Supporting Survivors' Financial Inclusion and Success:

How to Address Banking, Credit, and Consumer Challenges

Special Guest Presenters:

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Hosted By the Human Trafficking Prevention Project

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Human Trafficking Prevention Project

Financial Reintegration for Human Trafficking Survivors

Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force

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Co-Presented by
Laura Sammon
and
Sarah Byrne

WHAT IS TRIAGE?

- City-Wide Collaboration of Legal Aid, Corporations, and Law Firms
- Delivery of Comprehensive Legal Services began in 2013
- Leadership on National Survivor Law Collective
- Client and Matter Volume
- Trainings
- Legislative Advocacy
- Survivor Inclusion Initiative
- Non-legal Support
- Credit Repair

ACCESS TO FINANCIAL SERVICES

- United Nations' Liechtenstein Initiative
- Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking ("FAST")
  - Legal Compliance
  - Knowing Risks
  - Leverage to Mitigate Risks
  - Investment for Prevention
  - Survivor Support and Remedy

LIECHTENSTEIN INITIATIVE | FINANCE AGAINST SLAVERY & TRAFFICKING

Participating Banks

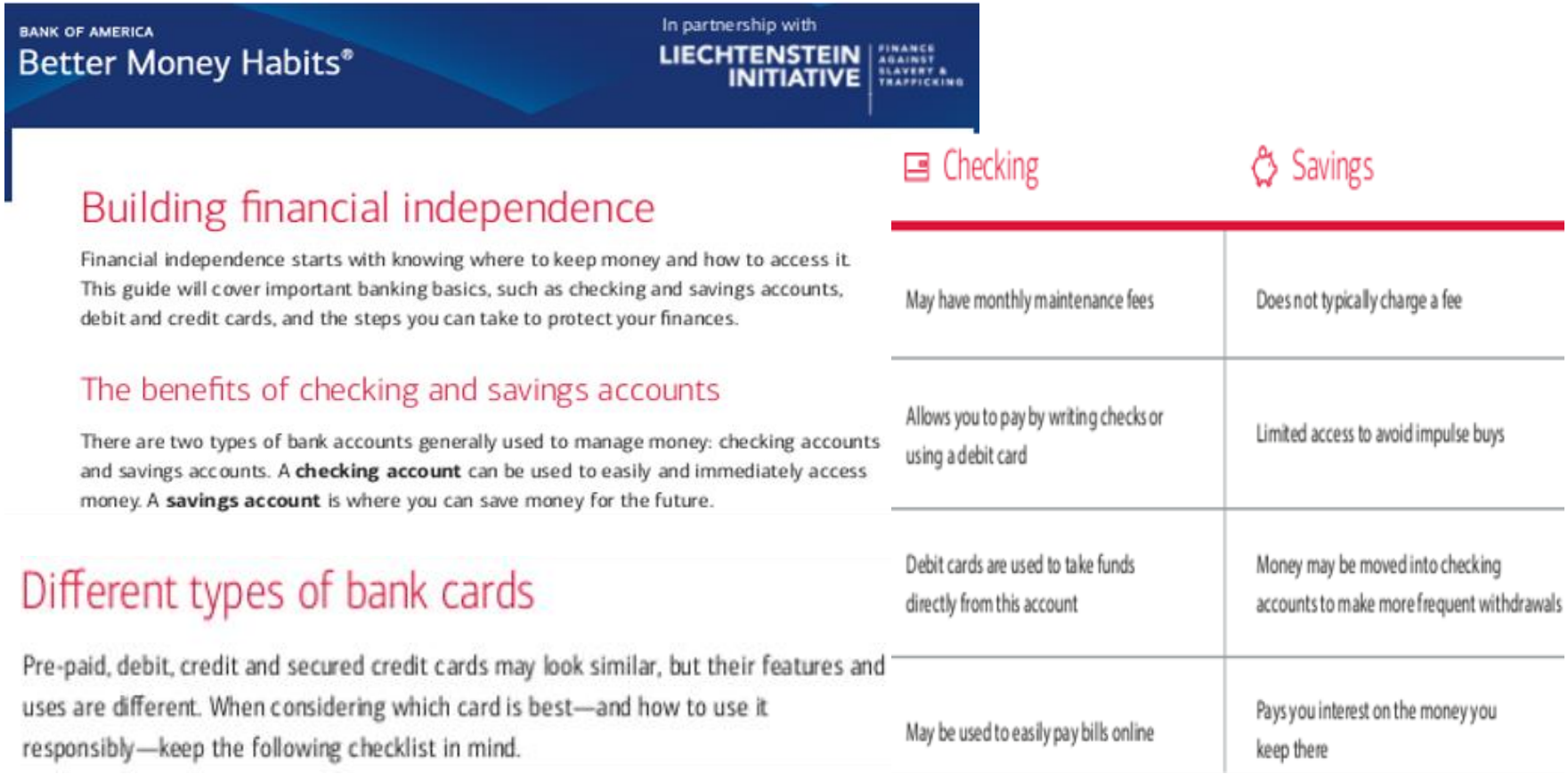
- Ally Bank
- Bank of America
- Bank of the West
- Barclays
- BMO Financial Group
- Citi
- HSBC
- LCNB National Bank
- Scotiabank
- Truist
- U.S. Bank
- Wells Fargo

SURVIVOR INCLUSION INITIATIVE ("SII")

LIECHTENSTEIN INITIATIVE | FINANCE AGAINST SLAVERY & TRAFFICKING

- *What it is?*
  - Access to Basic Accounts
    - Checking, Saving, Credit Cards, Loans (to Come)
  - Survivor-Focused, Barrier-Free, Onboarding Process
- *Referrals*
  - Through Participating Survivor Service Organization ("SSO")
    - Contact Me to Learn about Becoming an SSO (or participating bank)
  - Service Provider Attestation Letter
  - Victim Verification Letter (some banks require)
- *Implementation and Growth - A Work in Progress*
  - >2,000 Accounts Opened Worldwide
  - Education for Banks
    - Required Identification and Information
    - Account Accommodations

FINANCIAL LITERACY



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LIECHTENSTEIN INITIATIVE
FINANCE AGAINST SLAVERY & TRAFFICKING

Building financial independence

Financial independence starts with knowing where to keep money and how to access it. This guide will cover important banking basics, such as checking and savings accounts, debit and credit cards, and the steps you can take to protect your finances.

The benefits of checking and savings accounts

There are two types of bank accounts generally used to manage money: checking accounts and savings accounts. A **checking account** can be used to easily and immediately access money. A **savings account** is where you can save money for the future.

Different types of bank cards

Pre-paid, debit, credit and secured credit cards may look similar, but their features and uses are different. When considering which card is best—and how to use it responsibly—keep the following checklist in mind.

Checking	Savings
May have monthly maintenance fees	Does not typically charge a fee
Allows you to pay by writing checks or using a debit card	Limited access to avoid impulse buys
Debit cards are used to take funds directly from this account	Money may be moved into checking accounts to make more frequent withdrawals
May be used to easily pay bills online	Pays you interest on the money you keep there

CREDIT RESTORATION ASSISTANCE

- Source of delinquent credit
  - Debts from medical bills, bank account closures, credit cards, fines/fees, bail bonds and unfinished schooling, among other obstacles, impact a survivor's ability to move forward
- 35% of adults show debts in collections
- 99% of domestic violence abuse victims experience financial abuse in the form of identity theft, coerced debt and unequal distribution of assets and debts among partners
- 50% of identify theft cases involve a perpetrator and victim who know each other
- Barriers to financial independence and security
- Strong advocacy
- Nexus to exploitation
- Debt Bondage Repair Act status

CREDIT REPAIR FIRST STEPS

- Charlotte Triage sends request for assistance with credit restoration for HT survivor to all volunteers
- Interested volunteer responds accepting request
- Preliminary survivor information provided to volunteer – typically includes name, contact info, victim advocate/referral organization info, survivor request/needs
- Volunteer reaches out to advocate and survivor to schedule initial meeting

REQUIRED INFORMATION

Items necessary for assisting a survivor:

- Survivor must pull a credit report – freecreditreport.com (Experian, TransUnion and Equifax)
- Survivor may want to put security freeze on their credit if there is a potential that their trafficker is using their SS# for ID theft. Freeze must be formally done with each of the 3 credit bureaus.
- Once credit report is provided to volunteer – review and identify all items that are during and after the victimization dates.

Documents needed:

- Consent to release information - must be drafted and signed so the volunteer can speak on behalf of the survivor.
- Victim verification letter or attestation
- Power of Attorney - some creditors require a limited POA

WORKING WITH COLLECTIONS/CREDITORS

- Begin reaching out to collections/creditors
- Be sure to explain you are reaching out on behalf of Charlotte Pro Bono Triage – NOT your current employer.
- When sending personal information about the survivor encrypt mails. If faxing, call before faxing and ask that the fax is picked up immediately and information is not shared.
- Try to minimize the number of eyes on the survivor's private data
- As issues get resolved, update survivor detail report.
- Collections contacts will let you know when an item will be removed.
- For verification request an email stating the items has been officially removed.
- Pull another credit report 30 days after last item has been resolved to ensure they are no longer appearing on the credit report

MISC PRACTICE TIPS AND FACTS

- Not all financial information is reported to CRAs
- Know which party you're dealing with: lender/creditor, servicer, debt collector or debt buyer
- Rent, childcare payments, payday loans are not usually reported
- Collection accounts (including for back rent) are included
- Understand rights and process to dispute inaccurate credit information and report to both the CRAs and the source of the mistake
- Understand the difference between a freeze (cuts off creditor access to report) and a fraud alert (reserve access to report but verification of credit request required, requires identity theft report)

- Be mindful of industry standard time limits for credit reporting, for example,
  - Collection accounts = 7.5 years after original debt first became delinquent
  - Late payments = 7.5 years after the first missed payment
  - Bankruptcy = 10 years
  - Federal student loans = Indefinitely for Perkins loans, 7.5 years for others

MISC PRACTICE TIPS AND FACTS

- Consider safety risks in disputing debts or taking other action depending on status of relationship with exploiter
- Debt collection lawsuits are a separate process requiring legal advice outside of this training. However, seek guidance to understand whether settlement, pay off, payment plan or other negotiated result affects legal standing of creditor, servicer, debt collector or debt buyer.
- Caution whether payment on an old debt may re-start clock for statute of limitations on creditor's ability to sue to collect full payment due.
- Options for building good credit:
    - Letter from nontraditional creditors (landlords, utilities, daycares)
    - Secured credit card

QUESTIONS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

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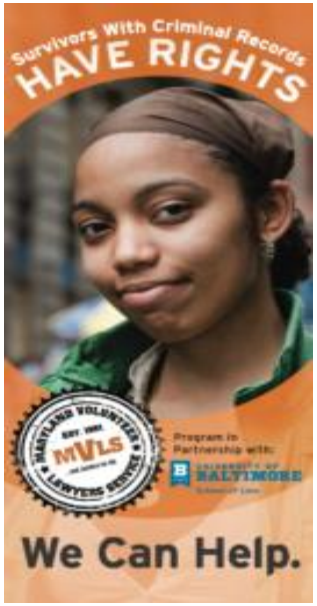
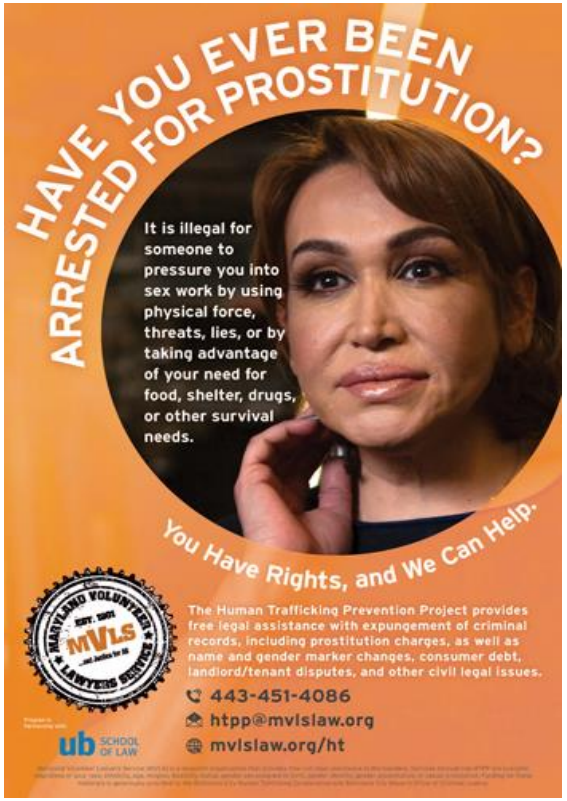
Visit the HTPP Website to Make Referrals and Request Outreach Materials





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