

LIVING INDEPENDENTLY

BANKING

Most people manage their money through checking and savings accounts at banks. Banking can be very confusing, even to people who have been on their own for a long time. Having a checking account or a savings account helps you to organize your money and pay bills. They also provide a safe place for any extra money you might have. Check on the fees that banks and saving and loans charge for checking and savings accounts.

- **Checking Accounts** There are several types of checking accounts.
 - A basic checking account is mainly used to pay bills and to get cash via a debit (ATM) card. The debit (ATM) card can also be used to make purchases. *Make sure and keep track of all your expenses to avoid heavy fees/penalties for overdrawing on your account* (that is taking more money than you have in the account);
 - Many checking accounts have monthly fees. Some checking accounts require a minimum balance or have other requirements to waive/avoid the monthly fees; and
 - Shop around with different banks for free checking.

- **Savings Accounts**
 - If you're serious about saving, open a savings account separate from your checking account;
 - Look for a bank that offers a higher interest rate (which is the amount/percentage of money that the bank pays you for keeping cash with them. *The higher the rate, the better*);
 - Also ask about any service fees and make sure they don't change a lot; and
 - Shop around with different banks and compare their service fees and interest rates.

Information you need to open a checking or savings account:

- Your full name:
- Your address and phone number:
- Your driver's license or ID :
- Date and place of birth:
- Mother's full maiden name:
- Social security Number: and
- Beneficiary (this is a person who will receive any leftover money in your account in the event of your death)

LIVING INDEPENDENTLY

BUDGETING (Fill out the last page of this Directory)

- *Be realistic.* Consider **all** expenses, including housing expenses, groceries, eating out, movies, vacations, spending money, and hobbies. To build in a margin of safety in your plan, overestimate your expenses and underestimate your income;
- *Create a spending plan* (with the assistance of the budget sheet provided at the back of this Directory). A spending plan helps you keep track of your money by showing how you intend to use any money you receive. A budget/spending plan is the best way to manage your money;
- *First pay your bills*, such as your rent, utilities, car payment, auto insurance, and your credit card bills. Remember, there are penalties and bank fees if you pay your bills late. If you pay your rent late, you run the risk of being evicted from an apartment. If you pay your credit cards late, not only will you be charged a late fee (on average \$15 to \$35 and higher), but you run the risk of damaging your credit history. If you damage your credit history, you damage your ability to borrow money in the future;
- *Set aside money* for your weekly and day to day expenses, such as groceries and bus/metro fare. Budget the amount you will need and stay within your budget, do not over-spend or spend on extras;
- *Distinguish between wants and needs.* Buy what you need first. The wants belong in the "what's left over" category; and
- *Plan for and develop an emergency fund* for unexpected expenses, such as car repairs, or being unable to work due to illness or an accident. Also save money for larger expenses that you are expecting, such as school books, clothes, outings (such as skiing/snowboarding), or vacation. You can also set aside money for future goals, such as buying a car.

(Note: A sample budget sheet is provided at the back of this Directory.)

To learn more about how to manage your money, visit the following websites.

Hands on Banking

Learn more about a credit report, credit cards, borrowing and managing money
www.handsonbanking.org

National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE) Teen Resource Bureau

A site designed by teens to educate other teens on money and finance
www.ntrbonline.org

LIVING INDEPENDENTLY

Grocery Shopping Tips

www.couponing.about.com/cs/grocerysavings/a/groceryshoptips.htm

www.abes-grocery-tips.com

www.about.com/cs/grocerysavings/a/groceryshoptips.htm

CAR INSURANCE

It is against the law to drive without car insurance. If you are a student, your caregiver may be able to continue to carry you on their car insurance until you are 24. Otherwise, you will have to get your own insurance. The California minimum requirement is liability and uninsured motorists amounts of \$15,000/per person and \$30,000/per accident and \$5,000 for damages. The Youth Development Services Program may be able to assist you with this expense. For more information regarding auto insurance, contact the California Dept. of Insurance at (800) 927-4357 www.insurance.ca.gov.

When you pay off or entirely purchase a car, you will receive the California Certificate of title, commonly known as the “pink slip”. It is a very important document, which contains detailed information about the car and provides proof of ownership. When a car changes ownership, the seller is required to sign this certificate and to have it recorded within 10 days by the DMV to finalize the transfer and discharge the seller from any further responsibilities connected with that particular vehicle.

CELL PHONES

- Almost everybody has a cell phone and having one is not only popular, but sometimes necessary;
- Be responsible and BEWARE. Cell phone charges can add up really quickly and they will catch you by surprise;
- Keep track of the number of minutes or text messages used. Any minutes, text messages, or internet use outside of your plan is very expensive, and you can end up with a very high bill. Ask your service provider how you can keep track of your minutes/text messages/internet use. The important thing is to keep track; and
- A way to curb the cost of cell phones is to get a prepaid plan. A prepaid plan lets you pay for the minutes up-front and as you use the minutes they're deducted from your plan. Once you're out of minutes, you cannot use your phone until you purchase additional minutes. This will help you from going over your minutes and paying a lot of extra money. It'll also help you keep track of how much you spend on your cell phone.

LIVING INDEPENDENTLY

CREDIT CARDS

- Having a credit card can help you build your credit history, BUT, having a credit card is a big responsibility and it should not be taken lightly;
- If you get a credit card, use it for emergencies only. Remember the difference between those things you need, and those things you want but don't really need. ;
- Credit cards have high interest rates (the amount of extra money you have to pay for borrowing money to pay for the items you charge on your card). Your best practice is to spend only what you can pay off each month;
- If you can't make a payment that equals the balance on your account, send in more than just the minimum payment. That is, always pay as much as you can towards the balance. If you make only the minimum payment each month, your debt will keep on growing, even if you don't make any other purchases. (The credit card companies prefer that you pay the minimum amount on your balance, so they can charge you more money [interest] on the remaining balance. They also hope you keep using the credit card so the balance (debt) increases. Remember, the higher your balance, the more they can charge you for borrowing the money); and
- Remember, if you're late or miss your payments, it can affect your credit history and put you in jeopardy of getting a loan or apartment lease in the future.

CREDIT INFORMATION

A credit report is a summary of your debts and a history of how promptly you have paid your bills. The information comes from the companies where you have credit accounts and from public court records. It is collected and stored by companies, often called credit bureaus, which make the information available to creditors whenever you apply for a loan or credit card or make a purchase on time payments.

Under a new federal law, you have the right to one free credit report every 12 months from each of the three major credit-reporting agencies. Check your reports for inaccurate data that could hurt your ability to get credit or a loan. Also, incorrect information can be a red flag that someone is using your identity to get credit without your knowledge.

One main fact about debt is that it follows you. Credit card debt can ruin your credit rating and damage your chances to make purchases like buying that new car after graduation. In fact, if you miss a payment by just 30 days, you tarnish your credit rating for the next seven years *after* you pay it off! If you haven't made a payment in three months, your account can be turned over to a collection agency. This also stays on your credit record for seven years *after* you finally pay it off.

LIVING INDEPENDENTLY

Keeping your credit clean: www.accountingnet.com

Credit Reports: TransUnion (800) 888-4213: www.transunion.com

Equifax (800) 685-1111: www.equifax.com

Experian (888) 397-3742: www.experian.com

DRIVER'S LICENSE

Department of Motor Vehicles 1 (800) 921-1117 www.dmv.ca.gov

To apply for an original driver license if you are over 18, you will need to do the following:

- Visit a [DMV office](#) ([make an appointment](#) for faster service);
- Complete application form DL 44 (An original DL 44 form must be submitted. Copies will not be accepted.);
- Give a thumb print;
- Have your picture taken;
- Provide your [social security number](#). It will be verified with the Social Security Administration while you are in the office;
- Verify your [birth date and legal presence](#);
- Provide your [true full name](#);
- Pay the \$27 application fee (the application fee for a [commercial driver license](#) is \$64) - **ILP funds can be used**;
- Pass a [vision exam](#);
- Pass a traffic laws and sign test. There are 36 questions on the test. You have three chances to pass; and
- Once you have received your driver's license, you must have the minimum required liability insurance for your auto (please see "car insurance" above for details).

California Identification Card

- DMV issues ID cards to persons of any age;
- The ID card looks like a driver license, but is used for identification purposes only;
- A regular ID card is valid for six years;
- The application fee is \$23- (**ILP funds can be used**);
- Reduced fee ID cards are available if you meet income requirements from a public assistance program. If you are eligible, the government or non-profit program will give you a completed *Verification for Reduced Fee Identification Card form (DL937)* to take to the DMV to apply for your reduced fee; and
 - See your local public assistance program agency for information about eligibility requirements and obtaining a DL937 form.

LIVING INDEPENDENTLY

IDENTITY THEFT

- Identity theft is the fastest growing crime of the 21st century;
- Teens are increasingly being targeted because;
 - Teens are largely unaware of the threats of identity theft, and those who are aware often fail to protect themselves
 - Teens frequent the Internet where they freely and, sometimes unknowingly, provide personal identifying information
 - Teens are known for having an “it can’t happen to me” attitude
- Perpetrators use your personal information to commit many different types of fraud, including credit card, bank, retail account (Gap, Macy’s), and telecommunications fraud;
- The internet is an appealing place for criminals to obtain identifying information such as your passwords, social security number, and credit card information.;
- Thieves often attempt to get information from chat rooms or from web sites that pose as legitimate commercial sites;
- According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) millions of Americans are victims of stolen identity every year (over 10 million in 2004); and
- The number one target of identity theft is young people between the ages of 18-29. According to the FTC young people comprised 31% of the 10 million victims in 2004.

Identity theft is a serious crime, but there is no need to become paranoid or stop using the Internet. However, you must be extremely cautious about divulging sensitive personal information to anyone.

Tips for preventing identity theft:

Guard your personal information. It’s valuable.

- Do not store personal identification information on laptops, wireless phones, pagers and MP3 players and other devices.
- Carefully destroy any paperwork you plan to throw out that has any identifying information, bank accounts, your driver’s license or Social Security number. Use a cross-cut shredder if possible.

Don’t be intimidated:

- Tell adults (social workers, coaches, teachers, employers) who ask for Social Security, driver’s license and credit card numbers that you want to know how they’ll use it and how they’ll protect it from identity theft.

Check out your paperwork

- Check bank and credit card statements for irregularities and any unauthorized charges.
- Ask for help on how to monitor your credit reports at least once a year.

****Refer to Credit Information for info and referrals ****

LIVING INDEPENDENTLY

THE INTERNET

The internet is used to obtain information, communicate, socialize, shop, access bank information, pay bills and access entertainment among other things. Websites like 'My-Space' can be / are great places to interact with your friends and share photos, memories and good times. However, they can also be places that make you an easy target for a perpetrator.

Protecting Yourself On-line

While you're on line, consider the following safety tips (suggested by the Federal Trade Commission)

- Think about how different sites work before deciding to join a site. Some sites will allow only a defined community of users to access posted content; others allow anyone and everyone to view postings;
- Keep control over the information you post. Consider restricting access to your page to a select group of people, for example, your friends from school, your club, your community groups or your family;
- Be cautious about posting information that could be used to identify you or locate you offline. This could include the name of your school, sports team, clubs, and where you work or hang out;
- Keep information to yourself. Do not post your full name, Social Security number, address, phone number, or bank and credit card account numbers – and don't post other people's information, either;
- Make sure your screen name doesn't say too much about you. Don't use your name, your age, or your hometown. Even if you think your screen name is anonymous, it doesn't take a genius to combine clues to figure out who you are and where you can be found;
- Post only information you are comfortable with others seeing and knowing about you. Many people can see your page, including your family, your teachers, the police, the college you might apply to next year, or the job you might want to apply for in five years;
- Remember that once you post information online, you can't take it back. Even if you delete the information from a site, older versions exist on other people's computers;
- Flirting with strangers online could have serious consequences. Because some people lie about who they really are, you never really know who you're dealing with;
- Be wary if a new online friend wants to meet you in person. Before you decide to meet someone, do your research:
 - Ask whether any of your friends know the person
 - See what background you can dig up through online search engines

LIVING INDEPENDENTLY

- If you decide to meet, be smart about it:
 - Meet in a public place, during the day, with friends you trust.
 - Tell an adult or responsible friend/sibling where you are going and when you expect to be back; and
- Trust your gut if you have suspicions. If you feel threatened by someone or uncomfortable because of something online, tell an adult you trust and report it to the police and the social networking sites. You could end up preventing someone else from becoming a victim.

For more information about staying safe online, visit the following organizations

OnGuard Online – www.OnGuardonline.gov

OnGuard Online provides practical tips from the federal government and the technology industry to help you be on guard against Internet fraud, secure your computer, and protect your personal information.

i-SAFE – www.i-safe.org

Founded in 1998 and endorsed by the U.S. Congress, i-SAFE is a non-profit foundation dedicated to protecting the online experiences of youth everywhere.

National Cyber Security Alliance – www.staysafeonline.org

NCSA is a non-profit organization that provides tools and resources to empower home users, small businesses and school, colleges and universities to stay safe online.

Staysafe - www.staysafe.org

staysafe.org is an educational site intended to help consumers understand both the positive aspects of the Internet as well as how to manage a variety of safety and security issues that exist online.

Wired Safety – www.wiredsafety.org

WiredSafety.org is an Internet safety and help group. Comprised of unpaid volunteers around the world, WiredSafety.org provides education, assistance and awareness on all aspects of cyber-crime and abuse, privacy, security and responsible technology use.

JOB ASSISTANCE - (Also, see *Employment*)

California Employment Development Department www.edd.ca.gov
Work Source Centers (800) 367-2562 *assistance with job placement*
Youth should contact her/his ILP Coordinator.

LIVING INDEPENDENTLY

LIFE SKILLS TRAINING (For ILP-eligible youth only)

Life skill services are offered through The Community College Foundation, The Foundation for California Community Colleges and Para Los Ninos. Through a contract with Youth Development Services, these agencies develop, organize and present services for probation and foster youth age 16 and older. Services include Independent Living Program (ILP) classes, financial aid workshops, and Early Youth Development Services. The agencies also assist in the training of foster parents and other human service workers. For further information, contact your ILP Transition Coordinator or the agencies.

Community College Foundation www.communitycollege.org (213) 427-6910

Foundation for California Community Colleges www.foundationccc.org
(310) 216-7708

Para Los Ninos www.paralosninos.org (213) 250-4800

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

Provides financial, employment and health-related assistance to residents of Los Angeles County. Programs and services include:

- California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs); which provides temporary financial assistance, as well as employment services to families with children;
- Cal-Learn, a CalWORKs program for pregnant and parenting teens; and
- General Relief (GR), which provides temporary assistance and work opportunities to indigent adults.

Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) programs also include Food Stamps, Medi-Cal, and Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI), and In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS).

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES (DPSS)

Public Help Line (877) 481-1044

TDD (for hearing impaired) (562) 908-6650

Child Care Hotline (877) 244-5399 (CHILD-99)

Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority www.lahsa.org

RENTERS INFORMATION (see Housing Section)

SEALING OF RECORDS AND ACCESSING RECORDS

Please refer to the *Advocacy (Legal Resources)* section of this booklet. You can also visit ILP online, www.ilponline.org, legal assistance section, and click on "Having legal problems?" for a list of legal resources.

LIVING INDEPENDENTLY

TAXES

If you work in this country and make a certain amount of money you have to pay taxes. Tax laws change each year, but basically, you must pay three different types of taxes – federal, state and social security. It is your responsibility to keep informed about taxes and pay your taxes by April 15th each year. You can get information on tax laws at the library, a post office, or by calling the state tax office or the federal government's tax office the Internal Revenue Service or "IRS." The IRS office in Los Angeles is located downtown. For more information contact (213) 576-3009; or visit the website at: www.irs.gov.

W4 and W2 Forms:

The W4 is an official tax document you fill out when you get a job. The W4 authorizes your employer to deduct a certain amount of money from your paycheck for federal taxes. This is called "withholding" and is something all employers must do by law. Your employer can help you if you don't understand how to complete this form. The W2 is the statement that you usually get in January from your employer that reports your income for the prior year.

TRANSPORTATION

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority

(800) 266-6883 (Commute) www.mta.net or www.metro.net

Department of Motor Vehicles (800) 921-1117 www.dmv.ca.gov

UTILITIES

The Gas Company – www.socalgas.com

Call Center (800) 427-2200

Southern California Edison – www.sce.com

Billing Questions (800) 684-8123

Hearing and Speech Impaired Line (TDD) (800) 352-8580

Low Income Rate Assistance (800) 447-6620

Rates or other Service Related Questions (800) 950-2356

(800) 655-4555

Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP) – www.ladwp.com

Toll Free

(800) 342-5397 (DIAL-DWP)

SBC Pacific Bell - www.SBC.com

Service Center (800) 310-2355

MCI The Neighborhood – www.theneighborhood.com

Local Customer Service

(888) 624-5622 (MCI-LOCAL)

VERIZON Local Phone Service www.verizon.com

(800) 483-3000

LIVING INDEPENDENTLY

50 Suggestions for Independent Living

1. Obtain a certified copy of your birth certificate.
2. Obtain a Social Security card (and a wallet to put it in).
3. Enroll in a continuing education program.
4. Obtain a picture identification card (California I.D. or Driver's License).
5. Obtain a Medi-card, when eligible.
6. Obtain copies of your medical records.
7. Start a "Life Book" and/or file of important papers.
8. Open a bank account.
9. Learn how to write and cash a check.
10. Obtain a dentist.
11. Obtain a doctor.
12. Start a family scrapbook.
13. Renew contact with family members, if appropriate.
14. Develop at least one friendship.
15. Obtain a good counselor.
16. Join a local recreation center.
17. Learn new ways to have fun.
18. Connect with a church group.
19. Find a job.
20. Learn safe sex practices.
21. Find the best places to shop for food, clothing and furniture.
22. Learn to look up resources on-line and in the phone book.
23. Complete an Independent Living Skills workbook.
24. Learn to read a map.
25. Tour the city to get to know where things are such as the library, bank(s), stores, etc.
26. Learn to use the bus system and read the bus schedules.
27. Buy an alarm clock and learn to use it.
28. Learn to use the library and get a library card.
29. Get information about Driver's License, auto insurance laws/cost, etc.
30. Role play contacts with police, bank tellers, with friends(s), peer(s), counselor(s), etc.
31. Role-play several different styles of job interviews with friend(s), etc.
32. Put together a resume and an application fact sheet.
33. Make a list of important phone numbers.
34. Learn to cook five good meals.
35. Learn safe food handling and storage.
36. Learn to use coupons and comparison shop.
37. Learn to read a paycheck stub.
38. Learn to use an oven and microwave.
39. Learn to thoroughly clean a kitchen and bathroom.
40. Visit and observe adult traffic and criminal court.
41. Learn how, when, and where to get a lawyer.
42. Learn to read and understand a lease rental agreement.
43. Learn to do your taxes.
44. Learn to write a letter and mail it.
45. Develop good telephone communication skills.
46. Learn tenant and landlord rights.
47. Find a safe, inexpensive place to live.
48. Learn to budget your money.
49. Find a roommate with whom you can get along.
50. Talk to friends counselors, etc., about how about going out on your own.

LIVING INDEPENDENTLY

50 Ways to Save a Buck

1. Turn a hobby into a moneymaking service (for example, DJ-ing, computer lessons).
2. Quit smoking.
3. Swap clothing with friends.
4. Take advantage of free food (such as at school events) every chance you get.
5. Look for student movie pass discounts.
6. If you have a credit card, try to pay off your balance each month.
7. Carpool.
8. Search for the best gas prices in town.
9. Have a trusted friend cut your hair.
10. If you are on your own, share an apartment with friends.
11. Avoid the urge to spend money on fast food.
12. Pack your lunch for school or work.
13. Download free shareware online or borrow computer software from the library.
14. Read magazines at the library.
15. Look for after-work free appetizer buffets at area restaurants.
16. Buy books at used bookstores.
17. Trade in old books for new ones.
18. Visit a yard sale.
19. Exchange CDs with friends.
20. Sell old clothes at consignment shops.
21. Never make impulse purchases.
22. Check out movies from the library.
23. Take advantage of dry cleaning coupons.
24. Resole and recondition shoes instead of buying new ones.
25. Avoid disposable foods, such as prepackaged lunches and snacks.
26. Avoid one-hour photo processing. Invest in a low-cost digital camera.
27. Ask for cosmetic samples.
28. Shop alone. Shopping with friends can spark the urge to splurge.
29. Shop with a list – if it's not on the list, don't buy it.
30. Buy generic or store-brand products.
31. Check out discount bins at stores.
32. Don't buy food at convenience stores or gas stations.
33. Try not to buy convenience food from a machine.
34. Have a set weekly allowance plan before using your ATM or debit card.
35. Exercise in the park instead of at health clubs.
36. Check your newspaper for free local entertainment.
37. Visit art galleries and museums.
38. Use e-mail or instant messaging to stay in touch with long-distance friends and family.
39. Make a pizza instead of ordering one.
40. Make your own gifts.
41. Buy foods in bulk.
42. Shop at bakery thrift stores.
43. Save pocket change daily.
44. Walk to get where you're going.
45. Hold a game night for friends.
46. Avoid cover charges at clubs and dance halls.
47. Eat half of your meal at a restaurant and take home the rest for later.
48. Check out a visitor's bureau for recreation and park information in your area.
49. Barter (for example, work at a health club in exchange for free use).
50. Take a date to a park.