

Attorney General Warns Delawareans About Bogus Online Lead Generators

Attorney General Matt Denn's office warns Delawareans to be wary of online lead generators or list services that claim to provide potential client leads to certain professionals, particularly real estate agents.

The Consumer Protection Unit of the Delaware Department of Justice has investigated complaints about lead generators or list services that claim to provide advanced or superior advertising services for local professionals to drive more potential clients to those professionals. In exchange, they often require large up-front payments and include contracts that protect the lead generator more than the professional.

Lead generators may have complete control over when, where, and how they advertise the professional's services. Often these leads provide little if any return, and may advertise the professional in areas or locations where the professional does not or cannot provide service. Unless the lead generator regularly operates in a particular geographic area of Delaware, or is affiliated with a known professional organization, professionals are strongly cautioned against paying for unknown or unverified lead generating services.

The DOJ Consumer Protection Unit cautions all consumers to be diligent before paying anyone for lead generating or listing services by:

- Doing initial research into the company online;
- Checking for any complaints with the Better Business Bureau;
- Searching for the company's registration or licensure in the jurisdiction it claims to be operating from (i.e.

Division of Corporations or Secretary of State offices)

- Thoroughly reading any contracts or agreements that the consumer is expected to sign before remitting any payment for services; and
- Checking for a local company or advertising forum, networking group, or professional association who could provide the same or similar services in the consumer's own community.

DOJ encourages consumers who believe they may have been scammed to call the Attorney General's toll-free Consumer Hotline at 1-800-220-5424 or email the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Unit at consumer.protection@delaware.gov. If the company is located outside Delaware, consumers should also consider filing a complaint with the Attorney General's office in that state.