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Cora Johnson, a financial manager and certified counselor at Army Community Services, discusses a few financial education programs with Sgt. 1st Class Eric Towns, during a recent office visit. Johnson and ACS offer more than 15 classes aimed at helping Soldiers, family members and civilians learn

financial management skills.

Dec. 5, 2016 -- While the holidays are traditionally a time of fun and happiness, for some, the pressure to spend on gifts and the holidays can cause stress, and sometimes long-term problems.

The bad news is that according to the Department of Commerce, holiday spending is expected to rise 10 percent over last year's totals, which can exacerbate existing financial problems for people.

The good news? Many programs exist at Carlisle Barracks to help you make better financial decisions and learn how to solve existing financial problems.

"Help is available -- much more help than most people realize," said Cora Johnson, a financial manager and certified counselor at Army Community Service. "We offer a wide variety of financial services to help improve your financial life. No matter what your financial situation, we can help you to establish a plan of action for achieving your financial goals."

Johnson said that there are 15 individual programs within the Financial Readiness Program, which range from learning good savings habits to credit/debit management, mortgage counseling and first time home buying. Her expertise was recently recognized as she received an IMCOM Certificate of Achievement for her commitment to Soldiers, family members and civilians through the development and implementation of new financial assistance

programs.

ACS offers the classes in personal financial readiness and consumer affairs as well as personal financial counseling. These services are also available to support commanders in maintaining unit financial readiness and to educate service members and families on financial self-sufficiency. Some services are offered on an individual basis.

One of the hidden danger of poor financial management is the impact it can have on your career. Nearly half of all security clearance applications are denied due to financial problems, according to the Office of Personnel Management. DoD guidelines state that people with a history of being unable to live within one's means, satisfy debts, and meet financial obligations may raise questions about the individual's honesty and put people, property or information systems at risk.

Planning, not panicking are keys to sound financial management, according to Johnson.

“Learn how to assess the situation, identify resources, set priorities, create a plan, and communicate with your creditors during a financial crisis,” she said. “Don’t wait for the crisis to get worse. The monetary benefits of dealing with financial problems—saving more, paying down expensive debt—will improve not just your bottom line but your overall mood as well. The less you worry about dealing with finances and money issues, the more you can enjoy life.”

When it comes to the holidays, Johnson recommends sticking to your budget.

“The holidays are a time for celebrating, not stressing,” she said. “Financial difficulties have far-reaching impacts that are even harder felt during the holiday season. It is understandable why so many people—particularly those with children— push thoughts about their financial issues aside during the holiday season. There are two ways to improve your financial situation: spend less or earn more. If you can’t earn more, than spend less.”

To learn more about the ACS financial programs call (717) 245-4357.