Jan 7, 2021

Contact Kylie Mason

Phone 850-245-0150

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

DO NOT Pay to Reserve a COVID-19 Vaccine Appointment



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today issued a Consumer Alert warning Floridians about COVID-19 vaccine scams that involve misleading webpages charging for vaccine appointments. According to recent news reports, scammers used the popular event website Eventbrite to pose as county health departments and take or attempt to take payments in exchange for COVID-19 vaccine appointments.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “Consumer Protection investigators and criminal prosecutors in my office are aggressively pursuing reports of scammers taking money in exchange for phony COVID-19 vaccine reservations. If you have been a victim of this scam, please contact my office so we can end this fraud and help protect those seeking vaccinations.”

States are overseeing the free COVID-19 vaccine distribution rather than the federal government. To help manage appointment scheduling, several counties in Florida have turned to ticketing services like Eventbrite; however, no county is charging for vaccine reservations.

Attorney General Moody recommends the following tips to help Floridians avoid COVID-19 vaccine-related scams:

- Know that anyone asking for money in exchange for an appointment is a scam;
- Check with county health departments for local vaccine distribution guidelines;
- Be wary of any website where pop-up ads solicit a vaccine appointment;

- Look for “https” or a padlock icon in the website name to ensure that you are on a secure website; and
- Report suspicious solicitations or COVID-19 vaccine-related advertisements to the Attorney General’s Office by calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or visiting MyFloridaLegal.com.

For more tips on spotting and avoiding COVID-19 vaccine scams, see Attorney General Moody’s previous Consumer Alert here.

Since the COVID-19 emergency declaration last March, Attorney General Moody has issued more than 30 Consumer Alerts with information about emerging scams and tips to avoid fraud. To view the latest alerts and to stay up to date on COVID-19 related scams, visit the Attorney General’s Consumer Alert webpage by clicking here.

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

UPDATE (Jan. 13, 2021): Following a review by the Florida Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division, Eventbrite confirmed that all unofficial listings for vaccine reservations have been removed from its platform and refunds have been made to anyone who may have paid for a reservation. Eventbrite has reported that it will review all new posts related to COVID-19 or vaccines and take action to disable any future unauthorized sites and make refunds to affected consumers.

Following news reports about possible misuse of the reservation platform, Eventbrite published a resource page to assist consumers in identifying and reporting any suspicious vaccination events. Users can also report unauthorized postings at the bottom of every event listing on Eventbrite, according to the platform.

# # #

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.