Coerced Debt

Coerced Debt occurs when an abuser opens/uses credit in your name through coercion or fraud. This can include loans, credit cards, and bank accounts. This sabotages housing, jobs, and education pursuits, and follows survivors long after they leave an abusive situation. This Financial Literacy Month, we're providing tips for what to do if you expect coercive debt has occurred in your relationship, and how to rebuild your credit score if it has.

If you suspect you've been the victim of coercive debt, the following steps can help you understand the damages and help stop them from continuing.

Pull free credit reports (AnnualCreditReport.com).

Notify banks/credit card companies and credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian, TransUnion). Request fraud alert or credit freeze.

List unfamiliar accounts/inquiries and gather evidence.

Document evidence and store securely; avoid escalating danger if still in the home.

Contact banks/credit bureaus; request fraud alert or credit freeze.

File a police report for identity theft if safe/appropriate.

Seek legal help: financial abuse, identity theft, and debt allocation can be addressed in protective orders/divorce (state laws vary).

Methods to help rebuild your credit:

Pull reports and dispute errors (AnnualCreditReport.com or each bureau).

On-time payments (use reminders/autopay).

Keep utilization under 30%.

Avoid many new accounts at once; consider a secured card or credit-builder loan (reported to bureaus).

Don't close old cards solely to "clean up."

Track score over time; be patient—credit recovery is gradual.