



*Consumer Credit Counseling Service  
of Maryland and Delaware, Inc.*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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*Helping people help themselves through Education, Financial Counseling and Debt Repayment*

## **CCCS OF MD & DE CELEBRATES COA REACCREDITATION**

**(BALTIMORE, MD)** When local nonprofit Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Maryland and Delaware recently received notice that it had been reaccredited by the Council on Accreditation (COA), its staff greeted the news with delight and relief. "This comes after a year of rigorous planning and self examination," notes CCCS Director of Human Resources Dinah Seisman. "The reaccreditation process requires organizations to take a look at how they're doing business on every level and identify opportunities for improvement. COA reaccreditation sets us apart from many other organizations in the industry. It attests to the fact that we continue to provide high-quality service."

Founded in 1977, COA is an independent, international not-for-profit accreditor that evaluates community-based human service and health care organizations. It currently evaluates and accredits more than 1800 organizations, which serve more than 7 million of the world's most vulnerable individuals each year. According to COA President and CEO Richard Klarberg, "The COA reaccreditation process involves a detailed review and analysis of both an organization's administrative operations and its service delivery practices. All are measured against national standards of best practice. These standards emphasize services that are accessible, appropriate, culturally responsive, evidence based, and outcomes-oriented. They confirm that the services are provided by a skilled and supported workforce and that all individuals are treated with dignity and respect."

Organizations that are accredited by COA must be reaccredited every four years. During the reaccreditation process, COA reviews the "entire" organization, not just specific programs. Organizations are evaluated on everything from governance and financial management to employee training and client rights. Ms. Seisman says, "Here at CCCS, we began the reaccreditation process by gathering existing documentation about our procedures and practices. Then we put these under a magnifying glass and asked ourselves, 'How do we measure up? What are our strengths, and what are our opportunities for improvement?' Based on this information we developed a narrative, prepared our self-study and submitted this along with evidence of how we meet the service delivery standards to COA."

When COA received CCCS of MD & DE's reaccreditation application, it assigned peer reviewers to assess the organization's performance. According to Seisman, "The reviewers read through our mounds of documentation and spent two-and-a-half days with us on-site learning how we do business. At the end of their stay, they provided us with verbal feedback, and then went back to the office to write a formal report." The evaluation reports that organizations receive discuss how well they meet accreditation standards and problem areas where they may need to achieve better

results. Organizations are given a chance to clarify these areas before an accreditation decision is rendered.

Seisman says, "The accreditation process is rough, but it's fair. It helps organizations recognize where they may need more work or where they excel. In any four-year period, there are bound to be new issues to address. For example, client confidentiality has become increasingly important -- especially giving how much private information is now transferred electronically. Reaccreditation helps organizations like CCCS stay current and responsive to these demands."

At the end of the accreditation process, the Council on Accreditation shares its decision with the organization. Seisman concludes, "We were really excited to receive *that* letter! COA's reaccreditation confirmed what we already know: CCCS has made a commitment to ourselves, our clients, our board, the community and regulatory agencies. We want to provide the best possible service and treat our clients with respect. The COA reaccreditation process validates that mission. It helps us become a stronger, more responsive organization and ultimately reach that goal."

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**Consumer Credit Counseling Service of MD & DE, Inc. (CCCS) is an accredited nonprofit organization that has served the local community since 1966. CCCS is dedicated to helping individuals and families resolve their financial problems. We promote the wise use of credit through education and confidential budget, money management counseling, and housing counseling. MD State License #14-01.**