

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO
EASTERN DIVISION

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION, *et al.*,

Plaintiffs,

v.

REPAIR ALL PC, LLC, *et al.*,

Defendants.

CASE NO. 1:17CV0869

JUDGE DAN AARON POLSTER

STIPULATED ORDER FOR PERMANENT INJUNCTION AND MONETARY JUDGMENT
AS TO DEFENDANTS DATADECK LLC AND ROMIL BHATIA

Plaintiffs the Federal Trade Commission (“FTC” or “Commission”) and the State of Ohio, Office of Attorney General, (collectively, “Plaintiffs”), filed their Complaint for Permanent Injunction and Other Equitable Relief (“Complaint”), pursuant to Section 13(b) of the Federal Trade Commission Act (“FTC Act”), 15 U.S.C. § 53(b), and the Ohio Consumer Sales Practice Act, R.C. § 1345.01 *et seq.* (“CSPA”). Plaintiffs and Defendants Datadeck LLC and Romil Bhatia (collectively, the “Bhatia Defendants”) stipulate to the entry of this Stipulated Order for Permanent Injunction and Monetary Judgment (“Order”) to resolve all matters in dispute in this action between them.

THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED as follows:

FINDINGS

1. This Court has jurisdiction over this matter.
2. The Complaint charges that Defendants participated in deceptive acts or practices in violation of Section 5 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45, and the CSPA, R.C. 1345.02 and

1345.03(6), in the advertising, marketing, promoting, offering for sale, and sale of Tech Support Products or Services.

3. Only for purposes of this action, Bhatia Defendants admit the facts necessary to establish jurisdiction.

4. Bhatia Defendants waive any claim that they may have under the Equal Access to Justice Act, 28 U.S.C. § 2412, concerning the prosecution of this action through the date of this Order, and agree to bear their own costs and attorney fees.

5. Bhatia Defendants waive all rights to appeal or otherwise challenge or contest the validity of this Order.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this Order, the following definitions apply:

1. **“Bhatia Defendants”** means Bhatia Individual Defendant and Bhatia Corporate Defendant, individually, collectively, or in any combination.

a. **“Bhatia Corporate Defendant”** means Datadeck LLC, and its successors, assigns, or subsidiaries.

b. **“Bhatia Individual Defendant”** means Romil Bhatia, and by whatever names he is known.

2. **“Defendants”** means, individually, collectively, or in any combination, Repair All PC, LLC, Pro PC Repair LLC, I Fix PC LLC, WebTech World LLC, Online Assist LLC, Datadeck LLC, I Fix PC, also d/b/a Techers247, Jessica Marie Serrano, Dishant Khanna, Mohit Malik, Romil Bhatia, Lalit Chadha, and Roopkala Chadha.

3. **“Person”** means a natural person, organization, or other legal entity, including a corporation, limited liability company, partnership, proprietorship, association, cooperative,

government or governmental subdivision or agency, or any other group or combination acting as an entity.

4. **“Tech Support Product or Service”** means any plan, program, or software, marketed to repair, maintain, or improve a computer’s performance or security, including, but not limited to, registry cleaners, anti-virus programs, virus and malware removal, and computer or software diagnostic services.

5. **“Telemarketing”** means any plan, program, or campaign that is conducted to induce the purchase of goods or services by use of one or more telephones, and which involves a telephone call, whether or not covered by the Telemarketing Sales Rule.

ORDER

I. BAN ON TECH SUPPORT PRODUCTS OR SERVICES

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that Bhatia Defendants are permanently restrained and enjoined from:

A. Advertising, marketing, promoting, offering for sale, selling, or providing, any Tech Support Product or Service;

B. Assisting or providing consulting services for others engaged in, or receiving any proceeds from, advertising, marketing, promoting, offering for sale, selling, or providing any Tech Support Product or Service; and

C. Owning, controlling, or serving as an officer, director, or manager of any business entity advertising, marketing, promoting, offering for sale, selling, providing, or assisting or providing consulting services for others engaged in advertising, marketing, promoting, offering for sale, selling, or providing, any Tech Support Product or Service.

II. PROHIBITION AGAINST DECEPTIVE TELEMARKETING

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Bhatia Defendants, their officers, agents, employees, and attorneys, and all other Persons in active concert or participation with any of them, who receive actual notice of this Order, whether acting directly or indirectly, in connection with the Telemarketing of any product or service, are permanently restrained and enjoined from:

- A. Making a false or misleading statement to induce any Person to pay for goods or services;
- B. Violating the Telemarketing Sales Rule, 16 C.F.R. Part 310, attached as **Attachment A**; and
- C. Violating the CSPA, R.C. § 1345.02 and § 1345.03, attached as **Attachment B**.

III. PROHIBITION AGAINST MISREPRESENTATIONS

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Bhatia Defendants, their officers, agents, employees, and attorneys, and all other Persons in active concert or participation with any of them, who receive actual notice of this Order, whether acting directly or indirectly, in connection with the advertising, marketing, promoting, offering for sale, selling, or providing of any goods or services, are permanently restrained and enjoined from misrepresenting, or assisting others in misrepresenting, expressly or by implication:

- A. That Bhatia Defendants are part of, affiliated with, certified or authorized by, or acting on behalf of any entity;
- B. That Bhatia Defendants have detected security or performance issues on consumers' computers, including, but not limited to, system errors, viruses, spyware, malware, or the presence of hackers;

C. Any material aspect of the performance, efficacy, nature, or central characteristics of any goods and services;

D. Any material aspect of the nature or terms of any refund, cancellation, exchange, or repurchase policies; or

E. Any other material fact.

IV. PROHIBITION AGAINST COLLECTING ON ACCOUNTS

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Bhatia Defendants, their officers, agents, employees, and attorneys, and all other persons in active concert or participation with any of them, who receive actual notice of this Order, whether acting directly or indirectly, are permanently restrained and enjoined from attempting to collect, collecting, or assigning any right to collect payment for any Tech Support Product or Service.

V. MONETARY JUDGMENT

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that:

A. Judgment in the amount of Twelve Million Three Hundred Ninety-Eight Thousand Two Hundred Thirty-Six Dollars and Fifty-One Cents (\$12,398,236.51) is entered in favor of Plaintiffs against Bhatia Defendants, jointly and severally, as equitable monetary relief.

B. Bhatia Defendants are ordered to pay to Plaintiffs Eighty Thousand Seven Hundred Seventy-One Dollars and Thirty-Nine Cents (\$80,771.39). Bhatia Defendants must make such payment as follows: (i) at least \$50,000.00 within 7 days of entry of this Order, an amount which, as Bhatia Defendants stipulate, their undersigned counsel holds in escrow for no purpose other than payment to Plaintiffs; (ii) at least \$15,385.70 within one month after the date of entry of this Order; and (iii) at least \$15,385.69, or the remaining unpaid portion of the \$80,771.39 payment amount, within two months after the date of entry of this Order. Such

payments must be made by electronic fund transfer in accordance with instructions previously provided by a representative of Plaintiffs. Upon such payments, the remainder of the judgment is suspended as to Bhatia Defendants, subject to the Subsections below.

C. Plaintiffs' agreement to this Order is expressly premised upon the promise by Bhatia Defendants to make payments timely as described in Subsection B above. If, upon motion by any Plaintiff, the Court finds that Bhatia Defendants have defaulted on any obligation to make a payment as required by this Order, then the judgment becomes immediately due as to Bhatia Defendants in the amount specified in Subsection A above, less any payment previously made pursuant to this Section, plus interest computed from the date of entry of this Order.

D. Plaintiffs' agreement to the suspension of part of the judgment is expressly premised upon the truthfulness, accuracy, and completeness of Bhatia Defendants' sworn financial statements and related documents (collectively, "financial representations") submitted to Plaintiffs, namely:

1. The Financial Statement of Bhatia Individual Defendant Romil Bhatia signed on July 12, 2017, including the attachments;
2. The Financial Statement of Bhatia Corporate Defendant Datadeck LLC signed by Bhatia Individual Defendant Romil Bhatia in July 2017, including the attachments;
3. The Financial Statement of Veda Canada Inc. dba IFix PC signed by Bhatia Individual Defendant Romil Bhatia on August 8, 2017, including the attachments; and
4. The Financial Statement of Travelohub Inc. signed by Bhatia Individual Defendant Romil Bhatia on August 9, 2017, including the attachments.

E. The suspension of the judgment will be lifted as to any Bhatia Defendant if, upon motion by any Plaintiff, the Court finds that Defendant failed to disclose any material asset,

materially misstated the value of any asset, or made any other material misstatement or omission in the financial representations identified above.

F. If the suspension of the judgment is lifted, the judgment becomes immediately due as to that Defendant in the amount specified in Subsection A above (which the parties stipulate only for purposes of this Section represents the consumer injury alleged in the Complaint), less any payment previously made pursuant to this Section, plus interest computed from the date of entry of this Order.

G. Bhatia Defendants relinquish dominion and all legal and equitable right, title, and interest in all assets transferred pursuant to this Order, and in all assets of Bhatia Corporate Defendant, and may not seek the return of any assets.

H. The facts alleged in the Complaint will be taken as true, without further proof, in any subsequent civil litigation by or on behalf of Plaintiffs, including in a proceeding to enforce their rights to any payment or monetary judgment pursuant to this Order, such as a nondischargeability complaint in any bankruptcy case.

I. The facts alleged in the Complaint establish all elements necessary to sustain an action by Plaintiffs pursuant to Section 523(a)(2)(A) of the Bankruptcy Code, 11 U.S.C. § 523(a)(2)(A), and this Order will have collateral estoppel effect for such purposes.

J. Bhatia Defendants acknowledge that their Taxpayer Identification Numbers (Social Security Numbers or Employer Identification Numbers), which Bhatia Defendants previously submitted to Plaintiffs, may be used for collecting and reporting on any delinquent amount arising out of this Order, in accordance with 31 U.S.C. §7701.

K. All money paid to Plaintiffs pursuant to this Order may be deposited into a fund administered by the FTC or its designee on behalf of Plaintiffs to be used for equitable relief,

including consumer redress and any attendant expenses for the administration of any redress fund. If a representative of the Plaintiffs decides that direct redress to consumers is wholly or partially impracticable or money remains after redress is completed, Plaintiffs may apply any remaining money for such other equitable relief (including consumer information remedies) as it determines to be reasonably related to the practices alleged in the Complaint. Any money not used for such equitable relief is to be deposited to an account or accounts pursuant to instructions provided by Plaintiff State of Ohio, Office of Attorney General. This money may be used for purposes that may include, but are not limited to, reimbursement of attorneys' fees and costs of investigation and litigation, placement in or application to any consumer protection law enforcement fund, including future consumer protection or privacy enforcement, consumer education, litigation, local consumer aid or revolving funds, defraying the costs of the inquiry leading to this Order, or for other uses permitted by state law, and all at the sole discretion of Plaintiff State of Ohio, Office of Attorney General. Any money not used for such equitable relief or such other purposes is to be deposited to the U.S. Treasury as disgorgement. Bhatia Defendants have no right to challenge any actions Plaintiffs or their representatives may take pursuant to this Subsection.

L. The asset freeze ordered in this case in the Preliminary Injunction Order entered on June 21, 2017 (Doc. 77) is modified as to Bhatia Defendants to permit the payments and transfers identified in this Section. Upon completion of those payments and transfers, the asset freeze is dissolved as to Bhatia Defendants.

M. The FTC may request any tax-related information, including amended tax returns and any other filings, that Bhatia Defendants have the authority to release. Within 14 days of receipt of a written request from a representative of the FTC, Bhatia Defendants must take all

necessary steps (such as filing a completed IRS Form 4506 or 8821) to cause the Internal Revenue Service or other tax authority to provide the information directly to the FTC.

VI. CUSTOMER INFORMATION

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Bhatia Defendants, their officers, agents, employees, and attorneys, and all other persons in active concert or participation with any of them, who receive actual notice of this Order, are permanently restrained and enjoined from directly or indirectly:

A. Failing to provide sufficient customer information to enable Plaintiffs to efficiently administer consumer redress. If a representative of Plaintiffs requests in writing any information related to redress, Bhatia Defendants must provide it, in the form reasonably prescribed by Plaintiffs, within 14 days;

B. Disclosing, using, or benefitting from customer information, including the name, address, telephone number, email address, social security number, other identifying information, or any data that enables access to a customer's account (including a credit card, bank account, or other financial account), that any Bhatia Defendant obtained prior to entry of this Order; and

C. Failing to destroy such customer information in all forms in their possession, custody, or control within 30 days after receipt of written direction to do so from a representative of the FTC.

Provided, however, that customer information need not be disposed of, and may be disclosed, to the extent requested by a government agency or required by law, regulation, or court order.

VII. COOPERATION

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Bhatia Defendants must fully cooperate with representatives of Plaintiffs in this case and in any investigation related to or associated with the transactions or the occurrences that are the subject of the Complaint. Bhatia Defendants must provide truthful and complete information, evidence, and testimony. Bhatia Individual Defendant must appear and Bhatia Corporate Defendant must cause its officers, employees, representatives, or agents to appear for interviews, discovery, hearings, trials, and any other proceedings that any Plaintiff's representative may reasonably request upon 5 days written notice, or other reasonable notice, at such places and times as Plaintiff's representative may designate, without the service of a subpoena. This Section does not preclude Romil Bhatia from invoking any Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination.

VIII. ORDER ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Bhatia Defendants obtain acknowledgments of receipt of this Order:

A. Each Bhatia Defendant, within 7 days of entry of this Order, must submit to the FTC an acknowledgment of receipt of this Order sworn under penalty of perjury.

B. For 15 years after entry of this Order, Bhatia Individual Defendant for any business that he, individually or collectively with any other Defendants, is the majority owner or controls directly or indirectly, and Bhatia Corporate Defendant, must deliver a copy of this Order to:

1. All principals, officers, directors, and LLC managers and members;
2. All employees, agents, and representatives who participate in conduct related to the subject matter of the Order; and

3. Any business entity resulting from any change in structure as set forth in the Section titled Compliance Reporting.

Delivery must occur within 7 days of entry of this Order for current personnel. For all others, delivery must occur before they assume their responsibilities.

C. From each individual or entity to which a Bhatia Defendant delivered a copy of this Order, that Bhatia Defendant must obtain, within 30 days, a signed and dated acknowledgment of receipt of this Order.

IX. COMPLIANCE REPORTING

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Bhatia Defendants make timely submissions to the Commission:

A. One year after entry of this Order, each Bhatia Defendant must submit a compliance report, sworn under penalty of perjury:

1. Each Bhatia Defendant must:

a. Identify the primary physical, postal, and email address and telephone number, as designated points of contact, which representatives of Plaintiffs may use to communicate with the Bhatia Defendant;

b. Identify all of that Bhatia Defendant's businesses by all of their names, telephone numbers, and physical, postal, email, and Internet addresses;

c. Describe the activities of each business, including the goods and services offered, the means of advertising, marketing, and sales, and the involvement of any other Defendant (which the Bhatia Individual Defendant must describe if he knows or should know due to his own involvement);

d. Describe in detail whether and how that Bhatia Defendant is in compliance with each Section of this Order; and

e. Provide a copy of each Order Acknowledgment obtained pursuant to this Order, unless previously submitted to the Commission.

2. Additionally, Bhatia Individual Defendant must:

a. Identify all telephone numbers and all physical, postal, email and Internet addresses, including all residences;

b. Identify all business activities, including any business for which he performs services whether as an employee or otherwise and any entity in which he has any ownership interest; and

c. Describe in detail his involvement in each such business, including title, role, responsibilities, participation, authority, control, and any ownership.

B. For 15 years after entry of this Order, each Bhatia Defendant must submit a compliance notice, sworn under penalty of perjury, within 14 days of any change in the following:

1. Each Bhatia Defendant must report any change in:

a. Any designated point of contact; or

b. The structure of Bhatia Corporate Defendant or any entity that Defendant has any ownership interest in or controls directly or indirectly that may affect compliance obligations arising under this Order, including: creation, merger, sale, or dissolution of the entity or any subsidiary, parent, or affiliate that engages in any acts or practices subject to this Order.

2. Additionally, Bhatia Individual Defendant must report any change in:

- a. Name, including aliases or fictitious name, or residence address; or
- b. Title or role in any business activity, including any business for which he performs services whether as an employee or otherwise and any entity in which he has any ownership interest, and identify the name, physical address, and any Internet address of the business or entity.

C. Each Bhatia Defendant must submit to Plaintiffs notice of the filing of any bankruptcy petition, insolvency proceeding, or similar proceeding by or against such Bhatia Defendant within 14 days of its filing.

D. Any submission to Plaintiffs required by this Order to be sworn under penalty of perjury must be true and accurate and comply with 28 U.S.C. § 1746, such as by concluding: “I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on: _____” and supplying the date, signatory’s full name, title (if applicable), and signature.

E. Unless otherwise directed by a representative of Plaintiffs in writing, all submissions to Plaintiffs pursuant to this Order must be emailed to DEbrief@ftc.gov or sent by overnight courier (not the U.S. Postal Service) to: Associate Director for Enforcement, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20580; and State of Ohio, Office of Attorney General, Consumer Protection Section, 615 West Superior Avenue, Floor 11, Cleveland, Ohio 44113. The subject line must begin: *FTC, et al. v. Repair All PC, LLC, et al.*, Matter Number X170032.

X. RECORDKEEPING

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Bhatia Defendants must create certain records for 15 years after entry of the Order, and retain each such record for 5 years. Specifically, Bhatia Corporate Defendant and Bhatia Individual Defendant for any business that such Bhatia Defendant, individually or collectively with any other Defendants, is a majority owner or controls directly or indirectly, must create and retain the following records:

- A. Accounting records showing the revenues from all goods or services sold;
- B. Personnel records showing, for each person providing services, whether as an employee or otherwise, that person's: name; addresses; telephone numbers; job title or position; dates of service; and (if applicable) the reason for termination;
- C. Records of all consumer complaints and refund requests, whether received directly or indirectly, such as through a third party, and any response;
- D. All records necessary to demonstrate full compliance with each provision of this Order, including all submissions to Plaintiffs; and
- E. A copy of each unique advertisement or other marketing material.

XI. COMPLIANCE MONITORING

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that, for the purpose of monitoring Bhatia Defendants' compliance with this Order, including the financial representations upon which part of the judgment was suspended and any failure to transfer any assets as required by this Order:

- A. Within 14 days of receipt of a written request from a representative of Plaintiffs, each Bhatia Defendant must: submit additional compliance reports or other requested information, which must be sworn under penalty of perjury; appear for depositions; and produce documents for inspection and copying. Plaintiffs are also authorized to obtain discovery, without

further leave of court, using any of the procedures prescribed by Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 29, 30 (including telephonic depositions), 31, 33, 34, 36, 45, and 69.

B. For matters concerning this Order, Plaintiffs are authorized to communicate directly with each Bhatia Defendant. Bhatia Defendants must permit representatives of Plaintiffs to interview any employee or other person affiliated with any Bhatia Defendant who has agreed to such an interview. The person interviewed may have counsel present.

C. Plaintiffs may use all other lawful means, including posing, through its representatives as consumers, suppliers, or other individuals or entities, to Bhatia Defendants or any individual or entity affiliated with Bhatia Defendants, without the necessity of identification or prior notice. Nothing in this Order limits the Commission's lawful use of compulsory process, pursuant to Sections 9 and 20 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 49, 57b-1.

D. Upon written request from a representative of Plaintiffs, any consumer reporting agency must furnish consumer reports concerning Bhatia Individual Defendant, pursuant to Section 604(1) of the Fair Credit Reporting Act, 15 U.S.C. §1681b(a)(1).

XII. RETENTION OF JURISDICTION

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that this Court retains jurisdiction of this matter for purposes of construction, modification, and enforcement of this Order.


SO ORDERED, this 26th day of January, 2018.

s/ Dan Aaron Polster

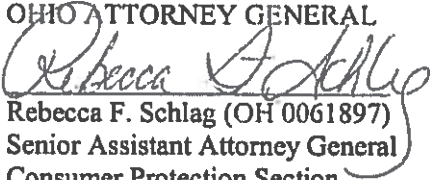
JUDGE DAN AARON POLSTER

SO STIPULATED AND AGREED:

FOR PLAINTIFFS:

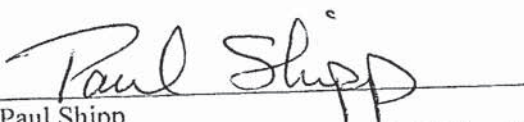

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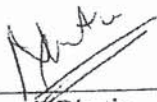
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STATE OF OHIO

FOR DEFENDANTS:



Paul Shipp

Attorney for Defendants Datadeck LLC and Romil Bhatia



Oct 27, 2017

Romil Bhatia

Individually and as owner of Datadeck LLC

ATTACHMENT A

TELEMARKETING SALES RULE 16 C.F.R. PART 310

Section Contents

- § 310.1 Scope of regulations in this part.
- § 310.2 Definitions.
- § 310.3 Deceptive telemarketing acts or practices.
- § 310.4 Abusive telemarketing acts or practices.
- § 310.5 Recordkeeping requirements.
- § 310.6 Exemptions.
- § 310.7 Actions by states and private persons.
- § 310.8 Fee for access to the National Do Not Call Registry.
- § 310.9 Severability.

Authority: 15 U.S.C. 6101–6108.

§ 310.1 Scope of regulations in this part.

This part implements the Telemarketing and Consumer Fraud and Abuse Prevention Act, 15 U.S.C. 6101-6108, as amended.

§ 310.2 Definitions.

- (a) *Acquirer* means a business organization, financial institution, or an agent of a business organization or financial institution that has authority from an organization that operates or licenses a credit card system to authorize merchants to accept, transmit, or process payment by credit card through the credit card system for money, goods or services, or anything else of value.
- (b) *Attorney General* means the chief legal officer of a state.
- (c) *Billing information* means any data that enables any person to access a customer's or donor's account, such as a credit card, checking, savings, share or similar account, utility bill, mortgage loan account, or debit card.
- (d) *Caller identification service* means a service that allows a telephone subscriber to have the telephone number, and, where available, name of the calling party transmitted contemporaneously with the telephone call, and displayed on a device in or connected to the subscriber's telephone.
- (e) *Cardholder* means a person to whom a credit card is issued or who is authorized to use a credit card on behalf of or in addition to the person to whom the credit card is issued.
- (f) *Cash-to-cash money transfer* means the electronic (as defined in section 106(2) of the Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act (15 U.S.C. 7006(2)) transfer of the value of cash received from one person to another person in a different location that is sent by a money transfer provider and received in the form of cash. The term includes a remittance transfer, as defined in section 919(g)(2) of the Electronic Fund Transfer Act ("EFTA"), 15 U.S.C. 1693a, that is a cash-to-cash transaction; however it does not include any transaction that is (1) an electronic fund transfer as defined in section 903 of the EFTA; (2) covered by Regulation E, 12 CFR part 1005.20, pertaining to gift cards; or (3) subject to the Truth in Lending Act, 15 U.S.C. 1601 et seq. For purposes of this definition, *money transfer provider* means any person or financial institution that provides cash-to-cash money transfers for a person in the normal course of its business, whether or not the person holds an account with such person or financial

- institution.
- (g) *Cash reload mechanism* makes it possible to convert cash into an electronic (as defined in section 106(2) of the Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act (15 U.S.C. 7006(2)) form that a person can use to add money to a general-use prepaid card, as defined in Regulation E, 12 CFR part 1005.2, or an online account with a payment intermediary. For purposes of this definition, a cash reload mechanism (1) is purchased by a person on a prepaid basis, (2) enables access to the funds via an authorization code or other security measure, and (3) is not itself a general-use prepaid card.
 - (h) *Charitable contribution* means any donation or gift of money or any other thing of value.
 - (i) *Commission* means the Federal Trade Commission.
 - (j) *Credit* means the right granted by a creditor to a debtor to defer payment of debt or to incur debt and defer its payment.
 - (k) *Credit card* means any card, plate, coupon book, or other credit device existing for the purpose of obtaining money, property, labor, or services on credit.
 - (l) *Credit card sales draft* means any record or evidence of a credit card transaction.
 - (m) *Credit card system* means any method or procedure used to process credit card transactions involving credit cards issued or licensed by the operator of that system.
 - (n) *Customer* means any person who is or may be required to pay for goods or services offered through telemarketing.
 - (o) *Debt relief service* means any program or service represented, directly or by implication, to renegotiate, settle, or in any way alter the terms of payment or other terms of the debt between a person and one or more unsecured creditors or debt collectors, including, but not limited to, a reduction in the balance, interest rate, or fees owed by a person to an unsecured creditor or debt collector.
 - (p) *Donor* means any person solicited to make a charitable contribution.
 - (q) *Established business relationship* means a relationship between a seller and a consumer based on:
 - (1) the consumer's purchase, rental, or lease of the seller's goods or services or a financial transaction between the consumer and seller, within the eighteen (18) months immediately preceding the date of a telemarketing call; or
 - (2) the consumer's inquiry or application regarding a product or service offered by the seller, within the three (3) months immediately preceding the date of a telemarketing call.
 - (r) *Free-to-pay conversion* means, in an offer or agreement to sell or provide any goods or services, a provision under which a customer receives a product or service for free for an initial period and will incur an obligation to pay for the product or service if he or she does not take affirmative action to cancel before the end of that period.
 - (s) *Investment opportunity* means anything, tangible or intangible, that is offered, offered for sale, sold, or traded based wholly or in part on representations, either express or implied, about past, present, or future income, profit, or appreciation.
 - (t) *Material* means likely to affect a person's choice of, or conduct regarding, goods or services or a charitable contribution.
 - (u) *Merchant* means a person who is authorized under a written contract with an acquirer to honor or accept credit cards, or to transmit or process for payment credit card payments, for the purchase of goods or services or a charitable contribution.
 - (v) *Merchant agreement* means a written contract between a merchant and an acquirer to

- honor or accept credit cards, or to transmit or process for payment credit card payments, for the purchase of goods or services or a charitable contribution.
- (w) *Negative option feature* means, in an offer or agreement to sell or provide any goods or services, a provision under which the customer's silence or failure to take an affirmative action to reject goods or services or to cancel the agreement is interpreted by the seller as acceptance of the offer.
 - (x) *Outbound telephone call* means a telephone call initiated by a telemarketer to induce the purchase of goods or services or to solicit a charitable contribution.
 - (y) *Person* means any individual, group, unincorporated association, limited or general partnership, corporation, or other business entity.
 - (z) *Preacquired account information* means any information that enables a seller or telemarketer to cause a charge to be placed against a customer's or donor's account without obtaining the account number directly from the customer or donor during the telemarketing transaction pursuant to which the account will be charged.
 - (aa) *Prize* means anything offered, or purportedly offered, and given, or purportedly given, to a person by chance. For purposes of this definition, chance exists if a person is guaranteed to receive an item and, at the time of the offer or purported offer, the telemarketer does not identify the specific item that the person will receive.
 - (bb) *Prize promotion* means:
 - (1) A sweepstakes or other game of chance; or
 - (2) An oral or written express or implied representation that a person has won, has been selected to receive, or may be eligible to receive a prize or purported prize.
 - (cc) *Remotely created payment order* means any payment instruction or order drawn on a person's account that is (a) created by the payee or the payee's agent and (b) deposited into or cleared through the check clearing system. The term includes, without limitation, a "remotely created check," as defined in Regulation CC, Availability of Funds and Collection of Checks, 12 CFR part 229.2(fff), but does not include a payment order cleared through an Automated clearinghouse or subject to the Truth in Lending Act, 15 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.*, and Regulation Z, 12 CFR part 1026, *et seq.*
 - (dd) *Seller* means any person who, in connection with a telemarketing transaction, provides, offers to provide, or arranges for others to provide goods or services to the customer in exchange for consideration.
 - (ee) *State* means any state of the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Northern Mariana Islands, and any territory or possession of the United States.
 - (ff) *Telemarketer* means any person who, in connection with telemarketing, initiates or receives telephone calls to or from a customer or donor.
 - (gg) *Telemarketing* means a plan, program, or campaign which is conducted to induce the purchase of goods or services or a charitable contribution, by use of one or more telephones and which involves more than one interstate telephone call. The term does not include the solicitation of sales through the mailing of a catalog which: contains a written description or illustration of the goods or services offered for sale; includes the business address of the seller; includes multiple pages of written material or illustrations; and has been issued not less frequently than once a year, when the person making the solicitation does not solicit customers by telephone but only receives calls initiated by customers in response to the catalog and during those calls takes orders only without further solicitation. For purposes of the previous sentence, the term "further solicitation" does

not include providing the customer with information about, or attempting to sell, any other item included in the same catalog which prompted the customer's call or in a substantially similar catalog.

- (hh) *Upselling* means soliciting the purchase of goods or services following an initial transaction during a single telephone call. The upsell is a separate telemarketing transaction, not a continuation of the initial transaction. An "external upsell" is a solicitation made by or on behalf of a seller different from the seller in the initial transaction, regardless of whether the initial transaction and the subsequent solicitation are made by the same telemarketer. An "internal upsell" is a solicitation made by or on behalf of the same seller as in the initial transaction, regardless of whether the initial transaction and subsequent solicitation are made by the same telemarketer.

§ 310.3 Deceptive telemarketing acts or practices.

- (a) *Prohibited deceptive telemarketing acts or practices.* It is a deceptive telemarketing act or practice and a violation of this Rule for any seller or telemarketer to engage in the following conduct:
- (1) Before a customer consents to pay¹ for goods or services offered, failing to disclose truthfully, in a clear and conspicuous manner, the following material information:
 - (i) The total costs to purchase, receive, or use, and the quantity of, any goods or services that are the subject of the sales offer;²
 - (ii) All material restrictions, limitations, or conditions to purchase, receive, or use the goods or services that are the subject of the sales offer;
 - (iii) If the seller has a policy of not making refunds, cancellations, exchanges, or repurchases, a statement informing the customer that this is the seller's policy; or, if the seller or telemarketer makes a representation about a refund, cancellation, exchange, or repurchase policy, a statement of all material terms and conditions of such policy;
 - (iv) In any prize promotion, the odds of being able to receive the prize, and, if the odds are not calculable in advance, the factors used in calculating the odds; that no purchase or payment is required to win a prize or to participate in a prize promotion and that any purchase or payment will not increase the person's chances of winning; and the no-purchase/no-payment method of participating in the prize promotion with either instructions on how to participate or an address or local or toll-free telephone number to which customers may write or call for information on how to participate;
 - (v) All material costs or conditions to receive or redeem a prize that is the

¹ When a seller or telemarketer uses, or directs a customer to use, a courier to transport payment, the seller or telemarketer must make the disclosures required by § 310.3(a)(1) before sending a courier to pick up payment or authorization for payment, or directing a customer to have a courier pick up payment or authorization for payment. In the case of debt relief services, the seller or telemarketer must make the disclosures required by § 310.3(a)(1) before the consumer enrolls in an offered program.

² For offers of consumer credit products subject to the Truth in Lending Act, 15 U.S.C. 1601 et seq., and Regulation Z, 12 CFR Part 1026, compliance with the disclosure requirements under the Truth in Lending Act and Regulation Z shall constitute compliance with § 310.3(a)(1)(i) of this Rule.

- subject of the prize promotion;
- (vi) In the sale of any goods or services represented to protect, insure, or otherwise limit a customer's liability in the event of unauthorized use of the customer's credit card, the limits on a cardholder's liability for unauthorized use of a credit card pursuant to 15 U.S.C. 1643;
- (vii) If the offer includes a negative option feature, all material terms and conditions of the negative option feature, including, but not limited to, the fact that the customer's account will be charged unless the customer takes an affirmative action to avoid the charge(s), the date(s) the charge(s) will be submitted for payment, and the specific steps the customer must take to avoid the charge(s); and
- (viii) In the sale of any debt relief service:
 - (A) the amount of time necessary to achieve the represented results, and to the extent that the service may include a settlement offer to any of the customer's creditors or debt collectors, the time by which the debt relief service provider will make a bona fide settlement offer to each of them;
 - (B) to the extent that the service may include a settlement offer to any of the customer's creditors or debt collectors, the amount of money or the percentage of each outstanding debt that the customer must accumulate before the debt relief service provider will make a bona fide settlement offer to each of them;
 - (C) to the extent that any aspect of the debt relief service relies upon or results in the customer's failure to make timely payments to creditors or debt collectors, that the use of the debt relief service will likely adversely affect the customer's creditworthiness, may result in the customer being subject to collections or sued by creditors or debt collectors, and may increase the amount of money the customer owes due to the accrual of fees and interest; and
 - (D) to the extent that the debt relief service requests or requires the customer to place funds in an account at an insured financial institution, that the customer owns the funds held in the account, the customer may withdraw from the debt relief service at any time without penalty, and, if the customer withdraws, the customer must receive all funds in the account, other than funds earned by the debt relief service in compliance with § 310.4(a)(5)(i)(A) through (C).
- (2) Misrepresenting, directly or by implication, in the sale of goods or services any of the following material information:
 - (i) The total costs to purchase, receive, or use, and the quantity of, any goods or services that are the subject of a sales offer;
 - (ii) Any material restriction, limitation, or condition to purchase, receive, or use goods or services that are the subject of a sales offer;
 - (iii) Any material aspect of the performance, efficacy, nature, or central characteristics of goods or services that are the subject of a sales offer;
 - (iv) Any material aspect of the nature or terms of the seller's refund,

- cancellation,
exchange, or repurchase policies;
- (v) Any material aspect of a prize promotion including, but not limited to, the odds of being able to receive a prize, the nature or value of a prize, or that a purchase or payment is required to win a prize or to participate in a prize promotion;
 - (vi) Any material aspect of an investment opportunity including, but not limited to, risk, liquidity, earnings potential, or profitability;
 - (vii) A seller's or telemarketer's affiliation with, or endorsement or sponsorship by, any person or government entity;
 - (viii) That any customer needs offered goods or services to provide protections a customer already has pursuant to 15 U.S.C. 1643;
 - (ix) Any material aspect of a negative option feature including, but not limited to, the fact that the customer's account will be charged unless the customer takes an affirmative action to avoid the charge(s), the date(s) the charge(s) will be submitted for payment, and the specific steps the customer must take to avoid the charge(s); or
 - (x) Any material aspect of any debt relief service, including, but not limited to, the amount of money or the percentage of the debt amount that a customer may save by using such service; the amount of time necessary to achieve the represented results; the amount of money or the percentage of each outstanding debt that the customer must accumulate before the provider of the debt relief service will initiate attempts with the customer's creditors or debt collectors or make a bona fide offer to negotiate, settle, or modify the terms of the customer's debt; the effect of the service on a customer's creditworthiness; the effect of the service on collection efforts of the customer's creditors or debt collectors; the percentage or number of customers who attain the represented results; and whether a debt relief service is offered or provided by a non-profit entity.
- (3) Causing billing information to be submitted for payment, or collecting or attempting to collect payment for goods or services or a charitable contribution, directly or indirectly, without the customer's or donor's express verifiable authorization, except when the method of payment used is a credit card subject to protections of the Truth in Lending Act and Regulation Z,³ or a debit card subject to the protections of the Electronic Fund Transfer Act and Regulation E.⁴ Such authorization shall be deemed verifiable if any of the following means is employed:
- (i) Express written authorization by the customer or donor, which includes the customer's or donor's signature;⁵
 - (ii) Express oral authorization which is audio-recorded and made available

³ Truth in Lending Act, 15 U.S.C. 1601 et seq., and Regulation Z, 12 CFR Part 1026.

⁴ Electronic Fund Transfer Act, 15 U.S.C. 1693 et seq., and Regulation E, 12 CFR Part 1005.

⁵ For purposes of this Rule, the term "signature" shall include an electronic or digital form of signature, to the extent that such form of signature is recognized as a valid signature under applicable federal law or state contract law.

upon request to the customer or donor, and the customer's or donor's bank or other billing entity, and which evidences clearly both the customer's or donor's authorization of payment for the goods or services or charitable contribution that are the subject of the telemarketing transaction and the customer's or donor's receipt of all of the following information:

- (A) An accurate description, clearly and conspicuously stated, of the goods or services or charitable contribution for which payment authorization is sought;
 - (B) The number of debits, charges, or payments (if more than one);
 - (C) The date(s) the debit(s), charge(s), or payment(s) will be submitted for payment;
 - (D) The amount(s) of the debit(s), charge(s), or payment(s);
 - (E) The customer's or donor's name;
 - (F) The customer's or donor's billing information, identified with sufficient specificity such that the customer or donor understands what account will be used to collect payment for the goods or services or charitable contribution that are the subject of the telemarketing transaction;
 - (G) A telephone number for customer or donor inquiry that is answered during normal business hours; and
 - (H) The date of the customer's or donor's oral authorization; or
- (iii) Written confirmation of the transaction, identified in a clear and conspicuous manner as such on the outside of the envelope, sent to the customer or donor via first class mail prior to the submission for payment of the customer's or donor's billing information, and that includes all of the information contained in §§ 310.3(a)(3)(ii)(A)-(G) and a clear and conspicuous statement of the procedures by which the customer or donor can obtain a refund from the seller or telemarketer or charitable organization in the event the confirmation is inaccurate; provided, however, that this means of authorization shall not be deemed verifiable in instances in which goods or services are offered in a transaction involving a free-to-pay conversion and preacquired account information.
- (4) Making a false or misleading statement to induce any person to pay for goods or services or to induce a charitable contribution.
- (b) *Assisting and facilitating.* It is a deceptive telemarketing act or practice and a violation of this Rule for a person to provide substantial assistance or support to any seller or telemarketer when that person knows or consciously avoids knowing that the seller or telemarketer is engaged in any act or practice that violates §§ 310.3(a), (c) or (d), or § 310.4 of this Rule.
- (c) *Credit card laundering.* Except as expressly permitted by the applicable credit card system, it is a deceptive telemarketing act or practice and a violation of this Rule for:
- (1) A merchant to present to or deposit into, or cause another to present to or deposit into, the credit card system for payment, a credit card sales draft generated by a telemarketing transaction that is not the result of a telemarketing credit card transaction between the cardholder and the merchant;
 - (2) Any person to employ, solicit, or otherwise cause a merchant, or an employee,

representative, or agent of the merchant, to present to or deposit into the credit card system for payment, a credit card sales draft generated by a telemarketing transaction that is not the result of a telemarketing credit card transaction between the cardholder and the merchant; or

- (3) Any person to obtain access to the credit card system through the use of a business relationship or an affiliation with a merchant, when such access is not authorized by the merchant agreement or the applicable credit card system.
- (d) *Prohibited deceptive acts or practices in the solicitation of charitable contributions.* It is a fraudulent charitable solicitation, a deceptive telemarketing act or practice, and a violation of this Rule for any telemarketer soliciting charitable contributions to misrepresent, directly or by implication, any of the following material information:
 - (1) The nature, purpose, or mission of any entity on behalf of which a charitable contribution is being requested;
 - (2) That any charitable contribution is tax deductible in whole or in part;
 - (3) The purpose for which any charitable contribution will be used;
 - (4) The percentage or amount of any charitable contribution that will go to a charitable organization or to any particular charitable program;
 - (5) Any material aspect of a prize promotion including, but not limited to: the odds of being able to receive a prize; the nature or value of a prize; or that a charitable contribution is required to win a prize or to participate in a prize promotion; or
 - (6) A charitable organization's or telemarketer's affiliation with, or endorsement or sponsorship by, any person or government entity.

§ 310.4 Abusive telemarketing acts or practices.

- (a) *Abusive conduct generally.* It is an abusive telemarketing act or practice and a violation of this Rule for any seller or telemarketer to engage in the following conduct:
 - (1) Threats, intimidation, or the use of profane or obscene language;
 - (2) Requesting or receiving payment of any fee or consideration for goods or services represented to remove derogatory information from, or improve, a person's credit history, credit record, or credit rating until:
 - (i) The time frame in which the seller has represented all of the goods or services will be provided to that person has expired; and
 - (ii) The seller has provided the person with documentation in the form of a consumer report from a consumer reporting agency demonstrating that the promised results have been achieved, such report having been issued more than six months after the results were achieved. Nothing in this Rule should be construed to affect the requirement in the Fair Credit Reporting Act, 15 U.S.C. 1681, that a consumer report may only be obtained for a specified permissible purpose;
 - (3) Requesting or receiving payment of any fee or consideration from a person for goods or services represented to recover or otherwise assist in the return of money or any other item of value paid for by, or promised to, that person in a previous transaction, until seven (7) business days after such money or other item is delivered to that person. This provision shall not apply to goods or services provided to a person by a licensed attorney;
 - (4) Requesting or receiving payment of any fee or consideration in advance of

obtaining a loan or other extension of credit when the seller or telemarketer has guaranteed or represented a high likelihood of success in obtaining or arranging a loan or other extension of credit for a person;

- (5)
 - (i) Requesting or receiving payment of any fee or consideration for any debt relief service until and unless:
 - (A) The seller or telemarketer has renegotiated, settled, reduced, or otherwise altered the terms of at least one debt pursuant to a settlement agreement, debt management plan, or other such valid contractual agreement executed by the customer;
 - (B) The customer has made at least one payment pursuant to that settlement agreement, debt management plan, or other valid contractual agreement between the customer and the creditor or debt collector; and
 - (C) To the extent that debts enrolled in a service are renegotiated, settled, reduced, or otherwise altered individually, the fee or consideration either:
 - (1) Bears the same proportional relationship to the total fee for renegotiating, settling, reducing, or altering the terms of the entire debt balance as the individual debt amount bears to the entire debt amount. The individual debt amount and the entire debt amount are those owed at the time the debt was enrolled in the service; or
 - (2) Is a percentage of the amount saved as a result of the renegotiation, settlement, reduction, or alteration. The percentage charged cannot change from one individual debt to another. The amount saved is the difference between the amount owed at the time the debt was enrolled in the service and the amount actually paid to satisfy the debt.
 - (ii) Nothing in § 310.4(a)(5)(i) prohibits requesting or requiring the customer to place funds in an account to be used for the debt relief provider's fees and for payments to creditors or debt collectors in connection with the renegotiation, settlement, reduction, or other alteration of the terms of payment or other terms of a debt, provided that:
 - (A) The funds are held in an account at an insured financial institution;
 - (B) The customer owns the funds held in the account and is paid accrued interest on the account, if any;
 - (C) The entity administering the account is not owned or controlled by, or in any way affiliated with, the debt relief service;
 - (D) The entity administering the account does not give or accept any money or other compensation in exchange for referrals of business involving the debt relief service; and
 - (E) The customer may withdraw from the debt relief service at any time without penalty, and must receive all funds in the account, other than funds earned by the debt relief service in compliance with § 310.4(a)(5)(i)(A) through (C), within seven (7) business days of the customer's request.

- (6) Disclosing or receiving, for consideration, unencrypted consumer account numbers for use in telemarketing; provided, however, that this paragraph shall not apply to the disclosure or receipt of a customer's or donor's billing information to process a payment for goods or services or a charitable contribution pursuant to a transaction;
- (7) Causing billing information to be submitted for payment, directly or indirectly, without the express informed consent of the customer or donor. In any telemarketing transaction, the seller or telemarketer must obtain the express informed consent of the customer or donor to be charged for the goods or services or charitable contribution and to be charged using the identified account. In any telemarketing transaction involving preacquired account information, the requirements in paragraphs (a)(7)(i) through (ii) of this section must be met to evidence express informed consent.
 - (i) In any telemarketing transaction involving preacquired account information and a free-to-pay conversion feature, the seller or telemarketer must:
 - (A) Obtain from the customer, at a minimum, the last four (4) digits of the account number to be charged;
 - (B) Obtain from the customer his or her express agreement to be charged for the goods or services and to be charged using the account number pursuant to paragraph (a)(7)(i)(A) of this section; and,
 - (C) Make and maintain an audio recording of the entire telemarketing transaction.
 - (ii) In any other telemarketing transaction involving preacquired account information not described in paragraph (a)(7)(i) of this section, the seller or telemarketer must:
 - (A) At a minimum, identify the account to be charged with sufficient specificity for the customer or donor to understand what account will be charged; and
 - (B) Obtain from the customer or donor his or her express agreement to be charged for the goods or services and to be charged using the account number identified pursuant to paragraph (a)(7)(ii)(A) of this section; or
- (8) Failing to transmit or cause to be transmitted the telephone number, and, when made available by the telemarketer's carrier, the name of the telemarketer, to any caller identification service in use by a recipient of a telemarketing call; provided that it shall not be a violation to substitute (for the name and phone number used in, or billed for, making the call) the name of the seller or charitable organization on behalf of which a telemarketing call is placed, and the seller's or charitable organization's customer or donor service telephone number, which is answered during regular business hours;
- (9) Creating or causing to be created, directly or indirectly, a remotely created payment order as payment for goods or services offered or sold through telemarketing or as a charitable contribution solicited or sought through telemarketing; or

- (10) Accepting from a customer or donor, directly or indirectly, a cash-to-cash money transfer or cash reload mechanism as payment for goods or services offered or sold through telemarketing or as a charitable contribution solicited or sought through telemarketing.
- (b) *Pattern of calls.*
- (1) It is an abusive telemarketing act or practice and a violation of this Rule for a telemarketer to engage in, or for a seller to cause a telemarketer to engage in, the following conduct:
 - (i) Causing any telephone to ring, or engaging any person in telephone conversation, repeatedly or continuously with intent to annoy, abuse, or harass any person at the called number;
 - (ii) Denying or interfering in any way, directly or indirectly, with a person's right to be placed on any registry of names and/or telephone numbers of persons who do not wish to receive outbound telephone calls established to comply with § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(A), including, but not limited to, harassing any person who makes such a request; hanging up on that person; failing to honor the request; requiring the person to listen to a sales pitch before accepting the request; assessing a charge or fee for honoring the request; requiring a person to call a different number to submit the request; and requiring the person to identify the seller making the call or on whose behalf the call is made;
 - (iii) Initiating any outbound telephone call to a person when:
 - (A) That person previously has stated that he or she does not wish to receive an outbound telephone call made by or on behalf of the seller whose goods or services are being offered or made on behalf of the charitable organization for which a charitable contribution is being solicited; or
 - (B) That person's telephone number is on the "do-not-call" registry, maintained by the Commission, of persons who do not wish to receive outbound telephone calls to induce the purchase of goods or services unless the seller or telemarketer
 - (i) Can demonstrate that the seller has obtained the express agreement, in writing, of such person to place calls to that person. Such written agreement shall clearly evidence such person's authorization that calls made by or on behalf of a specific party may be placed to that person, and shall include the telephone number to which the calls may be placed and the signature⁶ of that person; or
 - (ii) Can demonstrate that the seller has an established business relationship with such person, and that

⁶ For purposes of this Rule, the term "signature" shall include an electronic or digital form of signature, to the extent that such form of signature is recognized as a valid signature under applicable federal law or state contract law.

person has not stated that he or she does not wish to receive outbound telephone calls under paragraph (b)(1)(iii)(A) of this section; or

- (iv) Abandoning any outbound telephone call. An outbound telephone call is “abandoned” under this section if a person answers it and the telemarketer does not connect the call to a sales representative within two (2) seconds of the person’s completed greeting.
- (v) Initiating any outbound telephone call that delivers a prerecorded message, other than a prerecorded message permitted for compliance with the call abandonment safe harbor in § 310.4(b)(4)(iii), unless:
 - (A) In any such call to induce the purchase of any good or service, the seller has obtained from the recipient of the call an express agreement, in writing, that:
 - (i) The seller obtained only after a clear and conspicuous disclosure that the purpose of the agreement is to authorize the seller to place prerecorded calls to such person;
 - (ii) The seller obtained without requiring, directly or indirectly, that the agreement be executed as a condition of purchasing any good or service;
 - (iii) Evidences the willingness of the recipient of the call to receive calls that deliver prerecorded messages by or on behalf of a specific seller; and
 - (iv) Includes such person’s telephone number and signature;⁷ and
 - (B) In any such call to induce the purchase of any good or service, or to induce a charitable contribution from a member of, or previous donor to, a non-profit charitable organization on whose behalf the call is made, the seller or telemarketer:
 - (i) Allows the telephone to ring for at least fifteen (15) seconds or four (4) rings before disconnecting an unanswered call; and
 - (ii) Within two (2) seconds after the completed greeting of the person called, plays a prerecorded message that promptly provides the disclosures required by § 310.4(d) or (e), followed immediately by a disclosure of one or both of the following:
 - (A) In the case of a call that could be answered in person by a consumer, that the person called can use an automated interactive voice and/or keypress-activated opt-out mechanism to assert a Do Not Call request pursuant to § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(A) at any time during the

⁷ For purposes of this Rule, the term “signature” shall include an electronic or digital form of signature, to the extent that such form of signature is recognized as a valid signature under applicable federal law or state contract law.

- message. The mechanism must:
- (1) Automatically add the number called to the seller's entity-specific Do Not Call list;
 - (2) Once invoked, immediately disconnect the call; and
 - (3) Be available for use at any time during the message; and
- (B) In the case of a call that could be answered by an answering machine or voicemail service, that the person called can use a toll-free telephone number to assert a Do Not Call request pursuant to § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(A). The number provided must connect directly to an automated interactive voice or keypress-activated opt-out mechanism that:
- (1) Automatically adds the number called to the seller's entity-specific Do Not Call list;
 - (2) Immediately thereafter disconnects the call; and
 - (3) Is accessible at any time throughout the duration of the telemarketing campaign; and
- (iii) Complies with all other requirements of this part and other applicable federal and state laws.
- (C) Any call that complies with all applicable requirements of this paragraph (v) shall not be deemed to violate § 310.4(b)(1)(iv) of this part.
- (D) This paragraph (v) shall not apply to any outbound telephone call that delivers a prerecorded healthcare message made by, or on behalf of, a covered entity or its business associate, as those terms are defined in the HIPAA Privacy Rule, 45 CFR 160.103.
- (2) It is an abusive telemarketing act or practice and a violation of this Rule for any person to sell, rent, lease, purchase, or use any list established to comply with § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(A), or maintained by the Commission pursuant to § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B), for any purpose except compliance with the provisions of this Rule or otherwise to prevent telephone calls to telephone numbers on such lists.
- (3) A seller or telemarketer will not be liable for violating § 310.4(b)(1)(ii) and (iii) if it can demonstrate that, as part of the seller's or telemarketer's routine business practice:
- (i) It has established and implemented written procedures to comply with § 310.4(b)(1)(ii) and (iii);
 - (ii) It has trained its personnel, and any entity assisting in its compliance, in the procedures established pursuant to § 310.4(b)(3)(i);
 - (iii) The seller, or a telemarketer or another person acting on behalf of the seller or charitable organization, has maintained and recorded a list of telephone numbers the seller or charitable organization may not contact, in compliance with § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(A);

- (iv) The seller or a telemarketer uses a process to prevent telemarketing to any telephone number on any list established pursuant to § 310.4(b)(3)(iii) or 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B), employing a version of the “do-not-call” registry obtained from the Commission no more than thirty-one (31) days prior to the date any call is made, and maintains records documenting this process;
 - (v) The seller or a telemarketer or another person acting on behalf of the seller or charitable organization, monitors and enforces compliance with the procedures established pursuant to § 310.4(b)(3)(i); and
 - (vi) Any subsequent call otherwise violating § 310.4(b)(1)(ii) or (iii) is the result of error and not of failure to obtain any information necessary to comply with a request pursuant to § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(A) not to receive further calls by or on behalf of a seller or charitable organization.
- (4) A seller or telemarketer will not be liable for violating § 310.4(b)(1)(iv) if:
- (i) The seller or telemarketer employs technology that ensures abandonment of no more than three (3) percent of all calls answered by a person, measured over the duration of a single calling campaign, if less than 30 days, or separately over each successive 30-day period or portion thereof that the campaign continues.
 - (ii) The seller or telemarketer, for each telemarketing call placed, allows the telephone to ring for at least fifteen (15) seconds or four (4) rings before disconnecting an unanswered call;
 - (iii) Whenever a sales representative is not available to speak with the person answering the call within two (2) seconds after the person’s completed greeting, the seller or telemarketer promptly plays a recorded message that states the name and telephone number of the seller on whose behalf the call was placed;⁸ and
 - (iv) The seller or telemarketer, in accordance with § 310.5(b)-(d), retains records establishing compliance with § 310.4(b)(4)(i)-(iii).
- (c) *Calling time restrictions.* Without the prior consent of a person, it is an abusive telemarketing act or practice and a violation of this Rule for a telemarketer to engage in outbound telephone calls to a person’s residence at any time other than between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. local time at the called person’s location.
- (d) *Required oral disclosures in the sale of goods or services.* It is an abusive telemarketing act or practice and a violation of this Rule for a telemarketer in an outbound telephone call or internal or external upsell to induce the purchase of goods or services to fail to disclose truthfully, promptly, and in a clear and conspicuous manner to the person receiving the call, the following information:
- (1) The identity of the seller;
 - (2) That the purpose of the call is to sell goods or services;
 - (3) The nature of the goods or services; and
 - (4) That no purchase or payment is necessary to be able to win a prize or participate in a prize promotion if a prize promotion is offered and that any purchase or ~~payment will not increase the person’s chances of winning.~~ This disclosure must

⁸ This provision does not affect any seller’s or telemarketer’s obligation to comply with relevant state and federal laws, including but not limited to the TCPA, 47 U.S.C. 227, and 47 CFR part 64.1200.

be made before or in conjunction with the description of the prize to the person called. If requested by that person, the telemarketer must disclose the no-purchase/no-payment entry method for the prize promotion; provided, however, that, in any internal upsell for the sale of goods or services, the seller or telemarketer must provide the disclosures listed in this section only to the extent that the information in the upsell differs from the disclosures provided in the initial telemarketing transaction.

- (e) *Required oral disclosures in charitable solicitations.* It is an abusive telemarketing act or practice and a violation of this Rule for a telemarketer, in an outbound telephone call to induce a charitable contribution, to fail to disclose truthfully, promptly, and in a clear and conspicuous manner to the person receiving the call, the following information:
- (1) The identity of the charitable organization on behalf of which the request is being made; and
 - (2) That the purpose of the call is to solicit a charitable contribution.

§ 310.5 Recordkeeping requirements.

- (a) Any seller or telemarketer shall keep, for a period of 24 months from the date the record is produced, the following records relating to its telemarketing activities:
- (1) All substantially different advertising, brochures, telemarketing scripts, and promotional materials;
 - (2) The name and last known address of each prize recipient and the prize awarded for prizes that are represented, directly or by implication, to have a value of \$25.00 or more;
 - (3) The name and last known address of each customer, the goods or services purchased, the date such goods or services were shipped or provided, and the amount paid by the customer for the goods or services;⁹
 - (4) The name, any fictitious name used, the last known home address and telephone number, and the job title(s) for all current and former employees directly involved in telephone sales or solicitations; provided, however, that if the seller or telemarketer permits fictitious names to be used by employees, each fictitious name must be traceable to only one specific employee; and
 - (5) All verifiable authorizations or records of express informed consent or express agreement required to be provided or received under this Rule.
- (b) A seller or telemarketer may keep the records required by § 310.5(a) in any form, and in the same manner, format, or place as they keep such records in the ordinary course of business. Failure to keep all records required by § 310.5(a) shall be a violation of this Rule.
- (c) The seller and the telemarketer calling on behalf of the seller may, by written agreement, allocate responsibility between themselves for the recordkeeping required by this Section. When a seller and telemarketer have entered into such an agreement, the terms of that agreement shall govern, and the seller or telemarketer, as the case may be, need not keep ~~records that duplicate those of the other.~~ If the agreement is unclear as to who must

⁹ For offers of consumer credit products subject to the Truth in Lending Act, 15 U.S.C. 1601 et seq., and Regulation Z, 12 CFR Part 1026, compliance with the recordkeeping requirements under the Truth in Lending Act, and Regulation Z, shall constitute compliance with § 310.5(a)(3) of this Rule.

maintain any required record(s), or if no such agreement exists, the seller shall be responsible for complying with §§ 310.5(a)(1)-(3) and (5); the telemarketer shall be responsible for complying with § 310.5(a)(4).

- (d) In the event of any dissolution or termination of the seller's or telemarketer's business, the principal of that seller or telemarketer shall maintain all records as required under this section. In the event of any sale, assignment, or other change in ownership of the seller's or telemarketer's business, the successor business shall maintain all records required under this section.

§ 310.6 Exemptions.

- (a) Solicitations to induce charitable contributions via outbound telephone calls are not covered by § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B) of this Rule.
- (b) The following acts or practices are exempt from this Rule:
- (1) The sale of pay-per-call services subject to the Commission's Rule entitled "Trade Regulation Rule Pursuant to the Telephone Disclosure and Dispute Resolution Act of 1992," 16 CFR Part 308, *provided*, however, that this exemption does not apply to the requirements of §§ 310.4(a)(1), (a)(7), (b), and (c);
 - (2) The sale of franchises subject to the Commission's Rule entitled "Disclosure Requirements and Prohibitions Concerning Franchising," ("Franchise Rule") 16 CFR Part 436, and the sale of business opportunities subject to the Commission's Rule entitled "Disclosure Requirements and Prohibitions Concerning Business Opportunities," ("Business Opportunity Rule") 16 CFR Part 437, *provided*, however, that this exemption does not apply to the requirements of §§ 310.4(a)(1), (a)(7), (b), and (c);
 - (3) Telephone calls in which the sale of goods or services or charitable solicitation is not completed, and payment or authorization of payment is not required, until after a face-to-face sales or donation presentation by the seller or charitable organization, *provided*, however, that this exemption does not apply to the requirements of §§ 310.4(a)(1), (a)(7), (b), and (c);
 - (4) Telephone calls initiated by a customer or donor that are not the result of any solicitation by a seller, charitable organization, or telemarketer, *provided*, however, that this exemption does not apply to any instances of upselling included in such telephone calls;
 - (5) Telephone calls initiated by a customer or donor in response to an advertisement through any medium, other than direct mail solicitation, *provided*, however, that this exemption does not apply to:
 - (i) Calls initiated by a customer or donor in response to an advertisement relating to investment opportunities, debt relief services, business opportunities other than business arrangements covered by the Franchise Rule or Business Opportunity Rule, or advertisements involving offers for goods or services described in §§ 310.3(a)(1)(vi) or 310.4(a)(2)-(4);
 - (ii) Calls to sellers or telemarketers that do not comply with the prohibitions in §§ 310.4(a)(9) or (10); or
 - (iii) Any instances of upselling included in such telephone calls;
 - (6) Telephone calls initiated by a customer or donor in response to a direct mail

solicitation, including solicitations via the U.S. Postal Service, facsimile transmission, electronic mail, and other similar methods of delivery in which a solicitation is directed to specific address(es) or person(s), that clearly, conspicuously, and truthfully discloses all material information listed in § 310.3(a)(1) of this Rule, for any goods or services offered in the direct mail solicitation, and that contains no material misrepresentation regarding any item contained in § 310.3(d) of this Rule for any requested charitable contribution; *provided*, however, that this exemption does not apply to:

- (i) Calls initiated by a customer in response to a direct mail solicitation relating to prize promotions, investment opportunities, debt relief services, business opportunities other than business arrangements covered by the Franchise Rule or Business Opportunity Rule, or goods or services described in §§ 310.3(a)(1)(vi) or 310.4(a)(2)-(4);
 - (ii) Calls to sellers or telemarketers that do not comply with the prohibitions in §§ 310.4(a)(9) or (10); or
 - (iii) Any instances of upselling included in such telephone calls; and
- (7) Telephone calls between a telemarketer and any business to induce the purchase of goods or services or a charitable contribution by the business, except calls to induce the retail sale of nondurable office or cleaning supplies; *provided*, however, that § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B) and § 310.5 of this Rule shall not apply to sellers or telemarketers of nondurable office or cleaning supplies.

§ 310.7 Actions by states and private persons.

- (a) Any attorney general or other officer of a state authorized by the state to bring an action under the Telemarketing and Consumer Fraud and Abuse Prevention Act, and any private person who brings an action under that Act, shall serve written notice of its action on the Commission, if feasible, prior to its initiating an action under this Rule. The notice shall be sent to the Office of the Director, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, Washington, D.C. 20580, and shall include a copy of the state's or private person's complaint and any other pleadings to be filed with the court. If prior notice is not feasible, the state or private person shall serve the Commission with the required notice immediately upon instituting its action.
- (b) Nothing contained in this Section shall prohibit any attorney general or other authorized state official from proceeding in state court on the basis of an alleged violation of any civil or criminal statute of such state.

§ 310.8 Fee for access to the National Do Not Call Registry.

- (a) It is a violation of this Rule for any seller to initiate, or cause any telemarketer to initiate, an outbound telephone call to any person whose telephone number is within a given area code unless such seller, either directly or through another person, first has paid the annual fee, required by § 310.8(c), for access to telephone numbers within that area code that are included in the National Do Not Call Registry maintained by the Commission under § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B); *provided*, however, that such payment is not necessary if the seller initiates, or causes a telemarketer to initiate, calls solely to persons pursuant to §§ 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B)(i) or (ii), and the seller does not access the National Do Not Call Registry for any other purpose.

- (b) It is a violation of this Rule for any telemarketer, on behalf of any seller, to initiate an outbound telephone call to any person whose telephone number is within a given area code unless that seller, either directly or through another person, first has paid the annual fee, required by § 310.8(c), for access to the telephone numbers within that area code that are included in the National Do Not Call Registry; provided, however, that such payment is not necessary if the seller initiates, or causes a telemarketer to initiate, calls solely to persons pursuant to §§ 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B)(i) or (ii), and the seller does not access the National Do Not Call Registry for any other purpose.
- (c) The annual fee, which must be paid by any person prior to obtaining access to the National Do Not Call Registry, is \$54 for each area code of data accessed, up to a maximum of \$14,850; provided, however, that there shall be no charge to any person for accessing the first five area codes of data, and provided further, that there shall be no charge to any person engaging in or causing others to engage in outbound telephone calls to consumers and who is accessing area codes of data in the National Do Not Call Registry if the person is permitted to access, but is not required to access, the National Do Not Call Registry under this Rule, 47 CFR 64.1200, or any other Federal regulation or law. No person may participate in any arrangement to share the cost of accessing the National Do Not Call Registry, including any arrangement with any telemarketer or service provider to divide the costs to access the registry among various clients of that telemarketer or service provider.
- (d) Each person who pays, either directly or through another person, the annual fee set forth in § 310.8(c), each person excepted under § 310.8(c) from paying the annual fee, and each person excepted from paying an annual fee under § 310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B), will be provided a unique account number that will allow that person to access the registry data for the selected area codes at any time for the twelve month period beginning on the first day of the month in which the person paid the fee (“the annual period”). To obtain access to additional area codes of data during the first six months of the annual period, each person required to pay the fee under § 310.8(c) must first pay \$54 for each additional area code of data not initially selected. To obtain access to additional area codes of data during the second six months of the annual period, each person required to pay the fee under § 310.8(c) must first pay \$27 for each additional area code of data not initially selected. The payment of the additional fee will permit the person to access the additional area codes of data for the remainder of the annual period.
- (e) Access to the National Do Not Call Registry is limited to telemarketers, sellers, others engaged in or causing others to engage in telephone calls to consumers, service providers acting on behalf of such persons, and any government agency that has law enforcement authority. Prior to accessing the National Do Not Call Registry, a person must provide the identifying information required by the operator of the registry to collect the fee, and must certify, under penalty of law, that the person is accessing the registry solely to comply with the provisions of this Rule or to otherwise prevent telephone calls to telephone numbers on the registry. If the person is accessing the registry on behalf of sellers, that person also must identify each of the sellers on whose behalf it is accessing the registry, must provide each seller’s unique account number for access to the national registry, and must certify, under penalty of law, that the sellers will be using the information gathered from the registry solely to comply with the provisions of this Rule or otherwise to prevent telephone calls to telephone numbers on the registry.

§ 310.9 Severability.

The provisions of this Rule are separate and severable from one another. If any provision is stayed or determined to be invalid, it is the Commission's intention that the remaining provisions shall continue in effect.

ATTACHMENT B

1345.02 Unfair or deceptive acts or practices.

(A) No supplier shall commit an unfair or deceptive act or practice in connection with a consumer transaction. Such an unfair or deceptive act or practice by a supplier violates this section whether it occurs before, during, or after the transaction.

(B) Without limiting the scope of division (A) of this section, the act or practice of a supplier in representing any of the following is deceptive:

(1) That the subject of a consumer transaction has sponsorship, approval, performance characteristics, accessories, uses, or benefits that it does not have;

(2) That the subject of a consumer transaction is of a particular standard, quality, grade, style, prescription, or model, if it is not;

(3) That the subject of a consumer transaction is new, or unused, if it is not;

(4) That the subject of a consumer transaction is available to the consumer for a reason that does not exist;

(5) That the subject of a consumer transaction has been supplied in accordance with a previous representation, if it has not, except that the act of a supplier in furnishing similar merchandise of equal or greater value as a good faith substitute does not violate this section;

(6) That the subject of a consumer transaction will be supplied in greater quantity than the supplier intends;

(7) That replacement or repair is needed, if it is not;

(8) That a specific price advantage exists, if it does not;

(9) That the supplier has a sponsorship, approval, or affiliation that the supplier does not have;

(10) That a consumer transaction involves or does not involve a warranty, a disclaimer of warranties or other rights, remedies, or obligations if the representation is false.

(C) In construing division (A) of this section, the court shall give due consideration and great weight to federal trade commission orders, trade regulation rules and guides, and the federal courts' interpretations of subsection 45 (a)(1) of the "Federal Trade Commission Act," 38 Stat. 717 (1914), 15 U.S.C.A. 41, as amended.

(D) No supplier shall offer to a consumer or represent that a consumer will receive a rebate, discount, or other benefit as an inducement for entering into a consumer transaction in return for giving the supplier the names of prospective consumers, or otherwise helping the supplier to enter into other consumer transactions, if earning the benefit is contingent upon an event occurring after the consumer enters into the transaction.

(E)

(1) No supplier, in connection with a consumer transaction involving natural gas service or public telecommunications service to a consumer in this state, shall request or submit, or cause to be requested or submitted, a change in the consumer's provider of natural gas service or public telecommunications service, without first obtaining, or causing to be obtained, the verified consent of the consumer. For the purpose of this division and with respect to public telecommunications service only, the procedures necessary for verifying the consent of a consumer shall be those prescribed by rule by the public utilities commission for public telecommunications service under division (D) of section 4905.72 of the Revised Code. Also, for the purpose of this division, the act, omission, or failure of any officer, agent, or other individual, acting for or employed by another person, while acting within the scope of that authority or employment, is the act or failure of that other person.

(2) Consistent with the exclusion, under 47 C.F.R. 64.1100(a)(3), of commercial mobile radio service providers from the verification requirements adopted in 47 C.F.R. 64.1100 , 64.1150, 64.1160, 64.1170, 64.1180, and

64.1190 by the federal communications commission, division (E)(1) of this section does not apply to a provider of commercial mobile radio service insofar as such provider is engaged in the provision of commercial mobile radio service. However, when that exclusion no longer is in effect, division (E)(1) of this section shall apply to such a provider.

(3) The attorney general may initiate criminal proceedings for a prosecution under division (C) of section 1345.99 of the Revised Code by presenting evidence of criminal violations to the prosecuting attorney of any county in which the offense may be prosecuted. If the prosecuting attorney does not prosecute the violations, or at the request of the prosecuting attorney, the attorney general may proceed in the prosecution with all the rights, privileges, and powers conferred by law on prosecuting attorneys, including the power to appear before grand juries and to interrogate witnesses before grand juries.

(F) Concerning a consumer transaction in connection with a residential mortgage, and without limiting the scope of division (A) or (B) of this section, the act of a supplier in doing either of the following is deceptive:

- (1) Knowingly failing to provide disclosures required under state and federal law;
- (2) Knowingly providing a disclosure that includes a material misrepresentation.

(G) Without limiting the scope of division (A) of this section, the failure of a supplier to obtain or maintain any registration, license, bond, or insurance required by state law or local ordinance for the supplier to engage in the supplier's trade or profession is an unfair or deceptive act or practice.

Cite as R.C. § 1345.02

Amended by 131st General Assembly File No. TBD, SB 227, §1, eff. 4/6/2017.

Effective Date: 05-17-2000; 01-01-2007 .

1345.03 Unconscionable consumer sales acts or practices.

(A) No supplier shall commit an unconscionable act or practice in connection with a consumer transaction. Such an unconscionable act or practice by a supplier violates this section whether it occurs before, during, or after the transaction.

(B) In determining whether an act or practice is unconscionable, the following circumstances shall be taken into consideration:

(1) Whether the supplier has knowingly taken advantage of the inability of the consumer reasonably to protect the consumer's interests because of the consumer's physical or mental infirmities, ignorance, illiteracy, or inability to understand the language of an agreement;

(2) Whether the supplier knew at the time the consumer transaction was entered into that the price was substantially in excess of the price at which similar property or services were readily obtainable in similar consumer transactions by like consumers;

(3) Whether the supplier knew at the time the consumer transaction was entered into of the inability of the consumer to receive a substantial benefit from the subject of the consumer transaction;

(4) Whether the supplier knew at the time the consumer transaction was entered into that there was no reasonable probability of payment of the obligation in full by the consumer;

(5) Whether the supplier required the consumer to enter into a consumer transaction on terms the supplier knew were substantially one-sided in favor of the supplier;

(6) Whether the supplier knowingly made a misleading statement of opinion on which the consumer was likely to rely to the consumer's detriment;

(7) Whether the supplier has, without justification, refused to make a refund in cash or by check for a returned item that was purchased with cash or by check, unless the supplier had conspicuously posted in the establishment at the time of the sale a sign stating the supplier's refund policy.

(C) This section does not apply to a consumer transaction in connection with the origination of a residential mortgage.

Cite as R.C. § 1345.03

Amended by 131st General Assembly File No. TBD, SB 227, §1, eff. 4/6/2017.

Effective Date: 09-23-1977; 01-01-2007 .