

Prevention Tips

Freeze your credit by contacting each of the 3 credit bureaus. In this way no new accounts can be opened in your name.

Put your telephone number on the **Do Not Call** registry to stop getting calls from telemarketers: 1-888-382-1222 or www.donotcall.gov

Remove your name from mailing lists for pre-approved credit cards and insurance offers: 1-888-567-8688 (1-888-5OPTOUT) or www.optoutprescreen.com

Remove your name from mail and phone lists:
Direct Marketing Association (www.the-dma.org)
Mail Preference Service
P.O. Box 9008
Farmington, NY 11735

Telephone Preference Service
P.O. Box 9014
Farmingdale, NY 11735

Judicial System

For many, this may be the first involvement with law enforcement or the judicial system. It is very common for people to expect what they have seen on television or movies to apply to their current circumstances. Unfortunately, these expectations are often a distorted and unrealistic snapshot of how things truly operate.

Arizona has laws in place to protect victims. In cases involving prosecution, a court advocate can provide information, education, and support that will help reduce fears and uncertainties.

Another consideration that is often practiced is that of resolution by plea agreement. By negotiation and agreement, this approach to resolution can prevent the need for testifying in court.

As with any situation, education and information about how the judicial system operates can assist the victim and their family in the reduction of trauma.

Resources

GOVERNMENT RESOURCES :

Federal Trade Commission
ID Theft Hotline: 1-877-438-4338
www.consumer.gov/idtheft

Social Security Fraud Hotline
1-800-269-0271 (www.ssa.gov)

U.S. Dept. of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime
1-800-627-6872 (www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc)

U.S. Postal Inspection Service
1-877-876-2455 (www.usps.com/postalinspectors)

U.S. Passport Agency
1-877-487-2778 (www.travel.state.gov)

CREDIT BUREAUS:
Equifax: 1-888-766-0008 (www.equifax.com)

Experian: 1-888-397-3742 (www.experian.com)

Transunion: 1-800-680-7289 (www.transunion.com)

LOCAL RESOURCES:

Mesa Police Department
Document Crimes Unit
(480) 644-2002

AZ Dept. of Motor Vehicles
Drivers License Fraud Unit
(602) 938-4425

AZ Attorney General
Identity Theft Help Line
(602) 542-2145
www.identitytheft@azag.gov

Victim Services Unit

Identity Theft



Mesa Police Department
Victim Services Unit
130 N Robson
Mesa, AZ 85201
(480) 644-4075

This brochure provides information for you and your family on dealing with identity theft.

Common Reactions

Common reactions of victims of identity theft are similar to those who survive other types of traumatic events—shock, panic, anger, helplessness, embarrassment, a sense of vulnerability and violation.

It is common for victims to reach a point at which the intensity of such reactions is overwhelming. Intense concerns regarding financial security, family safety, and the ability to trust others may surface, at times leading to self-isolation and emotional numbness. Contributing to these concerns, may be suspicions that a friend or family member is the offender or a sense of no one caring or understanding the effects the experience.

Periods of endless questioning often occur:

- Is this really happening?
- How dare they?
- Why me?
- What can I do to protect myself?

In some cases, independence is lost as family and friends assume the victim to be no longer capable of taking care of their finances and making sound decisions. Elders are often subject to this, adding to their trauma and victimization.

Feelings about the offender

When we have no familiarity or connection to the offender, managing feelings and decisions may be made with more clarity and confidence. When the offender is a relative or friend the decision of reporting the crime can be one of the most difficult decisions you will have to make. Sharing your experience and the feelings that you have toward the offender, whether or not you know them personally, can be helpful in finding what decisions and consequences you are willing to live with. Significant others and friends are often willing to share the emotional burden and tasks that weigh on you.

Feelings of insecurity, vulnerability and hyper-alertness of people can be relieved by focusing more on the actual crime and not the offender. The offender is often not brought to justice and this is a reality that many must come to terms with. A healthier focus is one of clearing your identity and moving on with the knowledge and strength the experience has helped you achieve.

The Recovery Process

As you experience emotions, it is helpful to recognize and acknowledge what you are feeling. This may help you take steps toward regaining a sense of control.

Tedium and frustration will be part of reclaiming your identity. Faithfully document and organize all contacts made—including who you talked with, contact information, and the plan for what to do next. This is useful in realizing progress toward resolution.

Many times victims become consumed with their case and neglect other parts of their life, such as family, hobbies, etc. Keeping a balance between your life and your case is important. Channel your energy towards the positive. While some victims have changes in personality or their ability to trust, these changes can be viewed as positive in that a new levels of assertiveness and abilities for self-advocacy may result.

Remember, involvement in a traumatic event can produce upsetting responses such as disturbed sleep, diminished appetite, and difficulty concentrating. These responses will likely subside with time. However, if reactions are especially long lasting or troubling, you may need to turn to a professional for assistance.

Benefits of Counseling?

Some of the benefits of seeking counseling are:

- Reviewing the incident and processing the event can help victims clarify what actually occurred.
- Legal and judicial decisions can be discussed and utilized as part of the promotion of healing and resolution.
- The disruption due to trauma can make daily functioning difficult. Counseling can help develop coping skills and strategies, allowing for the continuance of school, work or relationships.
- Establishment of a support network helps to decrease the negative physical, psychological and emotional effects that often result from the traumatic experience.

The experience can be utilized as an opportunity to build and practice assertiveness, confidence, and protective instinct skills.

When your identity is stolen:

- _____ File a police report and get a copy.
- _____ Contact a credit bureaus, tell them you are an ID theft victim , and request a fraud alert on your report.
- _____ Ask for a copy of your credit report from the credit bureau and review it for errors, inquiries, and accounts you did not know about.
- _____ Contact your bank to close your accounts and open new ones. Change your PIN numbers. Establish “password only” access to the new accounts.
- _____ Advise your creditors such as credit card companies, telephone, utility companies, mortgage holders etc. by phone and in writing of the incident.
- _____ If your Social Security number was misused contact the Social Security Administration to report it , order a copy of your Earnings and Benefits Statement, and check it for accuracy.
- _____ File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission.
- _____ Monitor your mail and bank statements for evidence of new fraudulent activity.
- _____ Keep a log of all conversations with authorities and financial institutions.
- _____ Send correspondence by certified mail, return receipt requested.
- _____ Keep copies of: bills with fraudulent charges, documentation of accounts opened in your name without your consent, and all correspondence you send and receive.
- _____ Write a chronological summary of what happened: How did you first discover the theft? What clues do you have as to the identity of the suspect or the location of the theft? (Names, addresses, phone numbers used on fraudulent applications or orders, locations of fraudulent activity, account numbers compromised) Include as much information as possible to assist the investigator.