CEP has [free tax sites](#) in 15 communities throughout Illinois. Questions? Call 1-888-827-8511 or visit [www.economicprogress.org](http://www.economicprogress.org).

The Center for Economic Progress also offers financial workshops and one-on-one financial coaching that can help you:

- Set your financial goals.
- Create a spending plan.
- Access banking products, including: bank accounts, prepaid debit cards, and small dollar loans.
- Review and correct credit report; improve credit scores.

To schedule a free workshop or a one-on-one coaching session, contact CEP by [email](#) or call (312) 630-0248.

## **Free and Low Cost Credit Counseling**

### **National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC)**

1-800-388-2227

[www.nfcc.org](http://www.nfcc.org)

NFCC is a non-profit organization. Its Member Agencies provide free or low-cost individualized, confidential counseling in-person, by phone, or over the Internet. Trained, certified counselors assist you in determining the best options to meet your individual needs.

Certified Consumer Credit Counselors will:

- Advise you on managing your money;
- Offer solutions to your current financial problems;
- Develop a personalized plan to help you prevent future difficulties.

If you have severe debt, you may be eligible to enroll in a [Debt Management Plan](#) (DMP). A NFCC counselor can negotiate with your creditors if you qualify for their Debt Management Program.

**To locate an NFCC Member Agency in your area call 1-800-388-2227.**

## **Social Security Work Incentives**

Special rules make it possible for people receiving Social Security disability benefits (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to work and still receive monthly payments. And, if you cannot continue to work because of your medical condition, your benefits can start again – you may not even have to file a new application.

Work incentives include:

- Continued cash benefits for a period of time while you work;
- Continued Medicare or Medicaid while you work; and
- Help with education, training and rehabilitation to start a new line of work.

The rules for social Security disability and SSI are different. The Red Book - A Guide to Work Incentives is available at: <http://www.ssa.gov/redbook/>. In Chicago, contact a Community Work Incentives Coordinator at the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) – Employment Services Unit, 2102 W. Ogden Ave., 312-746-5743, or visit: [www.cityofchicago.org/Disabilities](http://www.cityofchicago.org/Disabilities).

## **Impairment Related Work Expenses (IRWE)**

[http://www.cessi.net/ticketpartnerssummit/PDF/SSDI\\_Work\\_Incentives\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.cessi.net/ticketpartnerssummit/PDF/SSDI_Work_Incentives_Plan.pdf)

Impairment Related Work Expenses (IRWE) can be used to reduce the amount of earnings that SSI or SSDI counts each month. With an approved IRWE, Social Security does not count earnings you use to pay for certain expenses. IRWE are only used after the trial work period is over to reduce the amount of earnings that SSDI counts each month toward your Substantial Gainful Activity level. Examples of IRWE are out of pocket medical expenses and some transportation costs.

## **Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS Plan)**

<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/pass.htm>

A PASS Plan helps an individual with a disability return to work by letting them set aside money and/or things they own to pay for items or services needed to achieve a specific work goal. Individuals can work with a state vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor on developing an achievable plan to get the training, items or services needed to return to work.

## **Monthly Budget Planner**

Keeping track of expenses is an important part of budgeting and managing your finances. The budget spreadsheet found at <http://christianpf.com/media/BudgetTemplate.xls> automatically calculates the data you input, so that you can instantly see where you stand against your budget after each purchase. Budget categories and types of expenses can be easily changed in the spreadsheet to show your personal spending habits.