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FEDERAL DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION
consumer news



Financial Empowerment and Inclusion

Know what disability services are available at your bank

Banks provide various accommodations and services for customers with disabilities, including digital banking apps, special accounts, and accessibility services. Learning about financial management and financing services that meet your needs, and how to protect yourself from financial scams and exploitation, will help you feel safer and more empowered to handle your daily finances.

How money smart are you?

The FDIC *How Money Smart Are You?* available at playmoneysmart.fdic.gov/games is a suite of 14 games and related resources about everyday financial topics, including materials for individuals with disabilities and their caretakers to consider as they manage their finances. This resource includes information on managing your debt, building for your future, and more.

#GetBanked

If you or a loved one are in the process of receiving payments related to a disability and you have not set up a bank account to receive those payments, you can learn more about options at the FDIC fdic.gov/getbanked/index.html website. Rather than receiving a check or debit card, many FDIC-insured banks offer accounts with

low (or no) monthly maintenance fees when you have direct deposit or maintain a minimum balance. Learn more about the top reasons to open a bank account at fdic.gov/getbanked/pdf/top-reasons-to-open-a-bank-account.pdf and where to find options to open an account online.

Determine if a bank meets your accessibility needs

The following are questions you may want to consider when shopping for a bank to meet your individual needs:

Customer service – Is the bank welcoming in your interactions by phone, online, and in person?

Accessibility – Can you interact with the bank in the way you prefer/need to do business? Are the branches accessible to you based on your needs? Are you able to review details about banking transactions electronically? For example, are you able to access your account information online and through banking apps easily? fdic.gov/resources/consumers/consumer-news/2020-11.html. Are you able to complete transactions such as making loan payments or transferring funds by phone or online? Are you able to use the bank's services to understand when deposits are available for use?

Familiarity – Is it important to have all your deposit and loan accounts at the same bank? Would you be comfortable dealing with more than one bank so as to get more tailored services based on your loan or deposit needs?

Safety and Stability – Are you dealing with an FDIC-insured financial institution? banks.data.fdic.gov/bankfind-suite/bankfind.

Is an ABLE account right for you or your family member?

Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) bank accounts are designed for individuals with disabilities and their families. ABLE bank accounts allow people to save money without having those savings count against their eligibility for federally-funded benefits. The ABLE Act is a federal law that provides the framework for ABLE accounts, but the accounts are run by individual states. Visit the Internal Revenue Service at irs.gov/government-entities/federal-state-local-governments/able-accounts-tax-benefit-for-people-with-disabilities and the Social Security Administration at choosework.ssa.gov/blog/2017-11-20-yawa-able-accounts-what-you-should-know to see if you qualify for an ABLE Account. If you qualify, be sure to shop and compare the different ABLE account options and ask the bank any questions you might have. You can obtain additional information about ABLE accounts at ablenrc.org.

Funds in an ABLE account (nationaldisabilityinstitute.org/financial-wellness/able-accounts/) deposited at an FDIC-insured institution are covered by the FDIC for up to \$250,000, with the account owner (the beneficiary) being the insurable depositor. The FDIC Electronic Deposit Insurance Estimator (EDIE, at edie.fdic.gov/index.html) can be used to calculate the insurance coverage of all types of deposit accounts offered by an FDIC-insured bank.

Paying for modifications to your home or assistive devices

If you need to make modifications to your home or purchase accessibility devices to improve the quality of life for you or a loved one with a disability, there are both financing and non-financing options that could be appropriate to help meet your accessibility needs.

Financing options

If you purchased your home, the interest rate on a home equity loan is usually lower when compared to a new consumer loan. This lower interest rate also means lower payments, but also ties your home to a new loan. For example, if you choose to get a home equity loan and cannot make the

payments you agreed to in the loan terms, your bank can foreclose on your house. A consumer loan would not be tied to the mortgage, so it would not put the house at risk. However, the interest rate and monthly payments could be higher, so be sure to compare the two. Also, interest paid on a home equity loan may be tax deductible, yet interest paid on a consumer loan is not. You may want to consult your tax professional about this potential tax saving.

Non-financing options

If you have an ABLE account, you may want to consider using these funds toward modifications or assistive devices you need. Modifications to your home and assistive devices and technology qualify as allowable expenses through an ABLE account.

If the cost and amount of a needed modification is minimal, a small dollar loan might be an option. If you're looking for a small dollar loan, more information can be found at the Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund at cdfifund.gov/faq.

Avoid financial exploitation and abuse

Unfortunately, persons with disabilities can be vulnerable to financial exploitation, especially if they need to depend on someone else for assistance. Here are some tips to help avoid financial abuse:

- Never provide personal information, including your Social Security number, account numbers, or other financial information to anyone over the phone unless you initiated the call.
- Carefully choose a trustworthy person to share your financial planning matters, so they can assist you with tracking your finances if you are unable to do so yourself.
- Secure your checkbook, account statements, and other sensitive

information.

- Order copies of your credit report to review for suspicious activity. (You are entitled to a free copy of your credit report from each of the three major credit bureaus once every twelve months. To order your free annual reports, go to AnnualCreditReport.com or call toll-free 1-877-322-8228.)
- Ask for details in writing and getting a second opinion from a financial advisor or attorney before signing any document you do not understand.
- Pay with checks and credit cards instead of cash to have records of transactions.

Feeling safe and empowered financially provides better quality of daily life. Knowing what services are available and making choices that best meet our needs gives us the economic confidence we need.

Additional Resources

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) Persons with Disabilities files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_ymyg_focus-on-people-with-disabilities.pdf

CFPB - Identifying financial abuse and exploitation files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_ymyg_disabilities_identifying-financial-abuse-and-exploitation_tool.pdf

Federal Trade Commission - Scammers offering to help with disability applications consumer.ftc.gov/consumer-alerts/2016/04/scammers-offering-help-disability-applications

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living acl.gov/programs/assistive-technology/assistive-technology

For more consumer resources, visit FDIC.gov, or go to the [FDIC Knowledge Center](https://FDIC.gov). You can also call the FDIC toll-free at 1-877-ASK-FDIC (1-877-275-3342). Please send your story ideas or comments to ConsumerNews@fdic.gov. You can [subscribe](#) to this and other free FDIC publications to keep informed!

