



NEWS FROM SCDCA

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

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Three Things Consumers Should Do in the New Year

COLUMBIA, S.C. – A new year means new beginnings and the opportunity to improve! The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs (SCDCA) is encouraging South Carolina consumers to make a New Year's resolution to become more financially fit. As with physical fitness, financial fitness is a long-term process. The following tips will help consumers be savvier in '16.

1. **Make a budget.** Write down recurring monthly expenses, like rent, insurance, food, gasoline and entertainment. Then write down how much money you make, including paychecks and any other money you get. If you are spending more than you earn, carefully review the budget to see what you could spend less on.
2. **Check your credit report annually.** Help guard against identity theft by reviewing your credit report and disputing any errors. You can order one free credit report from each credit reporting agency, annually at www.annualcreditreport.com or by calling 877-322-8228.
3. **Monitor your statements.** Protect your finances from fraud and identity theft by reviewing your bank, benefits, tax, medical, etc. statements as soon as they arrive in the mail. Be sure to check for and follow up on errors in a timely manner too.

If these tasks seem too daunting, consider a credit counselor. They can help consumers make a budget and meet financial goals. There are limits to how much a credit counselor can charge for services and they must be licensed with SCDCA. Visit www.consumer.sc.gov and click *Licensee Lookup* to find a licensed credit counselor.

For more information on personal finance, including budgets, credit and debt, visit www.consumer.sc.gov and click *Consumer Education* or call 800-922-1594.

About SCDCA

The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs aims to protect consumers from inequities in the marketplace through advocacy, complaint mediation, enforcement and education. To file a complaint or get information on consumer issues, visit www.consumer.sc.gov or call toll-free, 1-800-922-1594.

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