

Avoiding Identity Theft

Tips for you and your clients to protect against identity theft.

Identity theft is a serious crime, one that affects millions of Americans each year according to statistics published by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Identity theft occurs when someone steals your personal information in order to commit fraud or other crimes such as opening credit in your name or using your information to make unauthorized purchases.

Unfortunately, anyone can be victimized and it can cost you hundreds of dollars and many hours of your time to repair the damage that can be done to your credit and your personal reputation. LPL Financial is committed to protect your privacy, but there are steps that you can take to reduce your risk in identity theft.

- Shred all documents containing personal information before you discard them.
- Protect your Social Security number. Don't carry your Social Security card with you and do not provide it to anyone unless absolutely necessary.
- Keep your personal information in a secure place.
- Don't share personal information just because someone asks for it. Only share personal information when necessary & with trusted individuals.
- Never click on unsolicited emails and do not provide passwords or personal information on sites that you do not know or look unfamiliar.
- Use complex passwords and do not use the same password for everything. Update your passwords regularly.
- Monitor your accounts and billing statements for any unusual activity and take immediate action when you spot it.
- Call company if a bill is late or if you have not received financial statements when expected.
- Collect mail daily and place a hold on your mail when you are away from home for several days.
- Use security features on mobile devices such as two-factor authentication, fingerprint, or facial recognition.
- Install firewalls, anti-virus, & anti-malware software on your home computer.
- Update sharing & firewall settings when using a public wi-fi network. Use a virtual private network (VPN), if you use public wi-fi.
- Wipe and erase any electronic devices before donating or selling.
- Close any accounts where suspicious activity has occurred or that are no longer active or being used by you.
- Check your credit reports at least annually from all three major credit bureaus: Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion.
- Opt out of pre-screened credit card offers to include your current credit card companies: The safest way to avoid identity theft exposure from pre-screened credit card offers is to opt out of receiving them for five years or permanently through optoutprescreen.com, which is the official consumer credit reporting industry website, or contacting your current credit card companies.

If you do become a victim of identity theft, here are the steps you should immediately take:

- Contact the financial institution immediately where the suspicious activity occurred to let them know of the incident and possible fraudulent activity.
- File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission. Their Identity Theft Hotline can be reached, toll free at (877) 438-4338 or online at <https://www.identitytheft.gov/#/>. Any suspicious emails or calls should also be reported to the Federal Trade Commission.
- File a complaint with the FBI if you have been a victim of online identity theft: <https://www.ic3.gov/>
- File a police report with your local police department.
- Notify your major creditors. Contact your credit card companies to check for fraudulent charges and to stop future charges.
- Place a fraud alert or freeze your credit bureau reports and review your reports for any suspicious activity. You only need to contact one of the reporting agencies to place the alert on your report. That agency is required to notify the other agencies. The contact information for the credit bureaus is as follows:

Equifax Credit Information Services, Inc.

P.O. Box 740241
Atlanta, GA 30374
(888) 766-0008

TransUnion Fraud Victim Assistance Department

P.O. Box 6790
Fullerton, CA 92834
(800) 680-7289

Experian

475 Anton Blvd.
Costa Mesa, CA 92626
(714) 830-7000
(888) 397-3742

For more information about identity theft and resources, please contact:

Federal Trade Commission

Consumer Response Center
600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20580
(877) FTC-HELP [877-382-4357]
<https://consumer.ftc.gov/features/identity-theft>