

The Elder Consumer Protection Program at Stetson University College of Law's Center for Excellence in Elder Law serves as an educational and information resource, to both professionals and the public, on general and legal topics regarding current and developing matters in the area of elder consumer protection and awareness. The program, which is supported by state funding, offers assorted materials and various services that provide and promote general knowledge, public awareness and assistance, and professional development and training.

The content contained herein is intended only as a brief overview on matters of general interest. The content contained herein is not offered as legal advice, a definite statement of law, or a complete analysis of the particular matter. The applicability of law to a particular matter requires an exhaustive examination of the specific facts with the appropriate laws. If you have a specific legal issue or legal concern, you should always consult with an attorney for detailed legal advice.

#### **Elder Consumer Protection Program**

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## **Tax Season Scam Awareness**

**Be Concerned!**

**Be Aware!**

**Be Proactive!**

Elder Consumer Protection Program



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## Be Concerned!

Of the few things guaranteed in life, having to deal with taxes is one! Another guarantee is that unscrupulous scammers are aware of this and will use it to their advantage.

### IRS Impersonation Frauds and Scams

### Tax Preparer Frauds and Scams

### Post Tax Season Identity Theft

**As the taxpayer, ultimately you are legally responsible for filing your tax return, as well as paying any taxes, fees, penalties, or interest.**

## Be Aware!

- **Unsolicited telephone calls or e-mails.**

The IRS generally does not communicate with taxpayers via unsolicited telephone calls or e-mails.

Unsolicited telephone calls or e-mails may be scammers seeking personal or financial information.

Hoax e-mails or web links may be hackers installing spyware and viruses on your PC.

- **Fly-by-night tax return businesses.**

These businesses open up around tax season and close down shortly thereafter, leaving you to deal with any aftermath.

- **Tax preparers who don't sign the return.**

Although you are ultimately legally responsible, a tax preparer should still sign the return to confirm and validate their work.

- **Preparation fees based on return amount.**

Tax preparation fees should be based on the complexity of your return.

Preparers who base their fee on the amount of your return may use false deductions and excessive exemptions to inflate their fee.

- **Instant Tax Return Loans.**

Used to entice people who are eager for their refund, such loans are loaded with hidden fees and high interest rates.

## Be Proactive!

- Be cautious of unsolicited telephone or e-mail requests claiming to be tax related.
- Use the same due diligence in choosing a preparer as you would a doctor or lawyer.
- Be cautious of preparers who claim they can obtain larger refunds than other preparers.
- Avoid preparers who base fees or costs on the percentage of the refund.
- Use a preparer who signs and verifies the tax return in addition to you.
- Use tax preparation businesses with established, long-standing reputations.
- Ask questions, and expect to prove any claimed credits or exemptions.
- Once completed and verified, shred any and all documentation.

### Resources

- **Better Business Bureau:**  
Online: [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org)
- **Internal Revenue Service:**  
By telephone: 1-800-876-1715  
Online: [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)
- **Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration:**  
By telephone: 1-800-366-4484  
Online: [www.tigta.gov](http://www.tigta.gov)