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OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

CA: Work-from-Home Employment Scams



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today issued a Consumer Alert warning students at Florida colleges and universities of an emerging work-from-home employment scam. Scammers are targeting students via emails that appear to be sent from a college or university advertising fictitious work-from-home employment opportunities. The scammers obtain personal information from the student while posing as a university representative. Savvy scammers convince students to cash counterfeit checks and send them the money.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “During the COVID-19 crisis and resulting economic downturn, Floridians are looking for work, and it is unconscionable that scammers are exploiting these times of uncertainty to prey on our college students. Students who fall victim to this scam could face serious repercussions to their financial stability and credit record. I am urging all students currently enrolled at Florida colleges and universities to take extra precaution when receiving online job offers.”

The emerging scheme involves scammers sending online job advertisements offering college students an administrative position, tricking the student into believing the email is from a college or university representative by using an email address ending in ‘.edu’. As part of the scheme, the student receives counterfeit checks in the mail, or via email, and is instructed to deposit the checks into a personal checking account. The scammers then direct the student to withdraw the money and make a payment necessary for the job. Often, after the student sends the money, the checks are confirmed to be fraudulent by the bank.

According to Attorney General Moody's Consumer Protection Division, students falling victim to the scam experience bank accounts being closed due to fraudulent activity and a report filed by the bank with a credit bureau or law enforcement agency. Additionally, the student would be responsible for reimbursing the bank for the total amount of the counterfeit checks, often times resulting in an adverse effect on the student's credit record.

To avoid these types of employment scams:

- Research the company before accepting any job offer. Does the company have a professional website and legitimate contact information? Search for what others are saying about experiences with the company;
- If the solicitor is communicating via email, locate contact information for the sender through the school's website and confirm whether the job offer is real;
- Look for red flags, such as typos and grammatical errors. Offers of employment or pay without an interview are another sign of an employment scam; and
- Never send funds in the form of cash, checks, gift cards or wire transfers to secure a job or as part of an assigned duty by a new employer.

Since the pandemic hit Florida, Attorney General Ashley Moody has issued more than a dozen Consumer Alerts to help Floridians avoid COVID-19 related scams. To view previous Consumer Alerts about emerging COVID-19 related scams, click here.

Anyone who believes they are the victim of hacking or a COVID-19 related scam should contact the Florida Attorney General's Office at 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or MyFloridaLegal.com.

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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.