



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

201 W. Preston Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Martin O'Malley, Governor – Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor – John M. Colmers, Secretary

EDUCATIONAL ALERT!!!

TO: DDA Licensed Service Providers
All Concerned

FROM: Michael S. Neppan, Executive Director, Developmental Disabilities Administration
Nancy Grimm, Director, Office of Health Care Quality

DATE: January 22, 2010

RE: **Identity Theft**

The purpose of this educational alert is to inform all provider agencies licensed by the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) that Identity Theft is a serious crime that is on the rise nationwide. People who receive services and supports from the DDA are vulnerable to becoming victims of identity theft. As with any other crime, it is incumbent upon provider agencies to protect the safety and welfare of the people they serve. Below you will find information to assist in taking steps to understand, prevent and respond to identity theft.

What Is Identity Theft?

Simply put, identity theft is the criminal act of stealing another person's personal information and using it to assume that person's identity for the purpose of opening accounts, making purchases, accessing funds, committing terrorist acts, etc.

How Can Identity Theft Be Prevented?

Identity thieves often access personal information by intercepting mail, going through trash, listening in on conversations or obtaining information by way of the computer. These individuals have also become employed in health care settings and service agencies such as DDA provider agencies where they have been able to access personal information. It is important to control and prevent access to this information.

The following are some recommended steps to take:

Obtain a copy of the free credit report available annually from each of the three national credit reporting companies listed below. You may get these reports all at one time or stagger them throughout the year e.g. requesting one every 4 months from a different company; by contacting the website www.annualcreditreport.com or calling 1-877-322-8228;

Shred all mail that contains any personal information about people served by your agency;

Exercise caution in public settings to make sure by-standers are not able to record, hear or photograph personal information;

Toll Free 1-877-4MD-DHMH • TTY for Disabled - Maryland Relay Service 1-800-735-2258

Web Site: www.dhmh.state.md.us

Never give personal information to anyone if you are not certain of how it will be used and protected;

Exercise caution when using the internet and providing any type of personal information;

Control who will have access to personal information in provider agencies and how information is used, released and protected;

Conduct criminal background checks on all staff who will have access to personal information of people served; and

Train agency staff to recognize risks and prevent identity theft.

What Should I Do If Someone Becomes A Victim of Identity Theft?

If a person who receives services from a DDA provider becomes a victim of identity theft, the agency should take immediate steps to report and repair any damage caused by the theft. Because identity theft can take on many forms, the reporting process may vary depending on the nature of the thief's actions. Below are some steps to help begin the process. The entities listed should be consulted for guidance in further addressing and repairing the damage from identity theft.

Report the theft to the three national credit reporting agencies listed below and request their guidance including having a Fraud Alert placed on the individual's account;

Report the theft to the local police;

Contact any affected companies such as credit cards, banks, insurance companies etc. and report the theft to their Fraud Unit;

Report the theft to the U.S. Federal Trade Commission and the U.S. Department of Justice.

Consult the Federal Trade Commission and the Department of Justice websites for more information on responding to specific identity theft issues.

Resources to Assist with Preventing and Mitigating Identity Theft

US Dept. of Justice

www.justice.gov

(202) 514-2000

US Federal Trade Commission

www.ftc.gov

(877) 382-4357

www.annualcreditreport.com

1 (877) 322-8228

Credit Reporting Agencies

Equifax

www.equifax.com

1 (800) 437-4619

Trans Union

www.transunion.com

1 (800) 888-4213

Experian

www.experian.com

1 (888) 397-3742