

Sample Media Warning Letters



Office of the Director
Bureau of Consumer Protection

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20580

TO: Publisher

RE: Weight Loss Advertising in Your Publication

DATE: September 27, 2006

This letter is to advise you that you have run at least one potentially deceptive weight loss advertisement.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is the nation's consumer protection agency. The FTC and the law enforcement partners on the attached list read your publication as part of a review of advertising directed to Spanish-speaking consumers. This review is one component of the FTC's Hispanic Outreach and Law Enforcement Initiative, which aims to detect, stop, and prevent consumer fraud against Hispanics. To achieve these goals, the FTC continues actively to monitor Spanish-language media and to bring law enforcement actions against marketers whose ads include deceptive claims. For information about these actions, please refer to the FTC's website at http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/edcams/ojo/cases_health.htm.

The FTC also provides the media with guidance on how to spot facially deceptive ads. Under the FTC Act, weight loss claims, such as those disseminated in your publication, must be truthful and not misleading. They also must be supported by competent and reliable scientific evidence. In other words, it is unlawful for a marketer to make weight loss claims without scientific support at the time they made the claims.

The FTC has published a reference guide to help media outlets screen out weight-loss product ads that contain false claims. This guide, *Red Flag Bogus Weight Loss Claims*, is available at <http://www.ftc.gov/redflag/>. (In Spanish at <http://www.ftc.gov/redflag/espanol/index.html>.) Specifically, media outlets should "red flag" claims that a product:

- Causes weight loss of two pounds or more a week for a month or more without dieting or exercise;
- Causes substantial weight loss, no matter what or how much the consumer eats;
- Causes permanent weight loss (even when the consumer stops using the product);
- Blocks the absorption of fat or calories to enable consumers to lose substantial weight;

- Safely enables consumers to lose more than three pounds per week for more than four weeks;
- Causes substantial weight loss for all users; and
- Causes substantial weight loss by wearing it on the body or rubbing it into the skin.

You can get additional information on how to spot suspicious weight loss ads at:

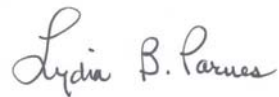
Screening Advertisements, A Guide for the Media (p. 7, Weight Loss Fraud)

<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/buspubs/adscreen.pdf>

Weight loss scams harm consumers in your community and hurt the credibility of your publication and your legitimate advertisers. We know that no media outlet wants to mislead its audience by knowingly running false weight loss claims. We hope this notification and the referenced materials will help your staff identify and reject ads that contain facially false claims in the future.

Please contact Laura Koss at 202-326-2890 if you have any questions. Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Lydia B. Parnes
Director



Office of the Director
Bureau of Consumer Protection

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20580

TO: Media Outlet

RE: Weight Loss Advertising on Your Network or Station

DATE: September 27, 2006

This letter is to advise you that you have run at least one potentially deceptive weight loss advertisement.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is the nation's consumer protection agency. The FTC and the law enforcement partners on the attached list read your publication as part of a review of advertising directed to Spanish-speaking consumers. This review is one component of the FTC's Hispanic Outreach and Law Enforcement Initiative, which aims to detect, stop, and prevent consumer fraud against Hispanics. To achieve these goals, the FTC continues actively to monitor Spanish-language media and to bring law enforcement actions against marketers whose ads include deceptive claims. For information about these actions, please refer to the FTC's website at http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/edcams/ojo/cases_health.htm.

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- Causes permanent weight loss (even when the consumer stops using the product);
- Blocks the absorption of fat or calories to enable consumers to lose substantial weight;

- Safely enables consumers to lose more than three pounds per week for more than four weeks;
- Causes substantial weight loss for all users; and
- Causes substantial weight loss by wearing it on the body or rubbing it into the skin.

You can get additional information on how to spot suspicious weight loss ads at:

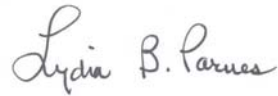
Screening Advertisements, A Guide for the Media (p. 7, Weight Loss Fraud)

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Weight loss scams harm consumers in your community and hurt the credibility of your organization and your legitimate advertisers. We know that no media outlet wants to mislead its audience by knowingly running false weight loss claims. We hope this notification and the referenced materials will help your staff identify and reject ads that contain facially false claims in the future.

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Director



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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20580

TO: Media Outlet

RE: Health-Related Advertising on Your Network or Station

DATE: September 27, 2006

This letter is to advise you that you have run at least one potentially deceptive health-related advertisement.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is the nation's consumer protection agency. The FTC and the law enforcement partners on the attached list read your publication as part of a review of advertising directed to Spanish-speaking consumers. This review is one component of the FTC's Hispanic Outreach and Law Enforcement Initiative, which aims to detect, stop, and prevent consumer fraud against Hispanics. To achieve these goals, the FTC continues actively to monitor Spanish-language media and to bring law enforcement actions against marketers whose ads include deceptive claims. For information about these actions, please refer to the FTC's website at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/edcams/cureall/press.htm> and http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/edcams/ojo/cases_health.htm#claims.

The FTC also provides the media with guidance on how to spot facially deceptive ads. Under the FTC Act, health-related claims, such as those disseminated in your publication, must be truthful and not misleading. They also must be supported by competent and reliable scientific evidence. In other words, it is unlawful for a marketer to make health-related claims without scientific support at the time they made the claims.

Health scams harm consumers in your community and hurt the credibility of your organization and your legitimate advertisers. We know that no media outlet wants to mislead its audience by knowingly running deceptive disease cure claims. We hope this notification and the referenced materials will help your staff identify and reject ads that contain suspicious health-related claims in the future. For example, please "red flag" ads that:

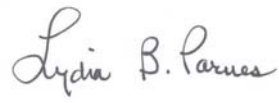
- claim a product is a quick and effective cure-all or diagnostic tool for a wide variety of ailments;
- claim a product can treat or cure diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, or cancer; or
- use words like "scientific breakthrough," "miraculous cure," "exclusive product," "secret ingredient," or "ancient remedy."

You can get additional information on how to spot suspicious health-related claims at:

1. *'Miracle' Health Claims: Add a Dose of Skepticism*
<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/health/frdheal.htm>. (In Spanish, at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/spanish/health/s-frdheal.htm>)
2. *Screening Advertisements, A Guide for the Media* (p. 9, Health Fraud)
<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/buspubs/adscreen.pdf>

Please contact Laura Koss at 202-326-2890 if you have any questions. Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lydia B. Parnes".

Lydia B. Parnes
Director



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TO: Publisher

RE: Health-Related Advertising in Your Publication

DATE: September 27, 2006

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Health scams harm consumers in your community and hurt the credibility of your publication and your legitimate advertisers. We know that no media outlet wants to mislead its audience by knowingly running deceptive disease cure claims. We hope this notification and the referenced materials will help your staff identify and reject ads that contain suspicious health-related claims in the future. For example, please "red flag" ads that:

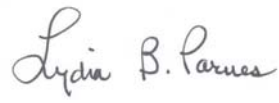
- claim a product is a quick and effective cure-all or diagnostic tool for a wide variety of ailments;
- claim a product can treat or cure diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, or cancer; or
- use words like "scientific breakthrough," "miraculous cure," "exclusive product," "secret ingredient," or "ancient remedy."

You can get additional information on how to spot suspicious health-related claims at:

1. *'Miracle' Health Claims: Add a Dose of Skepticism*
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Director



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To: Publisher

Re: Credit Repair Advertising in Your Publication

Date: September 27, 2006

This letter is to advise you that you have run at least one potentially deceptive credit repair advertisement.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is the nation's consumer protection agency. The FTC and the law enforcement partners on the attached list read your publication as part of a review of advertising directed to Spanish-speaking consumers. This review is one component of the FTC's Hispanic Outreach and Law Enforcement Initiative, which aims to detect, stop, and prevent consumer fraud against Hispanics. To achieve these goals, the FTC continues actively to monitor Spanish-language media and to bring law enforcement actions against marketers whose ads include deceptive claims. For information about these actions, please refer to the FTC's website at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/edcams/ojo/cases.htm>.

The FTC also provides the media with guidance on how to spot facially deceptive ads, such as ads for bogus credit repair services. Some credit repair companies claim they can remove negative information (including bankruptcies, judgments, liens, and bad loans) from a credit report, even when the negative information is truthful and current. The law, however, allows truthful, negative information to remain on a credit report for seven years, and, in the case of bankruptcy, for ten years. There is simply no legitimate way to remove truthful, negative information from a credit report. Moreover, it is illegal to require an advance payment for credit repair services.

The FTC has taken legal action against numerous marketers who deceptively advertised credit repair products and services. For information concerning some of these actions, please refer to the FTC's website at <http://www.ftc.gov/opa/2006/02/badcreditbgone.htm> and http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/edcams/ojo/cases_finance.

Credit repair scams harm consumers in your community and hurt the credibility of your publication and your legitimate advertisers. We know that no media outlet wants to mislead its audience by knowingly running fraudulent credit repair claims. We hope this notification and the referenced materials will help your staff identify and reject ads that contain facially

questionable claims in the future. For example, please “red flag” any claim that a company will:

- Remove all or most of the negative information from a credit report; or
- Help consumers start over with a new credit file.

Also, please watch out for ads where companies require an up-front fee for credit repair services.

You can get additional information on how to spot suspicious credit repair ads at:

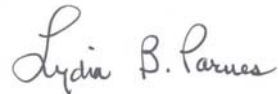
FTC's Website on Credit

<http://www.ftc.gov/credit/>;

<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/edcams/credit/espanol.htm> (Spanish version)

Please contact Laura Koss at 202-326-2890 if you have any questions. Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

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Lydia B. Parnes
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To: Media Outlet

Re: Credit Repair Advertising on Your Network or Station

Date: September 27, 2006

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- Remove all or most of the negative information from a credit report; or
- Help consumers start over with a new credit file.

Also, please watch out for ads where companies require an up-front fee for credit repair services.

You can get additional information on how to spot suspicious credit repair ads at:

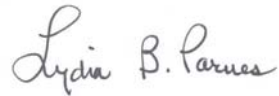
FTC's Website on Credit

<http://www.ftc.gov/credit/>;

<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/edcams/credit/espanol.htm> (Spanish version)

Please contact Laura Koss at 202-326-2890 if you have any questions. Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20580

TO: Publisher

RE: Work-at-home Advertising in Your Publication

DATE: September 27, 2006

This letter is to advise you that you have run at least one potentially deceptive work-at-home advertisement.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is the nation's consumer protection agency. The FTC and the law enforcement partners on the attached list read your publication as part of a review of advertising directed to Spanish-speaking consumers. This review is one component of the FTC's Hispanic Outreach and Law Enforcement Initiative, which aims to detect, stop, and prevent consumer fraud against Hispanics. To achieve these goals, the FTC continues actively to monitor Spanish-language media and to bring law enforcement actions against marketers whose ads include deceptive claims. For information about these actions, please refer to the FTC's website at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/edcams/ojo/cases.htm>.

The FTC also provides the media with guidance on how to spot facially deceptive ads. The FTC Act requires that advertising be truthful and non-deceptive, including advertising for work-at-home opportunities. These ads often make claims that consumers can earn money "from home" or "in your spare time" and may promise that experience and English-language skills are unnecessary. In our experience, claims that consumers can earn a significant income working at home rarely can be supported. Moreover, although some work-at-home opportunities are legitimate, we have seen many work-at-home scams, particularly involving envelope stuffing, medical billing, and assembly work schemes.

The FTC and its partners bring numerous enforcement actions against work-at-home scams. For information about some of these actions, please refer to the FTC's website at http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/edcams/ojo/cases_work.htm.

Work-at-home scams harm consumers in your community and hurt the credibility of your publication and your legitimate advertisers. We know that no media outlet wants to mislead its audience by knowingly running fraudulent work-at-home ads. We hope this notification and the

referenced materials will help your staff identify and reject possible scams in the future. For example, please “red flag” any ads that offer the following work-at-home opportunities:

- envelope stuffing;
- coupon clipping;
- order processing;
- medical billing; or
- assembly work.

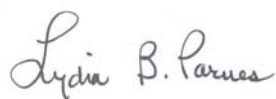
In addition, please watch out for work-at-home ads that promise specific earnings, such as “Earn thousands of dollars a month - from your home.”

You can get additional information on how to spot suspicious work-at-home ads at:

1. *Federal Trade Commission Facts for Consumers: Work-At-Home Schemes*
<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/invest/homewrk.htm>;
<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/spanish/invest/s-homewrk.htm> (Spanish version)
2. *FTC Consumer Alert Take this Scheme and Stuff It: Avoiding Envelope-Stuffing Rip-Offs*
<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/alerts/stuffitalrt.htm>;
<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/spanish/alerts/s-stuffitalrt.htm> (Spanish version)
3. *Screening Advertisements, A Guide for the Media* (p. 5, Get Rich Quick Schemes)
<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/buspubs/adscreen.pdf>

Please contact Laura Koss at 202-326-2890 if you have any questions. Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20580

TO: Publisher

RE: Business Opportunity Advertising in Your Publication

DATE: September 27, 2006

This letter is to advise you that you have run at least one potentially deceptive business opportunity advertisement.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is the nation's consumer protection agency. The FTC and the law enforcement partners on the attached list read your publication as part of a review of advertising directed to Spanish-speaking consumers. This review is one component of the FTC's Hispanic Outreach and Law Enforcement Initiative, which aims to detect, stop, and prevent consumer fraud against Hispanics. To achieve these goals, the FTC continues actively to monitor Spanish-language media and to bring law enforcement actions against marketers whose ads include deceptive claims. For information about these actions, please refer to the FTC's website at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/edcams/ojo/cases.htm>.

The FTC also provides the media with guidance on how to spot facially deceptive ads. The FTC Act requires that claims promoting the sale of products or services, including claims that consumers can make money by buying and operating a business, be truthful and not misleading. In addition, federal and state laws require that ads making earnings claims for certain business opportunities, such as vending machines and display racks, disclose the number and percentage of the seller's past customers who have achieved the same earnings.

The FTC and its state partners have brought numerous enforcement actions against business opportunity frauds. For information about some of these actions, please refer to the FTC's website at: <http://www.ftc.gov/opa/2005/02/bizoppflop.htm>.

Business opportunity scams harm consumers in your community and hurt the credibility of your publication and your legitimate advertisers. We know that no media outlet wants to mislead its audience by knowingly running fraudulent business opportunity ads. We hope this notification and the referenced materials will help your staff identify and reject ads that contain facially questionable claims in the future. For example, please "red flag":

- ads for business opportunities that represent that consumers will achieve substantial earnings with little or no risk, skills, or training;

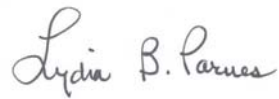
- ads with any claim that a consumer can earn a specific dollar figure, income, or profit unless the seller discloses in the ad the number and percentage of past purchasers who have made as much as or more than the amount claimed.

You can get additional information on how to spot suspicious business opportunity ads at:

1. *FTC Website on Business Opportunities*
<http://www.ftc.gov/bizopps/>;
<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/edcams/bizopps/espanol.html> (Spanish version)
2. *Screening Advertisements, A Guide for the Media* (p. 5, Get Rich Quick Schemes)
<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/buspubs/adscreen.pdf>

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