



Identity Protection

KEEP YOUR FINANCIAL RECORDS SECURE & PRIVATE

Over 15 million individuals in the United States reported being a victim of identity theft in 2012. In total, costs of identity theft amounted to over \$24 billion – more than all the other types of property crime in the United States!

There are measures that you can take to protect yourself.

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM IDENTITY THEFT

- 1) **Keep ALL of your financial records and information secure and private.** (Only share this information with trusted sources (ie. your bank or your employer, etc.) **This includes your bank account number and PIN.**
- 2) **Watch yourself! Keep an eye on all of your financial transactions to help you notice identity theft or fraud. Report any problems IMMEDIATELY!** This is important and can sometimes help prevent you from losing funds. (See resource list & also report any issues to your bank or financial institution.)
- 3) **If your bank or credit card company contacts you about identity theft, independently reach out to your banker or credit representative right away to confirm any issues and take action.** Being contacted by the company concerning identity theft IS the most common way individuals find out about identity theft. **However, there are several scams that alert you to identity theft and then ask you to disclose your personal information via email. Your bank will NOT do that. INDEPENDENTLY** contact or re-contact your credit card company or financial institution directly with questions.

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM FRAUD

- 1) **Unexpected offers of business deals or offers of funds from foreign countries are also common scams.** Be aware of these! It is illegal for an organization to request payments from you to receive prizes.
- 2) **Generally, be concerned about offers in which you have to rush funds to someone through money orders.**
- 3) **Be sure that ALL checks you accept are from a trusted source. (see below)**
- 4) **Do not fall victim to card cracking scams by sharing your bank account information and PIN online – even if someone promises to send you money.** (See Instructor Appendix for more information.)

AVOIDING FAKE CHECK SCAMS

There are several FAKE CHECK scams out there. If you deposit a check that is counterfeit and then withdraw the funds, YOU will be stuck paying the bill. YOU also could be sued for any funds you owe the bank AND possibly reported for check fraud! This can make it hard to open future bank accounts and **is a crime!** Banks have several safeguards to catch check fraud. Always know your source of funds! (See Resource List Pg. 66 for more information.)

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is!

CHAPTER EIGHT: PROTECTING YOUR IDENTITY

If you have ANY QUESTIONS or concerns about financial transactions, check with your local or state consumer protection agency.

Learn more from the following sources.

Consumer Federation of America, www.consumerfed.org/fakecheckscams

National Consumer League

www.fakechecks.org

www.fraud.org

Federal Trade Commission, 877-876-2455

Illinois Secretary of State, www.avoidthescam.net

Illinois Attorney General, Identity Theft Hotline, 866-999-5630, **Identity Theft Resource Guide**,

[http://www.ag.state.il.us/consumers/Identity Theft Resource Guide.pdf](http://www.ag.state.il.us/consumers/Identity%20Theft%20Resource%20Guide.pdf)

Citizens Utility Board, Consumer Hotline: 800-669-5556

CHECKING YOUR CREDIT – WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

As discussed in the credit chapter, it is critical that everyone checks their credit report annually (at least) to ensure that there are no mistakes or cases of fraud or identity theft. You can easily check this at www.AnnualCreditReport.com.

IMPORTANT: If you find that there are any errors or fraud, you need to report this right away. Instructions are included on your credit report.

For additional assistance with identity theft, contact: **Legal Assistance Foundation**, www.lafchicago.org, 312.341.1070; **Citizens Utility Board**, www.citizensutilityboard.org, 800-669-5556.

OBTAINING PROPER DOCUMENTS

Do YOU have a state ID? Do you have a social security card? There are several personal identification documents that are critical for your financial future BOTH for banking, investing and for employment.

Key items include:

- 1) **Your birth certificate**
- 2) **Your social security card**
- 3) **A state ID or driver's license**

If you do not have copies of these documents or if they have been lost or destroyed, it is important to take steps to obtain them as soon as possible so you have them when you need them. (Missing these documents is often an issue with young adults for banking/jobs.)

We have included information about where to go to find out what you need to do to get these documents.

Birth Certificate: See the Illinois Department of Health site at www.idph.state.il.gov or call 217-782-6554 for information on documentation needed (ie. piece of mail addressed to you, public assistance card, etc.); site locations, etc.

Social Security Card: See the Social Security Administration www.ssa.gov or 1-800-772-1213 for a list of documents needed to request a replacement card. There are many options such as birth certificate, school ID, medical record, transcript, etc.

State ID: (generally you need your birth certificate, social security card and proof of address) See the Illinois Secretary of State at www.cyberdriveillinois.com or 800-252-8980 for information.

(If needed) Matricula Card: Contact your local consulate. Here is the site to find the Mexican consulate, www.embassyofmexico.org, and to find other consulates try www.consumer-action.org.

ITIN: <https://www.irs.gov/individuals/general-itin-information>