

HOW TO ESTABLISH A BUDGET, STAY ORGANIZED AND NAVIGATE BANKING

The idea of managing finances and creating a budget is not something most people are excited about. It can feel so overwhelming that many people try not to think about it at all. The problem is that no matter how much money you make, if you aren't being careful with how you spend your money it is hard to accomplish your financial goals. Finances are typically made up of the following:

- How much money you bring in every month
- Debt
- Regular bills
- Fun spending (i.e. shopping, eating out, vacations)
- Financial goals (i.e. saving for retirement or big expenditures including a car or house)

While managing finances and setting a budget is challenging for most people, it can be even harder after a brain injury. Some challenges may include:

- Impulse purchasing, which may lead to more unnecessary spending
- Changes in income associated with injury
- Additional expense (i.e. medical bills, therapy co-pays)
- Difficulty with planning, organizing and sticking with the plan

Despite these challenges, having a brain injury rarely changes people's long-term goals such as buying a home, retiring and having money for interests and fun.

LEARN AS MUCH AS YOU CAN ABOUT YOUR FINANCES

The first step in financial management is learning as much about your finances as you can. This is the most overwhelming part of managing your finances and some people are tempted to give up. Don't give up; you got this! In order to get your

finances on track, you need to understand your unique finances:

- First, you need to know what debt you have, how much debt and where your debts are. Some common types of debt include:
 - Student loans
 - Credit cards
 - Pay day loans
- If debt is a concern for you, debt consolidation organizations or financial advisors can help. Do not get stuck in the trap of payday loans, it will only make things worse later.
 - Some banks offer free financial consultation.
 - The Brain Injury Alliance of Washington has a resource center that can help you find the resource you're looking for and recommend other ideas.
- Clarify exactly how much money you bring in each month.
- Make a list of your bills and expenses each month, including:
 - Rent/mortgage
 - Utilities
 - Car payment/transportation costs
 - Debt payments- loans, credit cards
 - Food
 - Healthcare- insurance, medications, co-pays
 - School/childcare costs

Once you know where your money needs to go:

- Apply extra money to pay down debt.
 - Don't try to do everything at once, prioritize and tackle one goal at a time
- Save for retirement or a long-term goal.
- Making sure you are balancing your fun spending with your long-term goals.
- Pay for things with cash and keep credit cards at home. It's harder to overspend.

