

MONEY MATTERS



Seeking Financial Security

(NAPSA)—When it comes to managing money, it may not just be what you know but also who you know.

That's the finding of a Coalition for Financial Security (CFS) survey, which revealed that many Americans who can afford to open an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) or purchase life insurance protection might not do so simply because they do not know anyone who can help them access these tools.

Experts say that the lack of personal contact by a financial professional has resulted in a knowledge gap that could leave millions facing disastrous financial futures. They suggest people focus on three financial goals:

1. Eliminating Debt:

It would take 15 years to pay off a credit card with a \$15,000 balance and a 15 percent interest rate, even if you paid \$525 a month. It would take only three years to pay that same debt off making the same payments if you consolidated it into what's known as an installment loan.

2. Protecting Family:

Term life insurance can be used to help replace a family's income in the event that the breadwinner dies. It can also be used to pay off mortgages and other debt that might be left by the deceased.

3. Saving For The Future:

The biggest mistake you can make is assuming you don't have any money to save. Be sure to put some money aside in an IRA or other saving vehicle each month—even a small amount.

The Knowledge Gap

So how can more Americans learn financial basics? Jack Kemp, former Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and an advisory



Learning a few financial basics can help you protect your family.

board member of CFS, says increasing communication with experts is key.

"Combating this problem is twofold," said Secretary Kemp. "We need solutions to increase financial literacy, and we need to find ways to put more Americans in contact with experts who can provide them with the necessary financial advice."

It's a sentiment that Raul Yzaguirre, a former president and CEO of the National Council of La Raza, and who serves with Secretary Kemp on the CFS advisory board, says is all too true.

"Many Americans without investment and insurance tools have never been contacted about them and do not know the professionals who can help them build a stronger financial foundation," said Yzaguirre.

What You Can Do

CFS works to promote public policies that increase financial literacy and put more Americans in contact with financial experts. To join CFS or learn more, you can visit www.coalitionforfinancialsecurity.org.

You can also contact state officials and ask them to be certain underserved markets have access to financial professionals.