Module 6

Long-term planning

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Asset-building programs

Asset-building programs

Asset-building programs that may be able to help you reach your financial goals are available in many communities. You may want to check with local organization to see if these or other programs are available in your community and if so, what the program requirements are.

If you are working with a local domestic violence advocate, they may be able to provide you with additional information and resources for saving and building assets.

Individual development accounts (IDAs)

Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) are savings accounts that are matched by public and private sources. The accounts match your savings and allow a set period to save for specific goals. Goals usually include education, home purchase or seed money to start a business.

Micro-enterprise development programs
Micro-Enterprise Development Programs are small capital investments that allow individuals to form micro-businesses to contribute to their economic and social well-being.

Earned-Income Tax Credits (EITCs)
Federal and State Earned-Income-Tax Credits (EITCs) provide cash to low-income individuals through tax refunds. EITCs exist to increase the income and ability to save of working poor people. Many states offer a state income tax credit in addition to the federal EITC. Programs vary by state.

Matching funds and savings programs
DV service providers and other nonprofit organizations may provide low-income individuals with matching funds for savings and other financial resources. For example, FreeFrom offers a savings match program when they have the funds to do so. If you are working with an advocate, check with them to see if they know of any programs you might be eligible for.

Saving strategies

Compound interest

As you read in module 2, compound interest can help create wealth over time by growing your savings.

Take the example of Britney. When she was 20, she made a contribution of $5,000 to her retirement account. It sat in the account and earned an average 8% annual return. At that rate, by the time Britney was 65, the account had grown to $160,000.

Time and regular deposits

Compounding interest can help you save even more with regular deposits and investments. If Britney continued to add $5,000 to her retirement account each year for 45 years with an average of 8% interest, her retirement savings would total over $1.93 million. She would have more than eight times the amount she contributed.

For many of us, saving $5,000 a year is impossible. Instead, start with an amount that works for you. See if you can save 2% of your income. For example, if you make $25,000 a year, your annual retirement saving goal would be $500 per year or about $40 per month.

Making compounding work for you

Start early
The sooner you start, the more time compounding can work in your favor and the wealthier you can become. Start saving as soon as you can and save as much as you can. Note that, for tax-advantaged retirement accounts, there are limits to how much you can contribute each year. To help older workers, federal regulations allow them to put more money into retirement plans to give them a chance to "catch up".

Invest regularly
Do your best to make regular retirement savings contributions to help maximize the amount of interest you earn. It can be helpful to set up automatic deposits so that you do not have to think about it every month.

If you work for a company that provides a match, use this benefit and sign up for the highest match you are eligible for. With a match, your employer contributes money in addition to your contributions.

Be patient
If possible, don't touch the money. Compounding only works if you allow your investment to grow over time. The results will seem slow at first — most of the magic of compounding comes at the very end.

Interest earned on savings is a way to increase your income, even if it's only small amounts. Making your money work for you via interest-earning savings helps you maximize your earning potential. Interest is a way of making money that doesn't require you to work more hours or get a higher-paying job. Moreover, contributing to some retirement accounts can reduce your taxable income. See module 3 for a refresher on savings account options and compound interest.

Year	Year deposits	8% growth	Total deposits	Total growth	Balance
1	$480	$21.17	$480	$21.17	$501.17
2	$480	$62.49	$960	$83.66	$1,043.66
3	$480	$107.20	$1,440	$190.86	$1,630.86
4	$480	$155.61	$1,920	$346.47	$2,266.47
5	$480	$208	$2,400	$554.47	$2,954.47
6	$480	$264.72	$2,880	$819.19	$3,699.19
7	$480	$326.11	$3,360	$1,145.30	$4,505.30
8	$480	$392.55	$3,840	$1,537.85	$5,377.85
9	$480	$464.48	$4,320	$2,002.33	$6,322.22
10	$480	$542.34	$4,800	$2,544.67	$7,344.67
11	$480	$626.61	$5,280	$3,171.28	$8,451.28
12	$480	$717.83	$5,760	$3,889.19	$9,649.11
13	$480	$816.57	$6,240	$4,705.68	$10,945.68
14	$480	$923.45	$6,720	$5,629.13	$12,349.13
15	$480	$1,039.14	$7,200	$6,668.27	$13,868.27
16	$480	$1,164.36	$7,680	$7,832.63	$15,512.63
17	$480	$1,299.91	$8,160	$9,132.54	$17,292.54
18	$480	$1,446.63	$8,640	$10,579.18	$19,219.18
19	$480	$1,605.45	$9,120	$12,184.63	$21,304.63
20	$480	$1,777.36	$9,600	$13,961.99	$23,561.99

Retirement planning

Retirement accounts

Individual retirement accounts (IRAs)
Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) are tax-advantaged investment accounts designed to help people save for retirement. There are two main types:

- Traditional IRA: Contributions may be tax-deductible, and investments grow tax-deferred and will be subject to income tax when you take it out in retirement.
- Roth IRA: You put money into a Roth IRA that has already been taxed. Your savings will grow tax-free and withdrawals in retirement (including the earnings) are tax-free if certain conditions are met.

Both types have annual contribution limits, and early withdrawals before age 59½ may incur penalties and taxes, except in certain situations like buying a first home or covering qualified medical expenses.

IRAs typically offer a wider range of investment options than 401(k)s and other deferred salary plans do. The annual maximum contribution for IRAs is lower than the annual maximum for 401(k)s and other deferred salary plans.

Pension
Pensions are retirement plans set up by employers to provide benefits to retired employees.

Pensions are less common today than they used to be. Many pensions provide a set amount of money to retirees based on factors like the length of employment and age at retirement.

401(k) Plans
401(k) plans are retirement plans that defer income taxes on retirement savings and any interest they may earn until withdrawn. Contributions can also reduce the amount of taxes you pay each year while working. Most plans are sponsored by private-sector corporation employers. The annual contribution limits for 401(k)s are higher than they are for IRAs.

Current federal laws require employers to allow long-term part time employees (defined as working over 500 hours over three consecutive years) to contribute to the employer's 401(k) plan. If the employer contributes money to the 401(k) plans of full-time employees they can, but are not required to contribute to the 401(k)s of part-time employees.

Other deferred salary plans

There are other salary deferral retirement plans. 403(b) plans cover employees of educational institutions, churches, public hospitals and nonprofit organizations. 401(a) and 457 plans cover employees of state and local governments and certain tax-exempt entities.

If you are self-employed, you can set up a solo-401(k) or a Simplified Employment Plan (SEP).

Selecting options

With most retirement plans, you get a choice in how your contributions are invested. As you choose, here are some things to consider:

High vs low risk investments

High-risk investments (like stocks and stock mutual funds and ETFs) offer the potential for higher returns but can be volatile, making them better suited for people who have a long time to let the investment grow. Lower risk investments (like bonds and money market funds) provide stability and predictable income but usually have lower returns, making them more appropriate for preserving your savings as you get closer to retiring.

Age-based or target date funds

Many retirement account providers offer age-based or target date (e.g. the year you want to retire) funds that automatically adjust your investment mix, moving from more aggressive (e.g., more stocks) to more conservative (e.g., more bonds) as you get closer to retirement age.

Matching programs

If you have access to a retirement match program, try to take advantage of the maximum match. In a matching program, your employer contributes the same amount (matches) you contribute up to a certain amount. Employer matches are usually capped at either a set dollar amount or a percent of your income. For example, let's say you make $50,000 a year and your employer matches up to 6% of your income. If you contribute $3000 per year, your employer would contribute an additional $3000 per year.

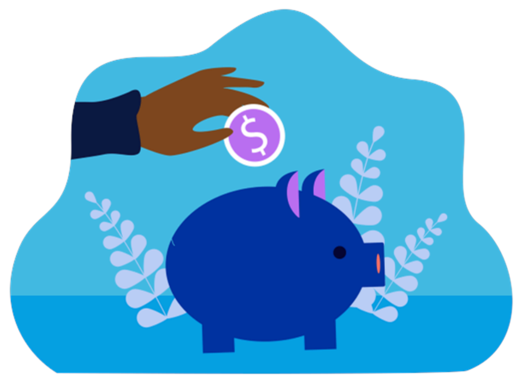
Financial advisors

Choosing the right options for you can feel intimidating. It can help to discuss your options with a reputable financial advisor. Financial advisors are not just for wealthy people. Your bank, credit union, employer or retirement program may provide you with free access to an advisor. When choosing an advisor, get information about how they are paid. Avoid working with advisors who make money based on you choosing certain investment options.

Sooner is better than later

People put off opening retirement accounts for many different reasons. The sooner you are able to start saving for retirement, the better.

Remember that even small amounts of money and time in retirement savings can make a big difference.



Withdrawal for domestic abuse

Current federal law gives survivors more access to retirement account funds. In some instances, survivors can now withdraw $10,000 or 50% of their vested balance (whichever is less) without penalty and with the option to repay the distribution within three years. Self-certification of domestic abuse is allowed. The distribution must be taken within 12 months of an incident of domestic abuse. Internal Revenue Service notice 2025-55 and news release IR-2024-170 provides additional information.

Calculating retirement goal

General guideline

As a general guideline, you can expect to live on 70-80% of your pre-retirement income. Some retired women spend as little as 60% of their pre-retirement income, while others spend more than when they were employed.

Most people use a mix of stocks and bonds for their retirement savings. When considering how you will divide your funds, it's important to consider how many years you have until you retire and your tolerance for risk.

Also keep in mind that with rare exceptions you can't withdraw money from retirement accounts without significant penalties and tax consequences.

Length
Will you retire early or are you planning to work at least part-time as long as you can? How many years of retirement do you expect to have?

Economy
During times of inflation or rising prices, you'll need more income to support your current lifestyle. When calculating how much money you'll need for retirement, assume inflation rates of 3-4%.

Expenses
What type of retirement do you picture? Do you plan to stay in your current home? Do you plan to retire to a beach community elsewhere? Will you downsize and significantly reduce your monthly costs?

Investing and long-term planning

Investment vehicles

There are many different ways to invest including, stocks, bonds, mutual funds and real estate. These options are known as investment vehicles.

Each investment vehicle has pros and cons. What's important is to choose the investments that best fit your goals, needs and timeline.

Bonds, funds, and stocks

Savings bonds

U.S. savings bonds are issued in various denominations. The U.S. government currently issues two types of savings bonds: Series EE and Series I, both available on TreasuryDirect.gov.

Interest on Series EE bonds accrues tax-deferred, meaning you pay taxes when you redeem the bond unless you qualify for an education-related tax exclusion. Series EE bonds earn interest over time, with a U.S. Treasury guarantee that they will double in value after 20 years, regardless of the interest rate.

Series I bonds are designed to protect against inflation. Their interest rate consists of a fixed rate (set when you buy the bond) and a variable rate that adjusts every six months based on inflation. Like EE bonds, interest is tax-deferred until redemption, and they can be used for certain education expenses to qualify for tax benefits.

Mutual funds

A mutual fund is a type of investment that pools money from many people to buy a mix of stocks, bonds, or other assets. Professional managers choose and manage the investments, so you don't have to pick individual stocks or bonds yourself. When the investments grow in value, your share of the fund increases, but if they lose value, your investment can go down too. If you buy a mutual fund, you will generally pay an expense ratio; some funds charge other fees as well.

Exchange-traded funds

An exchange-traded fund (ETF) is similar to a mutual fund, in that it holds a mix of stocks, bonds, or other assets. ETFs trade on the stock market like stocks. ETFs often have lower fees than mutual funds and can be bought or sold throughout the day at market prices.

Stocks

A stock represents a share of ownership in a company, meaning you become a partial owner when you buy one. Stock prices can go up or down based on the company's performance and market conditions, so you can make or lose money. Some stocks pay dividends (regular payments to shareholders), and any profits you make from selling stocks may be taxed as capital gains.

Bonds
A bond is a loan you give to a company or government in exchange for regular interest payments and the return of your money (principal) at a set date. Bonds are generally considered lower risk than stocks, but their value can fluctuate based on interest rates and the issuer's financial health. Interest earned on bonds may be taxed, though some government bonds offer tax advantages.

Estate planning

An estate plan will preserve your assets after you die. Although you may not consider yourself wealthy enough to have an estate, if you own a home, furniture, car and/or have money in a retirement fund you should protect it. This is true no matter how old you are. An estate plan can protect your assets and provide financial and emotional stability for your survivors. If you die without an estate plan, legal problems may delay the distribution of your assets. There are several ways to protect your estate. Once you have a plan in place, review it periodically to make sure it still meets your needs and that your beneficiaries are up to date.

If you have access to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) see if it includes help with estate planning. If you are working with an advocate, see if they know of any resources you can access to help create or modify your estate plan.

Will
A will is usually the heart of an estate plan. Without a will, the laws of your state will decide who receives your property. If you don't designate a legal guardian for any dependents of minor children, a court will decide who will raise them.

Trust
A trust can hold virtually any kind of tangible or intangible property. Tangible property is personal property such as clothes and furniture. Intangible property includes stocks and other non-physical property.

Trusts can be as flexible as needed to meet your objectives. Some trusts are established to avoid probate or reduce future estate taxes. Others are designed to provide for minor children.

Power of attorney
A power of attorney document clearly states your wishes about how to handle your healthcare and property. It states who is responsible for carrying your wishes out if you are unable to communicate. Be sure to pick someone who is likely to always be a consistent part of your life and who doesn't try to control you.

Life insurance
Life insurance can provide the cash your survivors may need to pay federal estate taxes when you die and/or other expenses. There are two main types of life insurance — whole and term. Whole life insurance lasts for the life of the person buying it and builds savings. Term life insurance lasts for a specific amount of time (a term).

Beneficiaries
A beneficiary is a person who receives money or other benefits from a benefactor. Periodically check and update your beneficiaries, if needed. If you have left or leave an abusive partner, it is a good idea to update your beneficiaries for all parts of your estate plan.

Emergency assistance

If you experience unemployment or other emergencies, here are two programs to look into:

Unemployment insurance
Unemployment insurance can help you pay the bills if you are involuntarily between jobs. In some states, survivors who leave a job due to domestic violence are eligible for unemployment.

Emergency assistance funds
Some nonprofit organizations and faith-based institutions offer emergency assistance to help pay rent, utility bills and/or relocation costs.

Generational wealth

Generational wealth includes retirement savings, home ownership, and car ownership that can be passed down to future generations to provide financial stability and opportunities.

Systemic inequalities have and continue to create barriers to building generational wealth.

Retirement savings

Accounts like 401(k)s and IRAs grow over time, and depending on how they are structured, they can be inherited, offering long-term financial support to those you designate as heirs.

Home ownership

Owning a home often builds equity that can grow in value over time. This asset can be passed down, giving loved ones and future generations a stable living space or financial assets to rely upon.

Car ownership

While cars typically lose value over time, owning vehicles outright can reduce future financial burdens for heirs, providing transportation without the cost of new loans. They also can be sold if funds are needed.

Compounding wealth

Investments such as stocks, bonds, certificates of deposit and money in interest-earning savings accounts can increase in value over time, helping to create a financial safety net for heirs.

Legacy (estate) planning

Estate planning including wills and trusts can help your assets go where you want them to after your death and can minimize tax burdens for your heirs. It can also be helpful to prioritize keeping clear records of ownership including the title to any vehicles and the deed to any home or property you own. Make sure to keep your list of beneficiaries up to date in any policies and in your will if you have one.

Combining savings, property, and thoughtful planning can build a foundation for generational wealth that supports the future of your loved ones. Handling these matters can help secure your peace of mind and your pathway toward wellness.

Insurance

Insurance overview

Insurance is an important part of your financial well-being. It can help protect you financially if you have health problems, are involved in a car accident, or if your home is damaged.

Some insurance is optional and some is required by state or federal laws. The criteria to qualify for insurance can be complicated and varies based on the specific policy.

Health insurance

Health insurance covers health and medical expenses due to illness or accidental injury. Costs and covered services vary. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) expanded access and coverage. The ACA added important protections for domestic violence survivors. Prior to its' passage, insurance carriers could deny coverage for many reasons including being a survivor of domestic or sexual violence.

You may be able to get health insurance through a job, the ACA, or a state program. Additionally, if you lose employer-based coverage, you may be eligible for COBRA coverage which allows you to keep the same insurance by paying the full premium for up to 18 months. You can learn more at www.healthcare.gov.

Health insurance benefits

Health insurance may pay for things like hospitalizations, surgery, doctor visits, medication, radiation, labs, medical equipment, vaccines and more.

Some health insurance plans offer wellness programs or other incentives such as rewards for getting a flu shot or contributions toward a gym membership. If you live with ongoing safety concerns, be sure to read the fine print before signing up for any of these programs as many of them require you to agree to allow collection of geolocation and other data as a condition of participation.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA)

In addition to the protections for survivors, the ACA has expanded access to healthcare in many ways. Under the ACA, insurance companies are no longer allowed to deny coverage on the basis of pre-existing conditions, lifetime limits on coverage are banned, dependents can keep coverage until age 26, and many preventative services are now required to be offered at no cost.

Under the ACA, preventative coverage includes things like contraception, mammograms, screening for HIV, maternity care, and vaccines.

Eligibility

To be eligible to use the Marketplace, you must:

- Be a U.S. citizen or lawfully present non-citizen currently living in the U.S. including U.S. territories. A recent court order has limited coverage for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients and people with some other immigration statuses. You can find out more at https://www.healthcare.gov/immigrants/immigration-status.
- Not be incarcerated or have Medicare coverage.

ACA tax credits and coverage

The ACA also provides tax credits, income based premium savings via the Marketplace and hardship exemptions to the healthcare coverage requirements that apply to survivors. Some states use the healthcare.gov Marketplace and some have their own state-specific marketplace. You can access both from the healthcare.gov site.

Health savings account (HSA)

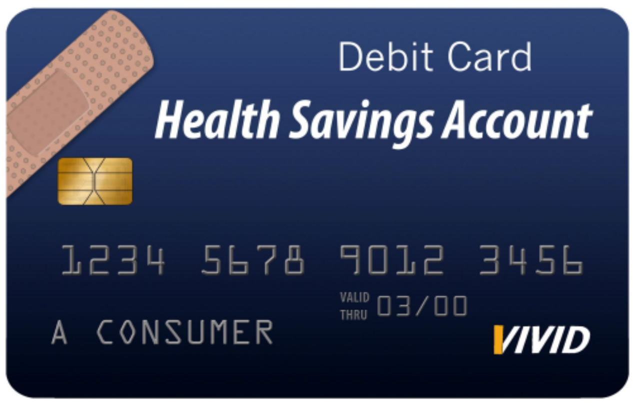
If you have a high-deductible health insurance plan, you may be eligible for an HSA. It allows you to pay for current health/medical expenses on a tax-free basis. It also allows you to save for certain medical and retiree health expenses on a tax-free basis. You own and control the money in your HSA.

If you have enough money in your HSA, you may be able to invest part of it which can help increase the money in your account over time. Your employer may offer an HSA or you may be able to sign up for one through your bank, credit union or insurance company. You can find out more about eligibility and contribution limits from IRS publication 969.

Eligibility

To be eligible to make HSA contributions (add money to an HSA), you must:

- Be covered under a qualifying high-deductible health plan (HDHP) on the first day of the month of the contribution.
- Not have any other health coverage except what is allowed.
- Not be enrolled in medicare.
- Not be able to be claimed as a dependent on someone else's tax return.
- Open your own HSA; joint accounts with a spouse are not allowed.



COBRA

COBRA, or the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, is a federal law that lets employees and their families keep their group health insurance after job loss and certain life events. In most cases you can keep coverage through COBRA for up to 18 months.

COBRA coverage can be very expensive as you generally have to pay the full cost of the premium including both what you paid as an employee and the amount your former employer paid towards your premiums. The health insurance plan is also allowed to charge you an additional 2% fee.

After receiving notice of COBRA eligibility, you have 60 days to enroll. If you enroll at any point during the 60 days, your coverage applies retroactively to the date you would have otherwise lost coverage. If you have a major medical expense during the 60 day period, it is often cheaper to pay for COBRA coverage than it is to pay out of pocket. If you have a health savings account (HSA) you may be able to use HSA funds to help cover COBRA premiums. It is also important to note that there are not payment grace periods with COBRA, if you don't pay on time, you will lose your health coverage.

Eligibility

People eligible for COBRA include :

- The employee who held the coverage.
- The employee's spouse or former spouse.
- The employee's dependent children.
- In some instances retirees and their spouses and/or dependents.

Auto insurance

Auto insurance can help you repair or replace your car if you get into an accident. It can also help protect you in the event of a lawsuit. In most states, car owners are required to have some level of auto insurance. Drivers must be able to pay for any losses they cause, including the cost of repairing a damaged car, paying for medical expenses and more.

Liability coverage generally covers injuries and damage to others when you are at fault. Full-coverage generally refers to liability coverage plus coverage for damages to your car.

Eligibility

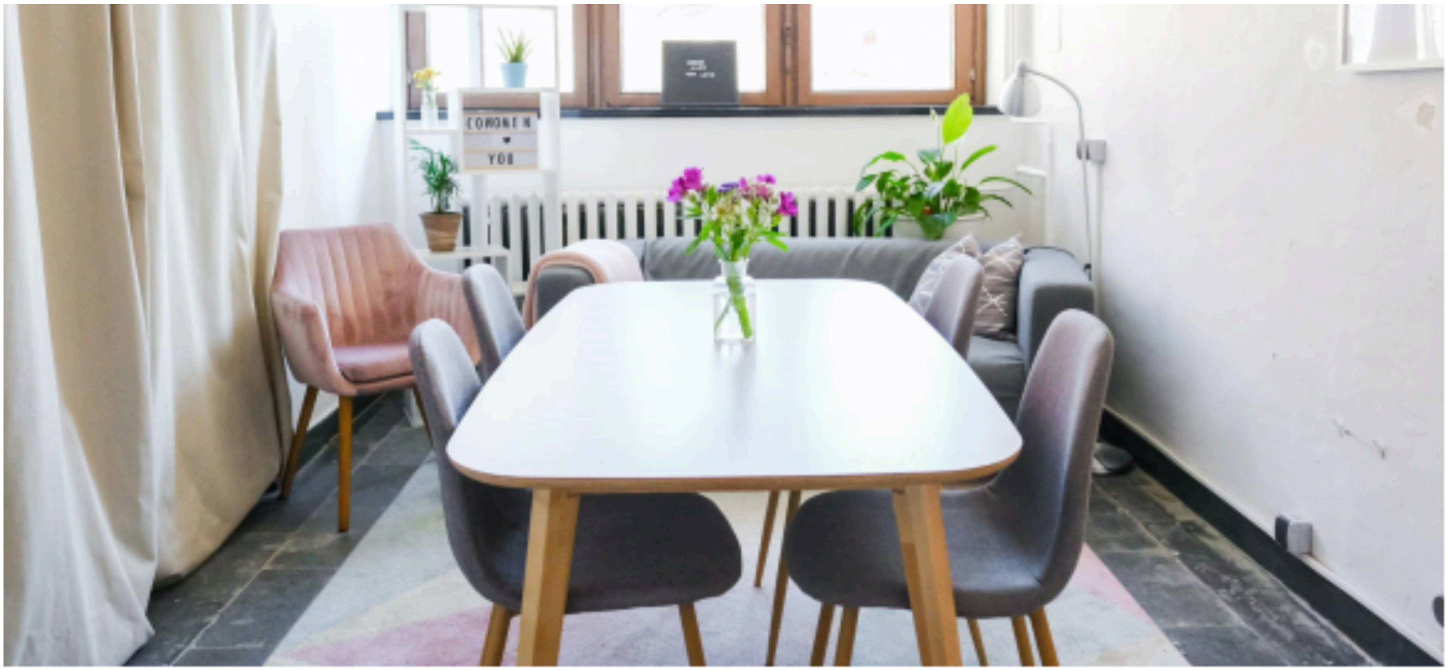
The requirements for auto insurance vary by company and policy. Common application questions include:

- Name.
- Address (insurance companies are allowed to charge different rates based on your location).
- Date of birth.
- Marital status and information about who lives in your household.
- Social Security Number.
- Driver's license number.
- Information about the vehicle(s) you want to cover (insurance companies are allowed to charge different rates for different cars).
- Information about your current or most recent insurance.

• Driving history including claims, tickets and accidents .

If you participate in an address confidentiality program, check to see if there are rights or procedures related to auto insurance.

Home and renters insurance



Homeowners insurance pays to help repair and replace your home if it's damaged or destroyed. Most policies include at least $100,00 of liability insurance.

Renters insurance helps protect your furniture or other personal property as well.

If you participate in an address confidentiality program, check to see if there are specific rights or procedures.

Life insurance

There are two basic types of life insurance, term and whole. Term life is less expensive. Costs and eligibility requirements vary. Many employer sponsored plans offer guaranteed issued coverage up to a certain amount without evidence of insurability when you first become eligible for benefits.

Term

A term policy is life coverage only. On the death of the insured it pays the face amount of the policy to the named beneficiary. You can buy term life for periods of one year to 30 years.

Whole

Whole life combines a term policy with an investment component. The policy builds cash value that you can borrow against.

Eligibility

Eligibility requirements for life insurance policies vary and common application questions for policies that are not guarantee issue include:

- Name, address, phone number, employment information.
- Your age, gender, weight and height.
- Information about your driving record.
- Tobacco, alcohol and drug use.
- Current medications.
- Family medical history.
- Your medical history and an exam may be required.
- Information about any criminal convictions or moving violations.
- Risky hobbies such as ice climbing, skydiving, and car racing.
- Recent or planned travel outside of the U.S.

You need to answer honestly. The information in your application can be used to deny you coverage and to determine the rate you are charged for coverage.

Disability and long-term care

Disability insurance provides a portion of income lost due to a total or partial disability caused by illness or accident. There are both short-term and long-term policies. Many employer-sponsored plans include guaranteed issue amounts when you first become benefit eligible. If you want to add coverage later, you will likely have to provide additional information and can be denied coverage.

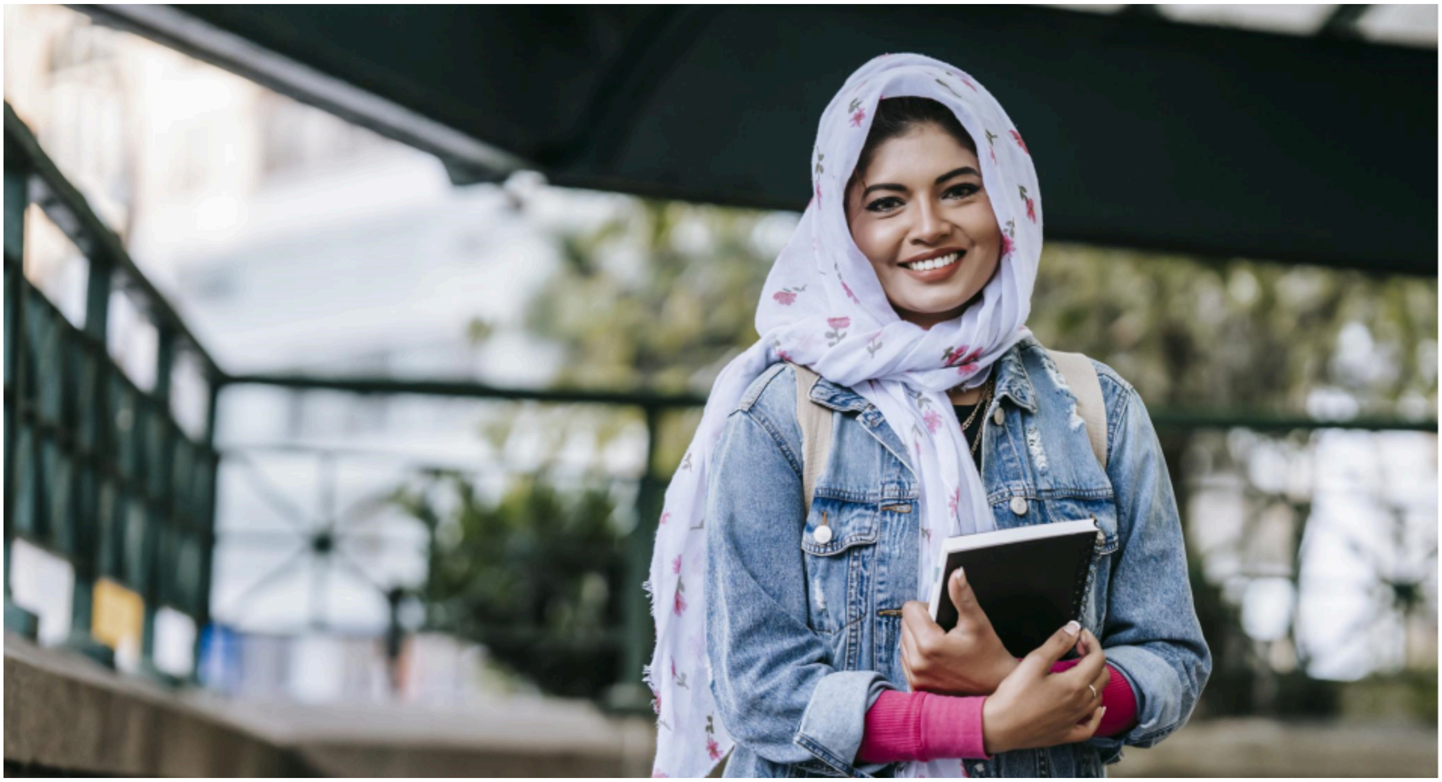
Long-term care insurance can help protect your family and savings from medical costs in the event of a lengthy illness.

Domestic violence and underwriting

Some insurance companies deny insurance coverage to survivors by using domestic violence as an underwriting criteria (a basis for determining who to cover, what to cover, and how much to charge). This discrimination can occur with many types of insurance. Additionally, insurers are not required to disclose the reason for rejections or other adverse actions. Adverse actions can include denying a claim or raising premiums. This makes it difficult to know if domestic violence criteria were used by the insurer.

Many states have laws that don't allow companies to use domestic violence as underwriting criteria. Each state has an insurance department and process to file a complaint. Work with an advocate and consider whether or not to file a complaint if you think you are experiencing discrimination due to domestic violence.

Education opportunities



Additional education

Additional education can be a way to increase your income potential.

Consider working with a career counselor to help you develop or change a career path. You may be able to find a counselor at a college or university near you. Or visit the National Career Development Association (NCDA) for more information on finding a career counselor and for resources on choosing a career.

Many career options

Many different career and job options exist. Consider exploring your interests, salary trends, job availability and more as you think through what, if any, additional education you want to pursue.

If you are working with an advocate, they may also be able to help you identify potential career and education options, create safety plans, and be a thorough partner as you determine the types of careers you do and do not want to pursue.

Education and training

Below are some education and training options that may be options for you:

General Educational Development (GED)
GED programs provide an alternative way to finish high school. Most businesses colleges and technical schools recognize GEDs as the equivalent of a high school diploma.

On-The-Job Training (OJT)
OJT programs range in length from a month to a year or more. They sometimes include classroom training.

Community colleges
Community colleges provide associate degrees and the opportunity to transfer to a four-year college or university. They are often less expensive than other colleges in universities. Many allow enrollment without taking tests such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or American College Testing (ACT) test.

Trade or vocational schools
Trade or vocational schools provide specialized training in specific fields. Fields can include health care, plumbing, HVAC, truck driving, cosmetology and more. Learning is often hands-on and can be faster than a four year degree.

Certification programs
Certification can provide training to work in a specific profession. Certification requirements vary widely. Some are offered by colleges or universities; others are offered by professional organizations. Some certificates must be renewed regularly, require continuing education and/or require people to pass a standardized exam.

Four-year colleges and universities
Colleges and universities grant bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees in addition to

professional certificates.

Financial aid

Financial aid is a critical piece of affording higher education for most people. Grants and scholarships generally do not have to be repaid. Student loans generally have to be repaid, with interest. Sources of financial aid include:

- The federal government
- State government
- Colleges
- Private organizations

If you are working with an advocate, ask them if they know of any survivor-specific financial aid sources that may be available to you.

FAFSA

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is used to determine who is eligible for federal student aid programs, including programs that aren't based on financial need. Additionally, many states, schools and private organizations also require FAFSA completion. Some schools and programs will require additional submissions such as the CSS/Financial Aid Profile.

Visit FAFSA.gov to learn more about the FAFSA. The FAFSA opens on Oct 1 each year and funding is generally distributed on a first come, first served basis so try to submit your application as close to Oct 1 as you can. A FAFSA application is also an application for a Federal Pell Grant.

Scholarship search tools

These scholarship search tools can help you locate scholarships and grants to apply for:

U.S. Department of Labor scholarship search tool
https://www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Training/find-scholarships.aspx

College Board search tool
https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search

FastWeb scholarship search
https://www.fastweb.com

Scholarships for survivors

Ask your advocate if they know of any survivor-specific scholarships.

One to consider if you qualify is the Women's Independence Scholarship Program (WISP). The WISP provides support for full or part-time students attending accredited programs. Learn more: https://wispinc.org/new-applicant-eligibility/.

Student loans

Private student loans can be risky, usually have variable interest rates, less flexible payment options, and no options for forgiveness. Avoid taking private student loans.

Most federal student loans don't require a credit check or cosigner. No payments are required until you leave college or drop below half-time. You may qualify to have the government pay the interest that accrues while you are in school. Federal student loans generally have a six month grace period meaning you have six months after leaving school before you have to start making payments. There are flexible repayment plans, options to postpone payments, and the possibility of federal student loan forgiveness if you meet the requirements.

Types of federal student loans

Below are different types of federal student loans that are available.

Direct subsidized loans
Direct subsidized loans are loans given to eligible undergraduate students who demonstrate financial need. They help cover higher education costs at a college or career school.

Direct unsubsidized loans
Direct unsubsidized loans are made to eligible undergraduate, graduate and professional students. Eligibility is not based on financial need.

Direct PLUS loans
Direct PLUS loans are made to graduate or professional students and parents of dependent undergraduate students. They help pay for education expenses not covered by other financial aid.

Direct consolidation loans
Direct consolidation loans allow you to combine all of your eligible federal student loans into a single loan with a single loan servicer.

Federal Stafford loans
Federal Stafford loans are awarded on the basis of financial need and are a federal government program.

Federal Perkins loans
Federal Perkins loans is a school-based loan program for undergraduates and graduate students with exceptional financial need. For Perkins loans, the school is the lender.

Paying for education

Before taking a student loan, evaluate how much you can afford to borrow and what it will take to repay the loan. If you need low monthly payments, the income-driven repayment plans for federal student loans can help. Annual income verification and other paperwork is required. Visit the Department of Education's loan simulator at: studentaid.gov/loan-simulator to help you figure out the right repayment plan for you.

Additional resources are available including:
- The National Consumer Law Center's student loan borrower assistance page: https://studentloanborrowerassistance.org/
- NNEDV Student Loan Expert Heather Jarvis' website: http://askheatherjarvis.com/

Tuition reimbursement

Tuition reimbursement (tuition assistance) is an arrangement between an employer and employee that outlines the terms under which the employer helps pay for continuing education. Some companies pay at registration while others only reimburse after successful completion of coursework.

529 plans

If you can, try to save money in advance for college. A 529 plan is a tax-advantaged investment account designed to help families save for education expenses. 529 plans are administered by states or state agencies. There are two types:

Prepaid Tuition Plans allow participants to purchase future tuition at today's rates.

College Savings Plans invest your savings and your earnings will vary based on the performance of the investments. When you use the savings from a 529 plan for qualified higher education expenses, you will not be taxed on your investment earnings. Many states offer similar state tax benefits.

IRA

Be very cautious when considering using IRA withdrawals for college costs. You can withdraw from an IRA to pay higher education expenses for yourself, your spouse, your child or your grandchild. You will owe federal income tax on the amount withdrawn, but won't be subject to the early withdrawal penalty. Be very careful as you will also need funds for retirement.

Taxes

Take advantage of the available tax credits and deductions for higher education expenses.

The American Opportunity Credit allows you to claim up to $4000 in qualified education expenses that can result in up to $2500 in tax credits per student, per year for the first four years a student works toward a degree or similar credential.

The Lifetime Learning Credit reduces the federal tax liability up to $2,000 per student, per year for qualified educational expenses.

You may also be able to deduct up to $2,500 per year of student loan interest on your taxes, reducing your adjusted gross income.

Remember to safety plan

If you don't participate in an address confidentiality program, consider getting a PO Box for college applications. This will help keep your home address private in case the school publishes a student directory or posts addresses on their website.

Research each school's privacy policy and opt-out policy for information sharing.

Work with an advocate to develop a safety plan tailored to your situation and needs.