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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

CA: Beware of Scams as Fla. Expands COVID-19 Vaccine Availability



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—With more than 6 million Floridians vaccinated against COVID-19 and millions seeking an inoculation, Attorney General Ashley Moody is encouraging vigilance against vaccine-related scams. To counter the reports that more than a quarter of a million seniors are avoiding the COVID-19 vaccine due to misguided cost concerns, Attorney General Moody is reminding Floridians that COVID-19 vaccines are free to the public and no financial information is required to receive an inoculation.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “Millions of Floridians have already received a COVID-19 vaccination and millions more are seeking an inoculation. If you are trying to schedule your shot, now is not the time to let your guard down. If anyone contacts you claiming to be a health care representative requesting financial information in exchange for a vaccine appointment, hang up and call our office. This advice is even more important as a recent report claims thousands of seniors believe the vaccines are not free. Stay informed and only rely on trusted sources of information about COVID-19 and vaccine distribution.”

Last week, Attorney General Moody sent a letter to eBay, Shopify and Twitter to act immediately to prevent scammers from selling fraudulent COVID-19 vaccination cards on their platforms. Attorney General Moody also reminded Floridians of the risks associated with posting COVID-19 vaccination cards online. Scammers can use information from the cards to create fake vaccination cards or use the information to hack online accounts or commit identity fraud.

Instead of waiting to be contacted, Floridians can go to MyVaccine.fl.gov to pre-register for the COVID-19 vaccination and check on the status of their registration. Consumers may also contact their local Florida Department of Health county office to inquire about available vaccine opportunities in their area. All COVID-19 vaccines in Florida are provided free of charge to the individual.

Earlier this year, Attorney General Moody also warned Floridians of several emerging vaccine scams through the Consumer Alert program. To view the alert, click here. Floridians should know, depending upon the vaccine provider and current eligibility guidelines, that consumers may be asked for the following items to secure an appointment or receive a shot:

- Driver's license or other form of ID;
- Contact and basic health information;
- Proof of eligibility; and
- Insurance or Medicare card, if the recipient is insured.

Floridians may receive calls or emails from the Florida Department of Health or other legitimate sources, such as Florida's homebound senior vaccination program, to assist in scheduling a vaccine or to confirm a vaccine appointment. Floridians who receive any such call or email and who wish to confirm that the communication is legitimate may reach out to their local Florida Department of Health county office. Floridians may also call the COVID-19 Call Center 24/7 at (866) 779-6121 or email COVID-19@flhealth.gov for questions regarding vaccine appointments.

While the vaccine is free, vaccine providers are permitted to seek reimbursement for the cost of administering the shot from a patient's insurance. Anyone offering appointments in exchange for banking or financial information, a Social Security number or remote access to a patient's computer or device is a scammer.

A report by Medicare Advantage found that more than 312,000 adults nationwide do not plan on receiving the COVID-19 vaccine because there is a misconception that vaccines must be paid for. There is no charge to an individual to receive a vaccination in Florida. As stated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: *"Vaccination providers can be reimbursed for vaccine administration fees by the patient's public or private insurance company or, for uninsured patients, by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund."*

All Florida residents are now eligible to receive any COVID-19 vaccine as prescribed by the Food and Drug Administration. The Pfizer vaccine is authorized for persons age 16 and older. The Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines are authorized for persons age 18 and older. To keep up with the Florida Department of Health's vaccine availability, click here.

Other scams related to the pandemic continue to operate. On Dec. 8, 2020, Attorney General Moody released a Consumer Alert that references the Department of Homeland Security's Operation Stolen Promise, an initiative targeting COVID-19 fraud. Since the initiative began, DHS has seized more than $39.8 million in illicit proceeds and arrested approximately 250 criminals. The initiative is now in level two, shifting the main focus on vaccines and treatments.

Anyone who suspects a COVID-19 vaccine-related scam should report it to the Florida Attorney

General’s Office by calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or visiting MyFloridaLegal.com.

For all of the Attorney General’s COVID-19 related releases and additional COVID-19 tips and resources, click here.

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The Florida Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division issues Consumer Alerts to inform Floridians of emerging scams, new methods used to commit fraud, increased reports of common scams, or any other deceptive practice. Consumer Alerts are designed to notify Floridians about scams and available refunds in an effort to prevent financial losses or other harm caused by deceptive practices. Anyone encountering a scam should report the incident to the Florida Attorney General's Office by calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or visiting MyFloridaLegal.com. To view recent Consumer Alerts and for other information about avoiding scams, visit MyFloridaLegal.com/ConsumerAlert.