Warning Signs of Too Much Debt

The following statements may help you determine if you have a debt problem. Place a check mark in front of all statements that are true for you:

- I cannot seem to stop myself from buying things I do not need or cannot afford.
- I avoid looking at my bills and credit card statements.
- I pay my mortgage, rent, car loans, or utility bills late at least once per year.
- I keep things that I buy on credit secret from my partner or lie about how I paid for them.
- I have gotten a phone call about an overdue credit payment.
- I spend more time worrying about my bills than paying for them.
- I have taken a cash advance on a credit card to pay my monthly expenses.
- I charge more on my credit cards than I pay each month.
- I do not know how much money I need each month for my living expenses.
- I do not know how much I owe in total on my debts.
- I owe money to more than seven creditors.
- I depend on extra income, such as overtime, to make ends meet.
- I have past due credit payments that will take more than a year to pay.
- More than 15 percent of my take-home pay goes to credit payments (excluding mortgage).
- I would like to consolidate my loans or extend my current loans.
- I usually pay only the minimum on my credit cards.
- I owe more money to my creditors than I own in personal property.

If you checked four or more of these statements, you may have a problem using credit. If you checked seven or more you are in danger of getting into big trouble with credit use. To avoid more serious problems in the future, begin making some changes now. Start small by working on one or two areas that need to be changed at a time and continue until you have addressed all the items that you checked.