

# Welcome

*to peace of mind!*

## Credit Advisors Foundation

Client Handbook

Client # \_\_\_\_\_

Account Manager \_\_\_\_\_



1818 South 72nd Street, Omaha, NE 68124

888-942-9027 • Fax 402-393-4141

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



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**Our mission is to eradicate the causes and consequences of ineffective consumer debt management through education, training and programs delivered with the highest level of customer service and dignity, free from all forms of discrimination.**



# CONTACTING CREDIT ADVISORS FOUNDATION

We want to hear from you!

If you have any questions or comments about your debt management program you can reach us, Credit Advisors Foundation, any time. To receive the best service; contact us in one of the following three ways:

- **Online 24/7** - Access your Credit Advisors Foundation account online at **[www.creditadvisors.org](http://www.creditadvisors.org)**. To access your program online, your login Client ID is your Credit Advisors Foundation Client Number and your password is your social security number, no dashes, just the nine numbers.
- Contact us by **telephone** at **888-942-9027** select option one and then your Account Manager's extension. If you receive their voice-mail, leave a detailed message with your full name, client number, and telephone number with the area code. Allow up to 24 hours for a return call. If you leave detailed information about why you are calling, we will do our best to have the matter resolved by the time we return your call. If you'd rather speak with another counselor, instead of leaving a message for your Account Manager, you have that option as well.
- **Write** us at: Credit Advisors Foundation  
1818 South 72nd Street,  
Omaha, NE 68124  
Attn: (insert your Account Manager's name here).

## REFER A FRIEND!

Refer friends and relatives to Credit Advisors Foundation! We know it's difficult to share your financial problems with others but you owe it to friends and relatives to show them how you are finding financial peace and freedom. Spread the good news and we can begin helping them today! Give them our toll free number 800-942-9027. When asked, tell them to say they were referred by you. Contact your Account Manager at 888-942-9027 for more details or if you have any questions.

# CLIENT BENEFITS

## Education

The most important aspect of your debt management program is the education Credit Advisors Foundation provides during and after your program. Listed below are just a few of the materials and programs available to you as a client; please contact your Account Manager for more information on all our educational offerings.

- *Defeat Debt* is the newsletter you will receive with your statement each month
  - *Defeat Debt's* topics include: budgeting, consumer rights, money management, creditor information, and information to help you through your debt management plan
- *Debt Edge* is an e-newsletter focusing on consumer news and current issues. This e-newsletter is sent to your e-mail every month
- “Lunch and Learn” seminars are held once a month. They provide in-depth information and training on a variety of financial topics
  - The seminars can be attended in person, at our Omaha, Nebraska office, or over the phone using CAF's conference line. Please call 800-942-9027 for further information.
- The Client Education Series is located at [www.creditadvisors.org](http://www.creditadvisors.org), the eight modules are to be completed over the life of your program
  - The topics include:
    - Budgeting
    - Banking
    - Credit Reports
    - Identity Theft and Scams
    - Insurance
    - Saving
    - Mortgage and other Housing Options
    - Credit Usage
  - You will be awarded a certificate of completion upon finishing all the modules, along with an additional prize!

Please take advantage of these education opportunities. After all your hard work getting out of debt, we want to make sure you have the knowledge needed to stay debt free!

## **Concessions From Creditors**

At Credit Advisors Foundation, we work hard to make sure you receive any concessions creditors have to offer as soon as possible. Some of your creditors may provide specific concessions when they accept the proposals for your plan. For instance, some creditors: reduce or stop interest, waive and/or stop fees, or re-age past due accounts. Over the next four months you may begin to see adjustments on your billing statements from your creditors. Please note: Most creditors require three consecutive monthly payments before granting any concessions. Creditors typically return our proposals within three to six weeks of starting your program with acceptances or additional requests. If a creditor tells you they have not received a proposal three to six weeks from now, ask them for a fax number and call us with the information. We will gladly send another proposal to them.

## **OBTAINING OR APPLYING FOR NEW CREDIT**

Do not request any new credit before checking with us first. Not only will obtaining new debt delay your goals of becoming debt free, your creditors may decide to remove you from the program or remove your concessions.

## **OPEN COMMUNICATION**

Keep us informed of all changes in your home address, mailing address, e-mail address, and telephone numbers. Please set your e-mail system to accept our e-mails so you can receive important information.

Please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions, concerns, suggestions or ideas. This is your program and we want to hear from you!

Please respond promptly to any communication you receive from our staff. We are here to help and sometimes we need additional information.

# MAKING PAYMENTS

*ONLY FULL AND TIMELY PAYMENTS CAN KEEP YOU SUCCESSFULLY ON THE ROAD TO DEBT FREE LIVING!*

## Electronic Funds Transfers (EFT):

Most of our clients utilize Electronic Funds Transfer (“EFT”) to ensure full and timely payments in a hassle free manner: no stamps, no money order charges, no lost mail. If you are not signed up for EFT, please contact your Account Manager at 888-942-9027. CAF has seven convenient “pull dates” from which you can choose. Pull dates are the days each month when we can transfer your payment from your bank account. Pull dates available include: 1st, 5th, 8th, 11th, 16th, 20th and 23rd. If your EFT pull date falls on a weekend or a holiday, the funds may come out the next bank business day. Credit Advisors Foundation receives payments by EFT the third business day following your pull date. So be sure to choose a date which works best for meeting your creditors due dates. You may also need to ask your creditors to move their due dates.

Changes to your EFT’s are not recommended. However if you must change them, for your security, **any change to your EFT must be done in writing and received in our offices no less than 10 business days prior to the date on which the change is to take effect.** Change forms can be acquired from your Account Manager. All changes must be delivered either by hand, USPS return receipt requested, or overnight mail. **NO FAXES WILL BE ACCEPTED.** The forms must be complete and have the original signature of the account holder.

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**Please be advised that, in the event an electronic funds transfer (EFT) or bank account has one of the following challenges, a reimbursement may be assessed to your Credit Advisors Foundation account to cover incurred charges where allowable.**

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Account Closed/Frozen	=	\$15.00
Authorization Revoke	=	\$25.00
Change Date/Lower Payment	=	\$ 5.00
NSF/Stop Payment	=	\$15.00
Funds In Place of EFT Pull	=	\$10.00
Skips	=	\$20.00

## Payroll Deduction/ Wage Assignments

Payments can be deducted directly from your paycheck and sent to Credit Advisors Foundation. **Contact us at 888-942-9027** for more information.



## Money Order/Cashiers Check

Your payments are always due in our offices by the first day of each month.

## Money Gram:

Payments may also be made by MoneyGram. To find the nearest location, call MoneyGram at 800-926-9400.

**MoneyGram accepts cash only.** You will need the full amount of your payment plus your Money Gram fee. **You will need to ask Money Gram for a blue Money Gram form. You will be making payment to Credit Advisors Foundation. Provide your client number and/or social security number. The Receive Code (Required) 2515, City and State: Omaha, NE.** At the completion of your transaction, Money Gram will give you a receipt with a money control number. Please keep this for your records.

## Personal Checks

Personal checks are not accepted.

## Cash

For your protection, cash payments are not accepted.

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**\*\* No matter how you pay: If a lapse of 30 days between payments to CAF occurs, your debt management program is at risk. Most creditors discontinue counseling concessions if proposed payments are not received each 30 day cycle, and may never restore concessions. To avoid this, please make full timely payments and stay in contact with your Account Manager. Good communication will help us provide you with options.**

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## **STATEMENTS FROM CREDIT ADVISORS FOUNDATION**

You can access a statement of your account 24/7 by logging on to EProgress at [www.creditadvisors.org](http://www.creditadvisors.org). Your Social Security number is your password. We'll even send you a monthly reminder to review your account via e-mail.

If you do not have internet access let us know and we'll send you paper status reports. Requests should be sent to 1818 South 72nd St., Omaha, NE 68124.

Check your information carefully to verify accuracy. If you notice a larger or smaller balance on your creditor statements compared to your Credit Advisors Foundation statement, please send a copy of that creditor statement to us immediately, highlighting the issue.

Remember to adjust your spamblocker to accept our e-mails. If you do not know how to do this, call your Account Manager at 888-942-9027.

If you do not receive your statement, call us at 888-942-9027!

## **STATEMENTS FROM CREDITORS**

You will continue to receive statements from your creditors detailing our payments to them. Make sure you review all your statements and send copies to us every three to four months. You may fax them to your Account Manager at 402-393-4141, Attn: Your Account Manager. This allows us to verify you are receiving any and all concessions your creditors offer. If a creditor mails you a notice that they have sold or transferred your account, changed your account number or interest rate, or assessed new fees, etc, please send us a copy of the statement with the highlighted areas of concern immediately.

Sometimes after reviewing your statement you may find you need to change your due date to avoid late fees, keep costs down, and make sure the debt management program succeeds. Before calling a creditor to make any changes, contact your Account Manager to discuss all options available. Creditors are normally helpful in making a due date adjustment for you via a simple call to their customer service department; an 800 number is usually on each statement.

The window of time for disputing charges, late fees, and interest rates with creditors varies from one creditor to the next. However, the more timely the dispute, the more likely it is to receive a positive outcome. For this reason, please mail or fax copies of the statement or letter that you feel is incorrect as soon as you receive it. Credit Advisors Foundation will help dispute any charge that you believe to be in error if we receive notification of the charge within 60 days of the billing statement when the charge occurs. It's vital to the success of your program that you promptly open and review all creditor letters and statements you receive.

# **COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

## **Is Credit Advisors Foundation able to provide loans?**

Credit Advisors Foundation is not a loan company. You cannot borrow yourself out of debt. Credit Advisors Foundation shows you how to use your regular income to get out of debt, and we help you to do it.

## **What phone number should I give to my creditors so they can speak with Credit Advisors Foundation?**

As a client, you no longer have to deal with creditor calls! If a creditor calls you, tell them Credit Advisors Foundation is handling your account. Provide them with your Credit Advisors Foundation client number and tell them to call our creditor hotline at 402-501-8234.

## **Do you telephone my creditors when I start the program?**

Credit Advisors Foundation sends a written or electronic proposal to each of your creditors within five business days from your start date. This proposal notifies your creditors of your financial situation and asks them to accept the proposed payment amount. The proposal also asks your creditor to offer you a number of concessions. If a creditor does not respond to our written proposal within 60 days, Credit Advisors Foundation calls the creditor to attempt to verify proposal acceptance.

## **How does Credit Advisors Foundation use credit reports to monitor my program?**

Unlike some other counseling services, Credit Advisors Foundation understands your desire to obtain the credit you deserve. To ensure your plan stays on track, Credit Advisors Foundation administers a credit report program to monitor the progress of your debt management plan and verify your creditors have re-aged your accounts as agreed. The cost to you is approximately \$2.50 per month. This charge is included in your regular monthly payments in most cases. This service is not available in all states.

## **Can I still use my credit cards?**

Most of your creditors have probably closed your accounts. If a creditor has not closed your account, we advise against charging on any open accounts, as it may cause a creditor to discontinue any concessions they may be offering you.

## **What do I do when my creditor tells me they haven't received a proposal?**

Get the name of the creditor, the name of the representative that is calling you and their return phone number. Contact your Account Manager at 888-942-9027. Your Account Manager will return the call on your behalf.

## Why would a creditor reject a proposal?

All creditors have their own guidelines for proposal acceptance and concessions offered. Most creditors require the receipt of three to six payments after the proposal is accepted before they make changes to interest, charges, and account status to ensure you are committed to the program. The plan proposal may have been accepted, but it may take a few statements until it's reflected on your statement or in their records.

If a proposal is denied, it's likely that the relationship of the payment to the current balance is too low. Creditors want to know that the account will pay in full in less than 60 months, and that is why it's important for your Account Manager to have current balances and statements. There are also certain account statuses that can cause proposal acceptance to be denied or delayed. These would include but are not limited to:

- account charged-off as a bad debt
- account less than 6, 9 or 12 months old
- recent charges in the last 30, 60 or 90 days
- balance is a result of cash advances or balance transfers only
- not all accounts with that creditor were included in the plan
- suspected fraud
- account holder name and client name do not match
- account previously in debt counseling.

Usually what is required is a small adjustment, correction, or determination of an eligibility date along with the submission of a new proposal. Communication with your Account Manager is key in ensuring you obtain the maximum concessions possible.

## If I can't stretch my income to pay all of my bills, how can Credit Advisors Foundation help me?

Credit Advisors Foundation helps you by serving as your personal business manager and financial consultant. Creditors know that by using our professionally operated debt management plan, their chances of receiving full payment of your debts are greatly increased. Because of this, many creditors will offer lower interest rates and sometimes even lower payments to consumers who manage their debt through the Credit Advisors Foundation program. This means that more of your hard-earned money goes to paying your principal debt, getting you out of debt faster and for less overall money.

## **Will going through a Debt Management Program hurt my credit rating?**

Creditors offer concessions to those participating in debt management programs such as: interest reduction, waiving of fees and charges, or reducing scheduled monthly payments. However, in return for these concessions creditors expect that participants will not increase their debt load. To protect against increased debt, some creditors may report to the credit bureaus that you are “participating in a credit-counseling program”. Some creditors may also report you as past due for the first three months you are on the program.

Most creditors will re-age your account to a current status once they have received anywhere from three to six consecutive monthly payments from Credit Advisors Foundation. After you have been on the program 90 days, you will receive a letter from us outlining the current concessions you are receiving from creditors. Compare your concessions letter to your creditor statements. Contact us immediately if you notice a difference between your creditor statement and your concessions letter.

## **Can I pay extra in order to complete my plan sooner?**

Most definitely! Please call us and let us know how much extra you will be sending so that we may prepare your account. We apply the extra funds to the creditor that is going to benefit you the most, (e.g. based on rates, type, security or legal status). If circumstances change such that your income increases it's imperative to apply that money to your program, getting you out of debt sooner.

## **Why have some of my creditor balances increased?**

Your total debt may increase due to any interest, finance charges, over-limit and late fees, or differences in balances that were reported between the time of your initial budget analysis and proposal acceptance. Your contract indicates the **approximate** amount of time it will take to complete the program, which is based in part on the original indebtedness you owe. If your total indebtedness increases, the completion of the program may take longer. However, timely full payments and applying any additional income will ensure that you get out of debt in the least amount of time.

## **How do I authorize someone other than myself to obtain information or discuss my CAF account?**

If you would like to authorize a person not on your account to obtain information on your CAF account you must provide written authorization allowing us to release information to this individual. We suggest that you fax your written permission to your Account Manager at 402-393-4141.

## **Can I apply for a loan or for more credit while I'm on the CAF program?**

Do not request any new credit before checking with CAF first. Obtaining new debt may cause creditors to remove you from the program and discontinue any concessions they were offering.

## **Should I cancel any creditor payments that are being automatically deducted from my checking or savings account?**

You may want to consider canceling any automatic deductions you have with any of your creditors included on your program. If you do not cancel those deductions, your creditor may receive a double payment; one from Credit Advisors Foundation and the one that was automatically deducted from your account by your creditor.

## **Should I cancel the credit protection insurance on my creditor accounts?**

You may want to consider canceling any insurance and or recurring monthly charges on your credit card or finance accounts. Some creditors will not accept payment plans if credit insurance charges continue to accrue; others may request that the insurance premium be added to the proposed monthly payment amount.

## **Why is the balance on my creditor statement different from the balance due on my Credit Advisors Foundation statement?**

The balances given on your CAF statements are only **approximate** balances, based on the most recent creditor information we've received from you and the activity on your account since that information was received. Creditors do not send us copies of your statements. You must regularly update your balances on-line at [www.creditadvisors.org](http://www.creditadvisors.org). This allows us to provide you with the most up-to-date information.

## **Do I have to list all my creditors on the debt management program or can I leave any off?**

Credit Advisors Foundation recommends you list all creditors on your program for several reasons:

- Some creditors will not accept your program or offer concessions if all creditors are not listed on the Debt Management Program
- It's more convenient for you to only make one payment per month
- By listing all your debts, we have a much better idea of your total financial picture and are in a better position to help you

# **PRIVACY STATEMENT FOR CREDIT ADVISORS FOUNDATION**

Every effort (physical, electronic and procedural safeguards) is made to ensure that your financial information is kept confidential and secure. All Credit Advisors Foundation employees and agents are strictly held to the standards outlined in the Confidentiality Policy, which includes appropriate disciplinary action for knowingly or unknowingly revealing information of a confidential nature. Clients can expect that all of their business information will be kept absolutely confidential and secure from threats or unauthorized access. We do not release nonpublic individual information about our clients or former clients to anyone, except as permitted by law, without your permission. CAF has created this privacy statement in order to demonstrate our commitment to privacy. The following discloses our information gathering and dissemination practices:

## **Information Logged**

We may compile data and information we receive from you; however, we do not release this information in a manner allowing for personal identification of the contributors. We use your IP address to help diagnose problems with our server and to administer our Website.

## **Registration Forms**

Our forms require users to give us contact information (like their name, e-mail, and postal address), financial information (like their bank account or credit card numbers), and demographic information (like their zip code, age, or income level). Contact information from the forms is used to respond to inquiries, provide information about our company, to create personalized debt management plans, and to assist you in making payments. Your contact information is also used to get in touch with you when necessary. We may disclose some or all of the information that we collect to creditors, related financial institutions or third parties that you have authorized who need this information in order for us to assist you after a counseling session and/or in order to put you on a debt management program.

We may also collect or disclose personal information you provide or authorize such as surveys or other forms, transactions with us, creditors or others, and information received from credit reporting agencies, such as credit history.

## **External Links and Public Forums**

Our Website contains links to other sites. CAF is not responsible for the privacy practices or the content of external Websites. Please remember that any information that is disclosed in these areas becomes public information and you should exercise caution when deciding to disclose your personal information.

## Security

Our site has security measures in place to protect against the loss, misuse, and alteration of the information under our control. Credit Advisors Foundation will take the necessary precautions to ensure your confidential information is secure, confidential and protected from unauthorized access or any other threats.

## Data Quality/Access

We restrict access to nonpublic personal information about you to employees on a need-to-know basis in order to provide appropriate services. Our Website gives users the following options for changing or modifying information previously provided:

- You can send an email to [info@creditadvisors.org](mailto:info@creditadvisors.org)
- You can log in and make changes through EProgress (see page 6)
- You can send a letter to Credit Advisors Foundation:  
1818 South 72nd Street  
Omaha, NE 68124

## Contacting the Website

If you have any questions about this privacy statement, the practices of our site, or your dealings with this Website, you can contact:  
[info@creditadvisors.org](mailto:info@creditadvisors.org)

## CLIENT CONCERNS

Credit Advisors recognizes that while we strive to provide the highest level of service to our clients, occasionally a client will have a concern they need to have addressed. Clients are encouraged from the time of first contact through program completion to contact their Account Manager at 888-942-9027 any time they have a question or concern. Responses to most questions or concerns should be provided within three business days, with calls returned in 24 hours.

Clients who feel their concern has not been resolved to their satisfaction can submit a written complaint to the Vice President of Client Services, Credit Advisors Foundation, 1818 South 72nd Street, Omaha, NE 68124. These complaints will be handled on a case-by-case basis and resolved as quickly as possible. At the time the complaint is received, the client will be contacted by CAF with a request for any additional information required from the client.

A copy of the resolution will be sent to the client, and copies will be kept in the clients' file and in a separate Resolution File. The contents of the Resolutions File shall be summarized and presented to the Board of Directors and Foundation administrators for quality assurance reviews and policy changes.



# STATEMENT OF CLIENT'S RIGHTS

1. You are entitled to be treated with courtesy and consideration at all times by anyone you speak with at our organization.
2. You are entitled to a non-judgmental Counselor capable of handling your financial matters; and if they cannot, they will provide you with a referral to someone who possibly can.
3. You have the right to receive an Action Plan detailing your options and recommendations from your Counselor at no charge.
4. You are entitled at no cost to ask questions, access educational resources and benefit from professional help to develop a personal budget. If an additional service that is appropriate for your situation assesses a fee (and after the fee is fully explained and you are willing to participate in the program), you will be charged a reasonable fee.
5. You are entitled to have your questions and concerns addressed in a prompt manner and to have your telephone calls returned promptly.
6. You are entitled to be kept informed of the status of your financial concern and to request and receive copies of any related documents. You are entitled to sufficient information to allow you to participate meaningfully in the progress of any plan or program.
7. You are entitled to have your legitimate objectives respected by your Counselor.
8. You have the right to privacy in your dealings with your Counselor and to have your confidences preserved to the extent permitted by law.
9. You are entitled to have your Counselor conduct himself or herself ethically.
10. You may not be refused service on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin or disability.
11. You have the right to make a complaint about the service or treatment received from Credit Advisors Foundation and expect that this complaint will be investigated appropriately and in confidence. Clients will not be disadvantaged in receiving continuing service by making a complaint.
12. You have the right to have a quick resolution to any error made on your account.
13. You have the right to reject any suggested plan or referral.
14. You have the right to discontinue your service at any time in writing.

# Statement of Client's Responsibilities

1. To treat the Counselor and the Counselor's staff with courtesy and consideration.
2. To ensure the client's relationship with the Counselor is one of complete candor and inform the Counselor of all facts or circumstances regarding creditors, balances, statuses, creditor fees, income increases and any other information which is part of the personal financial situation.
3. To maintain contact with Credit Advisors Foundation, promptly notify us of any change in telephone number or address and to respond promptly to a request by Credit Advisors Foundation for information and cooperation.
4. To follow action plans or treatment programs which have been chosen in consultation with Credit Advisors Foundation.
5. To properly read and respond to all correspondence from Credit Advisors Foundation including any and all agreements.
6. To read all correspondence from creditors and to keep Credit Advisors Foundation apprised of their status either by delivering notice to CAF or logging into their online account.
7. To make use of all the educational opportunities such as seminars, tutorials, and publications.
8. To put their best effort toward reducing debts by following their Debt Management Plan, and putting extra income towards all debts.

## NOTES

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# IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

To view your account online:

**[www.creditadvisors.org](http://www.creditadvisors.org)**

The password is your Social Security number.



## **For questions on your account**

Contact your Account Manager

888-942-9027 (Toll Free)

[yourAccountManager@creditadvisors.org](mailto:yourAccountManager@creditadvisors.org)

## **To set an office appointment**

with your Account Manager 888-942-9027 (Toll Free)

## **To refer a friend to Credit Advisors**

Certified Credit Counselors 800-942-9027 (Toll Free)

**[www.creditadvisors.org](http://www.creditadvisors.org)**

## **To fax your Account Manager**

402-393-4141

## **To have creditors call us**

Creditor Hotline 402-501-8234

(and give them your client number)

## **To locate a Western Union office**

Western Union Locator 800-325-6000

## **To locate a MoneyGram office**

MoneyGram Locator 800-926-9400

## **To register for any class or seminar we offer**

please go to our web site at [www.creditadvisors.org](http://www.creditadvisors.org) or call 800-942-9027 and ask for Community Education to reserve your space.