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COVID-19 VACCINE SCAMS

Acting Hunterdon County Prosecutor Michael J. Williams wants to warn citizens of the potential for scammers looking to take advantage of individuals trying to get appointments for COVID-19 vaccinations.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services have received complaints of scammers using the public's interest in COVID-19 vaccines to obtain personal information and money through various schemes.

You should **NEVER** have to pay to get a COVID-19 vaccine. The federal government is providing the vaccine free of charge to all people living in the United States. Vaccination providers can be reimbursed for vaccine administration fees by the patient's public or private insurance company or, for uninsured patients, by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund. The same goes for waiting lists; anyone who asks for a payment to put you on a list, to make an appointment for you, or to reserve a spot in line is a **SCAMMER**.

Getting a vaccination appointment has been challenging and some people, especially our senior population, have had difficulty navigating the appointment process. This has led to some legitimate good Samaritans that have volunteered to assist finding and registering others for the vaccine. Unfortunately, there are nefarious people who use this as an opportunity to prey on others. You must be very careful to never give out personal, financial, or health information to people you do not know and trust.

You should only receive a vaccine at authorized vaccination sites, which you can find through your state or county health department. There are also advertisements falsely claiming that the vaccine can be shipped to your home for a fee. Vaccine distributors are not shipping doses of the vaccine to individuals, and you should not administer the vaccine to yourself.

The public should be aware of the following potential indicators of fraudulent activity:

- Advertisements or offers for early access to a vaccine upon payment of a deposit or fee
- Requests asking you to pay out-of-pocket to obtain the vaccine or to put your name on a COVID-19 vaccine waiting list
- Offers to undergo additional medical testing or procedures when obtaining a vaccine
- Marketers offering to sell and/or ship doses of a vaccine, domestically or internationally, in exchange for payment of a deposit or fee
- Unsolicited emails, telephone calls, or personal contact from someone claiming to be from a medical office, insurance company, or COVID-19 vaccine center requesting personal and/or medical information to determine a recipient's eligibility to participate in clinical vaccine trials or to obtain the vaccine
- Claims of FDA approval for a vaccine that cannot be verified
- Advertisements for vaccines through social media platforms, email, telephone calls, online, or from unsolicited/unknown sources
- Individuals contacting you in person, by phone, or by email to tell you that the government or government officials require you to receive a COVID-19 vaccine
- Do not open emails, attachments, or links from people you do not know, or that come unexpectedly. Doing so could download dangerous [malware](#) onto your computer or phone.

Acting Prosecutor Williams stated, "It is very important that we get this information out to the public, especially to our senior population that is the most vulnerable to those trying to take advantage of the COVID-19 health crisis. Please share this with your family, friends, and co-workers."

If you believe you have been the victim of a COVID-19 fraud, immediately report it to the FBI (ic3.gov, tips.fbi.gov, or 1-800-CALL-FBI) or HHS OIG (tips.hhs.gov or 1-800-HHS-TIPS).

Anonymous tips can be submitted by calling Crime Stoppers at 1-800-321-0010, going online at www.CrimeStoppersHunterdon.com, or through the free "P3 Tips" smartphone app. All tips are anonymous and kept confidential. Crime Stoppers pays cash rewards for valid tips.

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