



## TEST YOUR “FRAUD IQ”

### TRUE OR FALSE?

1. The top ways identity thieves get your information is through purse snatching, mail theft, dumpster diving, and e-mail or phone “phishing”.
2. It is a good idea to carry your Social Security card with you.
3. Once you have subscribed to a “No Call” list, you do not have to worry about telemarketers.
4. There is a law that requires charities to spend a certain percentage of their income on programs and services.
5. Foreign lotteries are illegal in the United States.
6. As long as you don’t buy any magazines or spend any money, playing sweepstakes is harmless entertainment.
7. Florida has a state contractor licensing board that licenses and approves contractors.
8. If a uniformed employee appears at your door to conduct an inspection, shows a badge and ID, it is safe to invite them in.
9. Most investment fraud is perpetrated by long term trusted advisors.
10. If you have a trusted family member, a financial advisor, or someone with your Power of Attorney who is paying your bills and managing your money, it is critical that you review your account statements.

## FRAUD QUIZ ANSWERS

1. TRUE Thieves are everywhere- even churches- looking to steal purses and checkbooks, credit cards, and other information they find inside. They are also looking for checks, pre-approved credit card applications, and account statements in your mailbox. They rummage through the trash looking for information containing account numbers and they send “phishy” e-mail asking you to verify account numbers by impersonating your bank, credit card company, government agencies, etc.
2. FALSE It is a good idea to have nothing in your purse or wallet that contains your Social Security number. An identity thief can apply for and receive credit in your name: credit cards, loans, gambling credit, cars, etc.
3. FALSE Although consumers who have subscribed to the Florida or federal “No Call Lists” have reported a strong decrease in calls, there are exemptions, including non-profit and charitable organizations, politicians, and those with whom you have an established business relationship, such as phone companies. The No Call Lists will not stop criminal telemarketers- to protect yourself simply do not talk to strangers.
4. FALSE It is the donor’s responsibility to determine how his or her donations are used. Ask charities for a copy of their annual report and contact the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (800 435-7352) or the State Attorney if you have any questions BEFORE making a contribution.
5. TRUE Federal law prohibits mailing payments to purchase any ticket, share, or chance in any foreign lottery. Telemarketing con artists from Canada have conned hundreds of Floridians into spending millions in payments for “taxes” before collecting on their Canadian lottery “winnings”.
6. FALSE When you play sweepstakes, your name is frequently put on marketing lists bought and sold by other direct marketers. Eventually your name can end up on criminal telemarketing lists.

7. FALSE While Florida has a requirement of statewide registration of contractors, some specialty registrations are granted by individual counties which are limited for use in the issuing county. When hiring a contractor always ask to see a copy of the license, noting the license number, and confirm that the license is valid before signing any contract or paying any money by contacting the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (850 487-2252), your local building inspector, or the State Attorney.
8. FALSE City and utility workers do not go door-to-door, but con artists do! Once in your home they will distract you while an accomplice sneaks in to steal your purse, jewelry, safes, and other valuables. NEVER let a stranger into your home- no matter who they claim to be.
9. TRUE The vast majority of investment fraud cases involve financial advisors who have had long term trusting relationships with their victims. The perpetrators use trust- and sometimes faith- as their weapons. No matter how long you have known or trusted someone, never make an investment decision without seeking the advice from a lawyer or an accountant.
10. TRUE In all cases of theft by family members, trusted advisors, and persons holding Power of Attorney, the victims have given up total control to others and do not review financial statements. Perpetrators took advantage of the victim's trust. In addition to your review of accounts, surround yourself with several advisors and caregivers who can provide a system of checks and balances so that no one person has total control over your finances.

# IDENTITY THEFT

## Warning Signs:

Your purse or wallet is stolen or mislaid.

Your bank account is overdrawn or there is unusual activity on your credit card.

Mail you are expecting doesn't arrive, especially mail related to financial matters; bills you paid are still showing due

You apply for a credit card or a loan and are denied.

## Preventative Steps:

\_\_\_ Carry a close fitting or hidden pouch instead of a purse or carry your wallet in your front pocket.

\_\_\_ Reduce the items you carry in public such as credit cards, Social Security cards, and checkbooks. Consider carrying a photocopy of your Medicare card with all but the last four digits of your account number blackened out.

\_\_\_ Shred, tear into small pieces, or cut up all mail and documents that contain Social Security, bank, or credit card numbers.

\_\_\_ Place mail with bills to be paid at the Post Office. Ask that new boxes of checks be held at your bank or credit union rather than being mailed to you.

# TELEMARKETING FRAUD

## Warning Signs:

You live alone (and enjoy talking to anyone calling).

You believe it's rude to interrupt a caller or to hang up.

You must pay money up front for taxes or fees to participate.

You must make an immediate decision before the call ends or the offer will be rescinded.

You are called more and more frequently by a multiplying variety of telephone solicitors.

## Preventative Steps:

\_\_\_ Never talk to strangers on the telephone- they are not calling to wish you a good day. They are invading YOUR privacy- as though they had walked into your home.

\_\_\_ Use an answering machine, voice mail, or Caller ID to screen calls.

\_\_\_ Never, under any circumstances, give any portion of your credit card, bank account, or Social Security number to a caller.

# MAIL AND INTERNET FRAUD

## Warning Signs:

You play sweepstakes daily because you think you need the extra money, holding out hope that you will win a big prize some day.

You believe that because your mail is delivered by the U.S. Postal Service that it must be legitimate.

You open and read all of your mail because many pieces look like official government documents or heart-felt solicitations for charity (and you don't have anything better to do).

You are getting the same offers through e-mail that you used to receive through the mail.

## Preventative Steps:

- \_\_\_ Even though it may be fun or give you something to do, stop participating in sweepstakes, lottery, and contest offers.
- \_\_\_ If you were to truly win something, you NEVER have to pay any fees, taxes, or costs of ANY kind before you receive your winnings- that's the law.
- \_\_\_ Don't give temptation a chance. If you receive a mailing/e-mail that (1) promotes sweepstakes, lotteries, charities, credit repair, work-at-home offers, (2) suggests you can make money by assisting a wealthy African, or (3) requests verification of account numbers, throw the envelope away or delete the e-mail without opening it (by opening the e-mail you may confirm to the sender that they have found a valid e-mail address and/or allow a virus into your computer).

# HOME IMPROVEMENT FRAUD

## Warning Signs:

A contractor solicits you at your door, insisting you have a problem which must be repaired right away.

A contractor offers a bargain price or claims to have materials left over from another job.

A contractor requires a substantial payment in advance or charges significantly more after the work is completed.

An inspector appears at your door, claiming to work for the city, county, or a utility company and informs you that they must come into your home to inspect your water heater, furnace, or backyard.

## Preventative Steps:

\_\_\_ BEWARE of door-to-door contractors who use high pressure or scare tactics to get an immediate decision.

\_\_\_ DON'T do business with someone who comes to your door offering a bargain or claims to have materials left over.

\_\_\_ Get at least 3 written bids. DO NOT always choose the lowest bidder- you get what you pay for.

\_\_\_ Require the contractor to use a written contract that lists material, costs, and the completion date.

\_\_\_ Don't allow strangers into your home, no matter who they claim to be. Governmental inspectors do not go door-to-door. Check and confirm identification.

\_\_\_ Confirm that they are licensed, insured, and bonded. Check with your building inspector to confirm that they have obtained any required permits and whether there have been any prior complaints against them.



# MORTGAGE FRAUD

## Warning Signs:

You've already fallen behind in your mortgage or you are already in foreclosure.

You're getting phone calls and visits from companies offering to help you with your debts.

You're receiving numerous fliers in the mail or on your door offering low interest cash loans.

A friend, advisor, or relative asks you to sign some forms and you do without reading them.

You trust that the information in the mortgage loan document is accurate so you do not read it thoroughly.

## Preventative Steps:

\_\_\_ Beware of companies who contact you in person or by fliers offering a foreclosure relief service.

\_\_\_ Don't deed your home to anyone or sign any forms or papers without getting advice from a lawyer or a HUD approved counseling agency. Once you sign legal papers, it can be difficult or even impossible to reverse the action and you can lose your home forever.

# INVESTMENT FRAUD

## Warning Signs:

High pressure sales tactics with an insistence on an immediate decision.

An unwillingness to let you discuss the deal with another advisor or to get a second opinion.

A guaranteed investment and one with “no risk”.

An unwillingness to provide written information, including state securities registrations and verifiable references.

A suggestion that you invest on the basis of trust or faith.

## Preventative Steps:

\_\_\_ Surround yourself with several advisors- don't become solely dependent upon one financial advisor or consultant.

\_\_\_ Thoroughly check out any offer- don't be rushed into making a hasty decision. Contact the office of the State Financial Officer if you have any questions.

\_\_\_ Carefully review your financial statements and look for signs of unauthorized or excessive trading. Periodically check your account online or by telephone with the fund managers.

\_\_\_ If you have trouble retrieving your funds, don't let a false sense of trust or loyalty keep you from demanding a return of your investment.

# CAREGIVER FRAUD

## Warning Signs:

There is unusual activity in your bank or credit card accounts.

Caregiver tries to isolate the victim who comes to rely solely on the caregiver.

Caregiver has total control over finances and has all financial statements mailed to him or her.

New acquaintances appear on the scene and the adult is either completely charmed by or fearful of the caregiver.

## Preventative Steps:

\_\_\_\_\_ If your caregiver, financial Power of Attorney, relative, neighbor, or anyone suggests that you make a change in your assets, your investments, your Will, or insurance, always get two or three other opinions from other relatives or advisors. Only a potential crook will not want you to discuss changes with others.

\_\_\_\_\_ No matter how much you know, love, or trust someone, never sign documents you have not read or do not understand.

\_\_\_\_\_ Even if you have a representative payee, Power of Attorney, or other advisor who manages your finances, insist on receiving and reviewing copies of all bank and financial statements.

## PREVENTION CHECKLIST

- \_\_\_ Use a close fitting pouch and/or a hidden wallet instead of a purse.
- \_\_\_ Don't carry your Social Security card; remove Social Security numbers from ID/ Health Cards; and consider carrying a photocopy of your Medicare card with all but the last four digits blacked out.
- \_\_\_ Deposit all outgoing mail inside the Post Office rather than placing it in your mailbox or a blue postal mailbox for carrier pickup.
- \_\_\_ Use a cross shredder on all financial mail and documents.
- \_\_\_ Get a free copy of your credit report once a year.
- \_\_\_ Don't talk to strangers on the phone, at your door, or on the street.
- \_\_\_ Sign up for the NO CALL lists.
- \_\_\_ Request those with whom you have an established business relationship to put you on their "Do Not Call" and "Opt Out" lists.
- \_\_\_ Send a letter to the Mail Preference Service.
- \_\_\_ Make an annual charitable giving plan and do not give to charities who solicit by telephone or door-to-door.
- \_\_\_ Get three written bids before contracting for home improvement; check out all contractors with the Better Business Bureau, the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, or your local building inspector; don't do business with door-to-door contractors.
- \_\_\_ Never sign a contract/document or make an investment without getting a second opinion from a trusted advisor.
- \_\_\_ Consult with an attorney to discuss "advanced directives" and set up checks and balances so that no one person has total control over you.

**REMOVE YOUR INFORMATION  
FROM  
MARKETING LISTS**

1. Don't play direct mail sweepstakes or talk to telemarketers.
2. Sign up for the Florida No Call List for both your home and your cell phones at 1 800 435- 7352.
3. Register also with the National Do Not Call Registry at [www.ftc.gov/donotcall](http://www.ftc.gov/donotcall) or [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov) or by calling 1 888 382-1222. You must re-register every five years.
4. Ask phone companies and other with whom you do business to put you on their "Do Not Call Lists".
5. "OPT OUT" of credit reporting agencies credit card solicitation marking lists by calling 1 888 567- 8688 or [www.optoutprescreen.com](http://www.optoutprescreen.com)
6. Call your credit card customer service to "OPT OUT" of marketing programs, including "convenience checks".
7. Reduce mortgage and real estate solicitations by Opting Out of lists collected and sold by Acxion by calling 1 877 774- 2094 or by e-mailing [optoutUS@acxion.com](mailto:optoutUS@acxion.com) It is not necessary if you opt out of the Direct Marketing Association mailing lists (see section 8 below).
8. Reduce e-mail/mail through the Direct Marketing Association: [www.dmaconsumers.org/consumerassistance.html](http://www.dmaconsumers.org/consumerassistance.html) (there is a \$5.00 fee for this) or by customizing the letter shown on the next page (this is free)

## **SUGGESTED FORM LETTER**

Mail Preference Service  
Direct Marketing Association  
Post Office Box 643  
Carmel, New York 10512

(Date)

To Whom It May Concern:

Please remove my name from all of your marketing lists. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

My name and address are:

(All versions of your name used in mailings)  
(Your mailing address)  
(City, State, Zip Code)

Sincerely,  
(Your signature- this is required)

## **HANG UP ON TELEMARKETERS**

Keep this script near your telephone. If you are contacted by a Telemarketer or someone soliciting contributions, read from the script and then HANG UP! Remember, YOU are in control of your telephone.

**I do not do business over the telephone.** (I do not donate to charities over the telephone.) **Please put me on your “DO NOT CALL” list.**

Don't allow the caller to interrupt you or engage you in further talk. Read the script and HANG UP- this is not being rude. It is protecting you from unwanted and perhaps fraudulent intrusion.

If someone calls you back after you hang up, they are harassing or rude, interrupt them and say:

“We don't have a good connection- call me back on my other line.”

Give them the State Attorney's telephone number (386) 362- 2320.

# ANNUAL GIVING PLAN

This is my Annual Charitable Giving Plan. I will not add any other charity or increase my annual budget without serious consideration.

Name of Charity	Annual Gift
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
Total Annual Charitable Giving Budget	_____

## Checklist:

- I have asked for and received written information, such as an annual report from each charity.
- I have checked out these charities through [www.give.org](http://www.give.org) or [www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org), the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, or the State Attorney.
- If solicited for a donation I will say "I already have a chosen list of charities that I support. If you would like me to consider you for next year, please send me a copy of your annual report."



# IMPORTANT RESOURCES

## Florida “No Call” List

To reduce phone calls, sign up for the Florida No call List. Exceptions include charities, politicians, and companies with whom you have an established relationship. This call is free, but there is a \$10.00 charge.

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services No Call List at (800) 435- 7352

## Unsolicited Faxes

To report unsolicited faxes call:  
Florida Department of Legal Affairs at (866) 966- 7226

## Credit Card “OPT OUT” Line

Stop credit card offers and unwanted credit cards from credit reporting agencies’ marketing lists. This call is free and there is no charge for this service. It is safe to give your Social Security number.  
Call 1 888 567- 8688 or [www.optoutprescreen.com](http://www.optoutprescreen.com)

## Business and Charity Reliability Reports

To receive a reliability report on a business or charity BEFORE buying or giving, contact:

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services  
at 1 800 435- 7352

For charities also consider [www.give.org](http://www.give.org) or [www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org)

## Credit Reporting Agencies

To receive a FREE copy of your credit report each year to help ensure that there is no inaccurate information or unusual activity, contact the following

