



...a brighter tomorrow

THE CONSUMER ADVOCATE

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Thank You!

Citigroup, for your generous and unwavering support that helps significantly fund our operations and educational efforts throughout the year.

Chase, for your kind funding, which will support our latest financial literacy program, "Esperanza Financiero".

What You Need to Know About SCAMS

As many individuals are struggling financially with the uncertain state of the economy, yet again scams are on the rise. No one wants to believe that they would fall for a scam or be caught off guard by a scam artist. However, each year millions of Americans are deceived and their personal information falls into the wrong hands.

Have you received a phone call or email asking for your name, address, social security number or credit card information allegedly for one reason or another or another? Did the caller say that your car warranty is about to expire... that you didn't report for jury duty...that you won a prize or lottery that you don't remember entering? It seems as though scam artists will say almost anything to try to entice you to reveal identifying information.

Scam artists often use tactics to create a **sense of urgency and catch you off guard**. They often create scams to align with the **latest news headlines**. Around tax season, there are tax rebate scams, with the foreclosure crisis many mortgage scams have surfaced, throughout the spring



and fall there are many college scholarship scams, etc.

What do you need to know to keep your information away from scam artists? Be aware of the different types of scams that exist and be able to identify **red flags** that may indicate something about the situation isn't right. The following are examples of different types of scams.

♦ **Social Networking Scams** - Whatever the latest trend might be, scam artists are sure to follow. Scam artists are increasingly using social networking sites like www.Facebook.com, www.twitter.com, and www.myspace.com in an attempt to steal peoples money and identities. The recently reported scams on Facebook typically work something like this: the scam artists hacks into someone computer to obtain their user name and password. The scam artist then logs in to the victim's account. Reports have cited that the thief uses the form of "chat" on Facebook or sends the persons "friends" messages stating the person is traveling (most commonly to London). The scam artist, pretending to be the person whose profile they have "hacked" into, states that their wallet was stolen and they need money wired to them for a plane ticket home. The scam artists are often tricky and learn as much about the person through their user "profile" before contacting

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anyone. In these situations the individuals the scam artist attempted to contact, reported the **red flags** of **poor grammar usage and spelling**, and the scam artist was **unable to answer questions** the actual person whose profile they were using would be able to. Questions such as; how did they meet, what their high school mascot was, what are their children's names, etc. In some situations, the persons friends fell for the scam and wired over \$600 to the scam artist never to have the funds recovered. In other situations, people were able to identify that the person was a hoax and report the scam.

- ♦ **Telephone Fraud** - Many scam artists use the telephone as a tool to target unsuspecting individuals and to coerce them giving up their information. While many scams exist, they all share the common **red flag**, that the individual receives a phone call and one way or another the scam artist asks for their personal information. If someone is calling you shouldn't they have your information? Shouldn't they know who you are? Recently, a scam surfaced in which scam artists called thousands of people, at home or on their cell phones to tell them that their car warranty was about to expire. While many people hung up or didn't answer



all together, some were caught off guard and proceeded to speak with the person. The scam artist would then ask for the **make and model of their car**. If they are calling you about your car, shouldn't they have this information already?

Many people receive similar calls from scam artists pretending to be the individual's credit card company or banking institution. The scam artists states that there have been illegitimate charges on the account and to clear these charges up, they will need your **name, address, and social security number or account number, etc.** Remember the **red flags**, no one should be calling you and asking for this information in its entirety. Ask them for a phone number where you can call them back, and be sure to report the scam to the **Federal Trade Commission at www.ftc.gov/idtheft or 1-877-ID-THEFT.**

Keep in mind, even if you are on the Do Not Call Registry, scam artists may still attempt to contact you. If they are trying to steal your identity it doesn't seem as though they are concerned with breaking the law. With that in mind, they most likely will not abide by the Do Not Call Registry.

- ♦ **Email Scams** - Scam artists also use email as a way to obtain personal information. In similar situations as described above, the scam artist may send an email asking you to confirm your account information or pretending to be from a bank or a store you make purchases online. Remember the **red flags** no one should contact you and ask for all of your personal information. If you are unsure, pull up the website you know and compare. You may notice **misspellings, color differences, etc.**
- ♦ **Internet buying** - Websites such as www.craigslist.com can be a great way to buy items for less, sell items to increase your income or even find a car or apartment. However, it is important to be wary just as when making any transaction online or over the phone. Be smart and know what sounds fishy. **Never give out personal financial information, never wire money, don't agree to send a security deposit for an apartment or car before you have viewed it** (regardless of the list of excuses you may hear).



Check out <http://www.craigslist.org/about/scams> for more information on how to avoid being scammed.

- ♦ **Scholarship Scams** - According to www.FinAid.org, **"If you have to pay money to get money, it's probably a scam."** There are many different types of scholarships scams out there, do your research before applying. FinAid.org is a great resource to learn about safe options for funding a college education or to learn about the many different scams that exist.

Scammed once, but scammed again? You may be frustrated having fallen for a scam once, but don't think you would again? There are scam artists who say that they will help you recover funds lost from

scams! These are called "recovery rooms" and many people out of frustration and desperation to have their money returned will fall for such scams. Be cautious! Check out organizations with the Better Business Bureau or the State Banking Department. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

WHAT TO DO: If you believe that someone may have gotten a hold of your information contact all three of the credit report agencies, **Equifax**, **Experian** and **Trans Union**, and put a **fraud alert** on your credit reports. A fraud alert is **free** and it **will last for 90 days**. It will make it very hard for anyone to use your information. This will also entitle you to another free credit report. It is generally best to wait about a month before obtaining this free credit report due to the fact that someone may have your information but not use it right away. Although a fraud alert only lasts for 90 days, keep in mind that you can place another when it expires. Rather safe than sorry!

Celebrity \$ense

"Time is more valuable than money. You can get more money, but you can not get more time"

- Jim Rohn

Did You Know?



Did you know that there is a secure, and free place where you can obtain a copy of all three of your credit reports?

The Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) requires each of the credit reporting agencies, Equifax, Experian, and Trans Union, to allow you to access a free copy of your credit report, once every 12 months. According to the United States Government and the Federal Trade Commission the best place to obtain this

information is at www.annualcreditreport.com or by calling: 1-877-322-8228.

Did you know that each person has three credit reports? One from Equifax, one from Experian, and one from Trans Union. There are three credit reports because different creditors and lenders report to different bureaus. So, in order to get a full picture of your finances, you will need to look at all three reports at the same time. Need help reading your credit reports? Here at Debt Counseling Corporation we recognize that reading your credit report may be overwhelming and isn't always easy. Feel free to contact one of our counselors for assistance!

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Spotlight on the Community

This spring, DCC has been busy providing money management and financial education through our educational outreach programs to local communities and throughout New York. With the support of Chase, Debt Counseling Corporation has implemented the program "Esperanza Financiero" to reach out the Latino and Hispanic communities on Long Island. We have also expanded our vast selection of educational materials.

Debt Counseling Corporation once again traveled to the Mastic YMCA William Floyd Project Leaders Club to conduct a workshop with teens and tweens on how to save money, establish short and long term goals, use debit cards and credit cards wisely, and the importance of establishing good credit. The teens and tweens tossed a beach ball back and forth with different money management words on it and followed up with discussion. The group was extremely enthusiastic to learn about money and money management.

Debt Counseling Corporation continued our partnership with the Westbury Memorial Library this spring. Due to the success, we have scheduled to provide counseling and workshops to community members throughout the summer months as well. We are very excited about this opportunity to expand our individual counseling opportunities.

What's New at DCC

If you reside in the Long Island area, you are also invited to our monthly in-house seminars to take advantage of our *Educational Incentive Program*. If you attend a monthly seminar and are enrolled in our DMP, your monthly maintenance fee will be directed to a creditor of your choice in the following month, to help pay down your debt faster. Mark your calendar for our upcoming seminars.

June 23, 2009 at 12:30pm – Saving For Retirement

Seating is limited, so reserve your seat today! Call 1.888.354.6332, ext. 316.



The mission of Debt Counseling Corporation is to educate the general public about debt management options such as budgeting, refinancing, and a debt management program; to provide consumers consistent, superior, individualized service; to provide each consumer with the tools they need to develop

and modify a budget which will allow them to maintain a dignified lifestyle.

Debt Counseling Corporation is also committed to assisting the creditors with collecting consumer debt by helping avoid bankruptcy whenever possible and eliminating their financial burden.