



Beware of COVID-19 Vaccine Scams

Fraudsters have launched a new scam by taking advantage of the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine news. They are attempting to defraud their victims by stealing their money and their sensitive, personal information.

On December 21, 2020, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) issued a press release warning consumers to be on the alert for several emerging fraud schemes related to COVID-19 vaccines. According to federal law enforcement, scammers have been using telemarketing calls, text messages, social media platforms and door-to-door visits to perpetrate COVID-19-related scams. The FBI warns consumers to be on the lookout for the following scam activities:

- Advertisements or offers for early access to a vaccine upon payment of a deposit or fee.
- Requests asking you to pay out of pocket to obtain the vaccine or to put your name on a COVID-19 vaccine waiting list.
- Offers to undergo additional medical testing or procedures when obtaining a vaccine.
- Marketers offering to sell and/or ship doses of a vaccine, domestically or internationally, in exchange for payment of a deposit or fee.
- Unsolicited emails, telephone calls, or personal contact from someone claiming to be from a medical office, insurance company, or COVID-19 vaccine center requesting personal and/or medical information to determine recipients' eligibility to participate in clinical vaccine trials or obtain the vaccine.
- Claims of Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval for a vaccine that cannot be verified.
- Advertisements for vaccines through social media platforms, email, telephone calls, online, or from unsolicited/unknown sources.

- Individuals contacting you in person, by phone, or by email to tell you the government or government officials require you to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

Here are tips to avoid becoming a victim of COVID vaccine fraud:

- Consult the District's coronavirus.dc.gov website for up-to-date information about authorized vaccine distribution channels and only obtain a vaccine through such channels.
- Check the FDA's website (fda.gov) for current information about vaccine emergency use authorizations.
- Consult your primary care physician before undergoing any vaccination.
- Don't share your personal or health information with anyone other than known and trusted medical professionals.
- Check your medical bills and insurance explanation of benefits (EOBs) for suspicious claims and promptly report errors to your health insurance provider.
- Follow guidance and recommendations from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), DC Health, and other trusted medical professionals.

Be suspicious of any unexpected phone calls, emails, text messages, advertisements, or home visitors offering COVID-19 tests, supplies or cures. If you receive a suspicious call, hang up immediately. Do not respond to unsolicited texts or emails regarding COVID-19 vaccines or click on COVID-19 vaccine related links appearing in unsolicited emails or text messages.

If you believe you have been the victim of a COVID-19 fraud, immediately report it to the FBI (ic3.gov, tips.fbi.gov, or 1-800-CALL-FBI) or HHS OIG (tips.hhs.gov or 1-800-HHS-TIPS). You may also contact Office of Consumer Protection in the DC Office of the Attorney General at oag.dc.gov/consumer-protection the DISB Enforcement and Consumer Protection Division at (202) 727-8000.

About DISB

The mission of the Department of Insurance, Securities, and Banking (DISB) is three-fold: (1) cultivate a regulatory environment that protects consumers and attracts and retains financial services firms to the District; (2) empower and

educate residents on financial matters; and (3) provide financing for District small businesses.