

## **FTC Staff Requests Information Regarding Identity Theft Targeting Senior Citizens**

Millions of consumers are victimized by identity thieves each year, and consumers and businesses spend billions of dollars and countless hours to repair the damage. Given the serious and widespread harm caused by identity theft, the Commission has devoted significant resources toward combating the problem, acting on three main fronts: aggressively enforcing the law, serving as a clearinghouse for identity theft complaints, and educating consumers and businesses about identity theft. For example, the Commission has brought more than 35 cases challenging companies' failure to take reasonable and appropriate measures to secure consumer information. The Commission also assists over 2,000 federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies by sharing identity theft complaints that it has collected with those agencies. The Commission also has an extensive outreach program to promote identity theft prevention and training legal services providers on assisting victims.

Periodically, Commission staff focuses its outreach efforts on a particular identity theft problem. For example, in the summer of 2011, Commission staff held *Stolen Futures, A Forum on Child Identity Theft*, bringing together experts from government, private industry, and public interest groups to discuss the unique challenges facing child victims of identity theft.

This year, Commission staff is focusing on identity theft impacting senior citizens. In order to learn more about this problem, Commission staff seeks information, including original research, on the scope of senior identity theft, challenges to combating it, and public and private sector solutions. Among other issues, Commission staff would like information on:

1. The prevalence of identity theft targeting senior citizens;
2. The extent to which seniors are vulnerable to identity theft;
3. Types of identity theft schemes and the extent to which thieves use them to target seniors, such as phishing schemes, power of attorney abuse, and tax, medicare, and nursing-home related identity theft;
4. The extent to which seniors are victims of familial identity theft;
5. Precautions seniors can take to protect their identity when seeking accountants, financial advisors, nursing care, home care, and other medical services; and
6. Public and private sector solutions to senior identity theft.

You can file a submission on senior identity theft and the above questions online or on paper. For Commission staff to consider your submission, we must receive it on or before July 15, 2012. Write “Senior Identity Theft, P065411” on your submission. Your submission – including your name and your state – will be placed on the public record, including, to the extent practicable, on the public Commission website, at <http://www.ftc.gov/os/publiccomments.shtm>. As a matter of discretion, the Commission tries to remove individuals’ home contact information from submissions before placing them on the Commission website.

Because your submission will be made public, you are solely responsible for making sure that it does not include any sensitive personal information, like anyone’s Social Security number, date of birth, driver’s license number, or other state identification number or foreign country equivalent, passport number, financial account number, or credit or debt card number. You are also solely responsible for making sure that your submission does not include any sensitive health information, like medical records or other individually identifiable health information. In addition, do not include any “[t]rade secret or any

commercial or financial information which is obtained from any person and which is privileged or confidential,” as provided in Section 6(f) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. 46(f), and FTC Rule 4.10(a)(2), 16 CFR 4.10(a) (2). In particular, do not include competitively sensitive information such as costs, sales statistics, inventories, formulas, patterns, devices, manufacturing processes, or customer names.

If you want Commission staff to give your submission confidential treatment, you must file it in paper form, with a request for confidential treatment, and you have to follow the procedure explained in FTC Rule 4.9(c), 16 CFR 4.9(c).<sup>1</sup> Your submission will be kept confidential only if the FTC General Counsel, in his or her sole discretion, grants your request in accordance with the law and the public interest.

Postal mail addressed to the Commission is subject to delay due to heightened security screening. As a result, we encourage you to file your submission online. To make sure that Commission staff considers your submission, you must file it at <https://ftcpublic.commentworks.com/ftc/senioridtheft>, by following the instructions on the web-based form.

If you file your submission on paper, write “Senior Identity Theft, P065411” on your submission and the envelope, and mail or deliver it to the following address: Federal Trade Commission, Office of the Secretary, Room H-113 (Annex L), 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20580. If possible, submit your paper comment to the Commission by courier or overnight service.

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<sup>1</sup> In particular, the written request for confidential treatment that accompanies the submission must include the factual and legal basis for the request, and must identify the specific portions of the submission to be withheld from the public record. *See* FTC Rule 4.9(c), 16 CFR 4.9(c).

Visit the Commission website at <http://www.ftc.gov> to read this Announcement and News Release. The FTC Act and other laws that the Commission administers permit the collecting of public comments to consider and use, as appropriate. The Commission staff will consider all timely and responsive public submissions that it receives on or before July 15, 2012. You can find more information, including routine uses permitted by the Privacy Act, in the Commission's privacy policy, at <http://www.ftc.gov/ftc/privacy.htm>.