



Having good credit is important, and understanding how to monitor your credit report enables you to spot errors and work toward improving your credit. This module provides guidance to help you understand why good credit matters, how to review your credit and special considerations for domestic violence survivors.



To learn more, visit The Moving Ahead Curriculum:  
<https://nnedv.org/resources-library/moving-ahead-curriculum/>

Ohio Domestic Violence Network  
<https://www.odvn.org/>



# The Moving Ahead Curriculum

## Module 3

### Credit Basics



## WHY GOOD CREDIT MATTERS

Good credit allows you to obtain loans and credit cards with the best interest rates. It might also help improve your ability to rent an apartment, buy insurance, have a mortgage and, in some cases, get a job.

## WHO CAN ACCESS YOUR CREDIT REPORT

Landlords, insurance companies and some employers have limited access. They can verify personal information, view payment history, see whether you've been sued, if you have declared bankruptcy, and if you've recently applied for credit.

## OBTAINING YOUR CREDIT REPORT

- Credit reporting is managed by three separate agencies - Equifax, Experian, and Trans-Union.
- You are entitled to a free credit report once a year from each agency.
- You can request a credit report individually with all three agencies or request to pull your report at one time through the annual credit report service.

## OBTAINING YOUR CREDIT SCORE

- Your free credit reports don't include your credit score. You may have to pay a small fee to obtain your credit score from the credit reporting agencies.
- Knowing your credit score helps if you're going to apply for a loan or line of credit. You can find out your credit score for free on some consumer websites or credit card companies.

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR CREDIT REPORT

### PERSONAL IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

Credit reports contain your name, birth date, social security number, current and previous addresses, and employment information.

### CREDIT HISTORY

- Credit reports include your credit history, including different types of credit accounts such as mortgage, credit cards, and installment credit (personal or auto loans).
- Each account lists payment history, balance information, creditor, contact information, and the current status of the account.

### INQUIRIES

Credit reports include a list of creditors and other authorized parties that have requested and received a copy of the credit report in the last two years.

### CORRECTING ERRORSON YOUR CREDIT REPORT

- Write a letter to the credit reporting agency.
- List the information you believe is incorrect and include copies (never originals) of documents that support your position.
- Send a similar letter to the creditor.
- Use the letter you sent to the credit reporting agency as a template and send a similar letter to the creditor you believe reported incorrect information.

### UNIQUE ISSUES FOR SURVIVORS

When thinking about credit, there are a few things that domestic violence survivors should consider:

## SAFETY

When applying for credit, you give your address, phone number, and employment, which may appear on your credit report. If your former partner has your social security number or other identifying information, they can access your report. If you can, provide your own copy of the report.

### JOINT ACCOUNTS

Any joint accounts with your partner or former partner (even if you no longer access them) may affect your credit negatively. Talk to your attorney about the best way to handle joint accounts.

### IMPROPER USE

If your partner or former partner uses your credit account without permission, you can file charges with the police. You can use a copy of the police report to dispute any claims from a creditor. If notifying the police isn't safe, you can also close the account.

### COLLECTION CLAIMS

In some situations, you may be subject to collection claims. For example, if you had to flee housing suddenly and didn't pay outstanding utilities, those unpaid utilities may get turned into collection.

## REMEMBER

Understanding, reviewing, and monitoring your credit report is important when establishing or maintaining good credit.