Feb 11, 2021

Contact Kylie Mason

Phone 850-245-0150

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

CA: Guard Your Heart and Wallet to Avoid Romance Scams



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today issued a Consumer Alert and a new Scams at a Glance brochure for Floridians seeking companionship this Valentine's Day. Romance scams prey on an individual's desire for companionship and occur when imposters pose as a person seeking love on dating sites, social media or even in person to gain trust—and ultimately swindle unsuspecting sweethearts.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "It's a trick as old as cupid himself—seducing targets with flattery and attention to get to their wallets through their hearts. As we celebrate Valentine's Day, it is important to be alert for scammers who may attempt to trick those seeking companionship into thinking they have found their soulmates. Unsuspecting Floridians may find out weeks or even months later that those they thought were their soulmates would be better suited to play the role of inmate in a local prison. So, remember to guard your heart, as well as your wallet, when seeking companionship this Valentine's Day, especially online."

For the last three years, reports of money lost on romance scams has skyrocketed higher than any other type of fraud. The year 2020 resulted in a record-breaking reported loss of $304 million nationally in romance scams. This is a 50% increase from 2019 and more than a quadruple increase from 2016.

Attorney General Moody issued a new edition to Scams at a Glance today that urges Floridians to follow these tips to guard against romance scams and ensure Valentine's Day is memorable

for all the right reasons:

- When meeting someone new online, ask detailed questions;
- Seek the opinion of trusted friends and family members;
- Conduct a reverse image search to see whether the image of a love interest is connected to any other accounts under different names or with different information;
- Never establish a joint bank account, or give access to accounts, to new sweethearts;
- Watch for typos or inconsistencies in speech patterns, personal information or stories shared in email, text or social media conversations;
- Never send money or gifts to someone who has not been met in person—even if they send money first; and
- Be aware that scammers may claim they need money urgently to travel to meet in person, take advantage of a business opportunity or deal with a family tragedy.

For more information about Romance Scams, view Attorney General Moody's Scams at a Glance: Swindling Sweethearts brochure by clicking here.

To download Scams at a Glance: Swindling Sweethearts in Spanish, click here.

To access the Scams at a Glance webpage for more content related to other common and emerging scams, click here.

Anyone who encounters a romance scam, or any other type of fraud, can file a complaint with the Florida Attorney General's Office at MyFloridaLegal.com or at 1(866) 9NO-SCAM.

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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.