

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

PLANNING FOR YOUR FINANCIAL FUTURE

It's never too early to start saving

It's never too early to start saving and to plan your financial future. Whether you'd like to save for a house, a car, college, retirement, or pay down debt, it all starts with identifying your spending patterns. Do you know where your money goes each month? When you determine your short-term and long-term financial goals, you can set up a plan and monitor your progress.

Many people find that having a monthly budget helps them track expenses, plan for emergencies, and achieve more control over their spending. Over time, these simple strategies can move the needle closer to your financial goals:

- **Create an automatic savings plan.** It's easier to save money when it's deducted right from your paycheck. Set up a fund for emergencies, such as three to six months of expenses. Contribute as much as possible to your retirement account, especially if your employer has a matching contribution. If you're saving for college tuition, explore your state's 529 college tuition savings plans.
- **Research expensive purchases.** Take the time to research prices and consumer reviews for costly items such as home appliances, electronics, and furniture. The more knowledge you have, particularly for large purchases such as automobiles, the better you can negotiate.
- **Develop a plan to pay off credit card debt.** The average American carries more than \$5,000 in credit card debt. Besides high interest rates, carrying high credit card debt can lower your credit score. Develop a concrete plan to pay down your credit card debt.
- **Periodically review expenses such as insurance policies and shop around.** You may find you can get a better deal with another vendor or lower the price of your current policies by increasing deductibles or eliminating coverages you no longer need. The same goes for cable, phone, and internet bills.
- **Check your credit report at least once or twice a year and correct any discrepancies.** You can obtain a free annual report from www.annualcreditreport.com. Your credit score determines your eligibility for loans, interest rates, and more. It's important to make sure your credit report is accurate.
- **Review your progress each month.** You'll stay motivated when you see how every step you take is a step toward financial wellness and peace of mind.

