



LEADERSHIP TRAINING

CFS/PFM CHECKLIST

MARINE CORPS FINANCIAL READINESS

Taking on a leadership role in the Marines comes with many responsibilities. One of which is to ensure financial readiness to sustain mission readiness. This checklist can help you assist a new or seasoned leader in the Marines so they are prepared to handle the challenges that come with their leadership role.

Military members tend to have increased financial management issues for a number of reasons, including: age, lifestyle and access to credit. Marines tend to move away from home and their support system at a younger age than the general population. Deployments, frequent moves, and difficulties maintaining spouse employment can increase financial challenges. Easy access to credit without a solid understanding of managing credit can also factor into financial problems.

Counselor: Use this checklist and the listed handouts as a solution-focused tool your students during class.

HANDOUTS

- ✓ The Need for Personal Financial Management
- ✓ Financial Warning Signs
- ✓ Understanding Credit
- ✓ Military Consumer Protection
- ✓ Sources of Help for Military Consumers
- ✓ Military Retirement



BASIC FINANCE

- ☐ Be aware of the unique financial issues affecting the military lifestyle. Review the *Need for Personal Financial Management* Handout for more information.

Counselor: Remind students of the struggles they may have had coming into the military. It's important to understand the financial challenges unique to the military such as deployments, frequent moves, etc. The key is to realize the significance of good money management. Strong habits will have a positive impact on personal relationships, stress levels, and mission readiness.

- ☐ Know the resources available to assist your Marines. Help is available at the Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS), from your Command Financial Specialists (CFS), and through the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS).

Counselor: Marines who are struggling and need specific help should go to MCCS. Let them know they can speak to a Financial Counselor and get on track. Additionally, they can seek help at the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS). This is a nonprofit organization providing interest-free loans and educational assistance to Marines, eligible family members, and survivors.

- ☐ Understand your roles and responsibilities as a leader in the Marines. Review the *Financial Warning Signs* Handout for more information on financial risk factors.

Counselor: Remind students it is their duty as a leader to help identify the warning signs of financial trouble. Encourage them to use this checklist and the available resources to get informed and manage situations early. It is critical to catch problems before they begin to impact family and work relationships, mental well-being, and mission readiness.

- ☐ Learn to identify Marines who are experiencing economic challenges such as increased housing and rental costs, food insecurity, and struggles with financial well-being. A Military Leaders toolkit is available through Military OneSource to assist you with supporting Marines struggling with these challenges.
<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/leaders-service-providers/economic-security/>

If you identify a Marine who needs help with housing, food to feed their family, or financial well-being, please direct them to the local MCCS or Military OneSource for assistance.

***Counselor:** Communication is key. Encourage your students to foster a healthy culture of communication and the importance of financial readiness. Try to identify possible warning signs of financial problems sooner rather than later. However, be sure to remind your students to maintain confidentiality.*

- ☐ Understand that Marines will be required to complete financial readiness training at various career milestones and life events. These events include: Initial Entry Training (boot camp and officer accessions pipelines), upon reporting to First Duty Station, subsequent duty stations (for members in paygrades E-4 or below and O-3 or below), Promotion (for members in paygrades E-5 or below and O-4 or below), Vesting in TSP under BRS, Major Life Event (Marriage, Divorce, First Child, Disabling Sickness or Condition), Leadership Training, Entitlement to Continuation Pay under BRS, Pre- and Post-Deployment, and Transition.
- ☐ Check each of your three major credit reports for free at ***annualcreditreport.com***. Additionally, Marines can request free credit monitoring services from the nationwide credit reporting agencies: Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. Review the *Understanding Credit* Handout for more information.

***Counselor:** Remind (or inform) students about the new security clearance review process. Historically, individuals were up for periodic reviews every five to 10 years depending on the type of clearance. Now, individuals are under continuous monitoring which automatically pulls financial data. Issues that are not dealt with can result in a loss of clearance. As a leader, it is critical to identify and provide help to Marines in need before there is a risk to the mission by losing a clearance.*

Additional notes: _____



CONSUMER PROTECTIONS

- ☐ Review the *Military Consumer Protection* Handout for additional information on identity theft, the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA), and Military Lending Act (MLA).
- ☐ Protect yourself from misleading consumer practices and know basic procedures for handling a consumer complaint or dispute. Review the *Sources of Help for Military Consumers* Handout.

Additional notes: _____



PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

- ☐ Understand the benefits of each military retirement system: Legacy “High-3” or Blended Retirement System (BRS) and the rules on Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) matching/vesting. As a leader, you may receive questions on either system.
- ☐ Review the *Military Retirement* Handout accompanying this checklist for more information.

Counselor: *Remind your students of the ways to succeed with each retirement system. Serving for over 20 years allows a Marine to receive the pension under the Legacy system and BRS. Additionally, with BRS, the emphasis is on saving a minimum of 5% into the TSP to receive the full matching contribution — which is free money! This money goes with Marines when they separate if vesting requirements are met, and even if they don’t serve 20 years or more. For leaders in the military, they need to ensure their team understands the basics of military pay and benefits. Additionally, leaders may be considering their own Continuation Pay options if they’re in the BRS so be sure to cover that section of the handout and refer to the appropriate resources: <https://militarypay.defense.gov/blendedretirement>.*

- ☐ Understand the importance of retirement planning throughout your military career. It is never too early to start planning for retirement. The sooner you begin saving, the more time your money has to grow with the power of compound interest. This means you may be able to save less over time to reach your goals. Once you start saving, it shouldn’t be a “set it and forget it” mentality. Revisit savings goals and TSP contributions regularly.
- ☐ Review TSP and withdrawal/rollover options upon reaching retirement age and/or separating from the military.

Counselor: *Explain to your student the high-level options for the TSP upon retirement. Here are three options:*

1. Leave the TSP in place, but once you separate from service, you no longer make contributions to the account.
2. Withdraw funds from the TSP. Taxes and penalties may apply, depending on your situation.
3. Rollover the TSP into an Individual Retirement Account. This typically has no tax implications if the rollover is done into the proper account type (Traditional or Roth).

For more information, visit www.tsp.gov. Speak with a financial counselor at the MCCS for help with your specific situation.

Additional notes: _____



COMPENSATION, BENEFITS, AND ENTITLEMENTS

- Invest in your future marketability. There's no time like the present — while you have a reliable job and paycheck — to explore how you can develop yourself professionally. Prepare your career for transition from the military to the civilian sector, and improve potential upward mobility and greater earning power with these tips from the DoD Career Ready Portal at <https://dodcareerready.usalearning.gov/>.

Tip 1: Look into whether your military career offers a registered apprenticeship for your Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) rating or skills you may have.

Visit the United Services Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP) website to identify and register for apprenticeships, track progress, and report completion of apprenticeships. Learn more: https://dodcareerready.usalearning.gov/service_members/apprenticeships.

Tip 2: Determine if your military experience translates into a civilian credential. Turn your military experience into certifications and licensing by visiting the Marine Corps Credentialing Opportunities Online (COOL): <https://www.cool.osd.mil/usmcl>.

Tip 3: Explore eligibility for tuition assistance.

Did you know that you could qualify for tuition assistance to pursue your education and potentially increase your earning potential? Learn more at the Department of Defense Career Ready Portal: https://dodcareerready.usalearning.gov/service_members/tuition_assistance.

Counselor: For more information on these programs, visit https://dodcareerready.usalearning.gov/service_members/tuition_assistance and discuss the programs, future career goals, and how building skills and gaining education can increase a Marine's earning power. Refer Marines to the Transition Assistance and Employment Readiness programs, as needed.

Additional notes: _____
