



CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

QUICK TIPS: HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM MORTGAGE FRAUD

In today's housing market and economic climate, it is becoming increasingly important to remain vigilant about mortgage and investment fraud. Staying informed and aware of the ways that lenders take advantage of buyers and investors is the best way to protect yourself against fraud. Below are tips about what you need to know about mortgage and investment fraud:

1. **Don't fall for the newest scams:** With the housing market crisis, mortgage and investment fraud is on the rise. Companies are promising to help distressed homeowners and charging fees for that help. Companies promising to help you avoid foreclosure for a fee are preying on you. You do not need to pay anyone to get information about loan modification or foreclosure prevention.
2. **There is FREE help:** Credit counseling services can counsel you for free on how to avoid foreclosure and how to adjust your housing payments. HUD approved counseling agencies provide free counseling.
3. **Talk to your lender:** Make sure you are in direct communication with your lender if you plan to make changes to your payment plan. Don't make payments to others or sign over your deed to others without talking to your lender.
4. **Keep your information safe and document everything:** Keep copies of everything you sign and provide to your lender and keep every document in a safe, secure place.
5. **Don't let others take your identity:** Don't give personal identifying information out to any company or person you do not know or that is not your lender. Do not accept payment for use of your name, credit card, or social security number. Don't let anyone sign anything for you without written authorization. Make sure you understand the power you give away if you authorize someone to sign for you.
6. **Understand what you are signing:** Make sure you read and understand ALL documents you are asked to sign. Ask questions about anything you don't understand.
7. **Report crime:** Companies and individuals that defraud you out of your property or money are breaking the law and can go to jail. Contact your local law enforcement agency if you have been a victim of fraud. You can make a police report at any police station or call the District Attorney's Fraud Hotline at (415) 553-9535.

HUD approved counseling agencies provide FREE counseling:

- Consumer Credit Counseling Services: (800) 777-7526
- Mission Economic Development Association: (415) 282-3334
- San Francisco Housing Development Corporation: (415) 822-1022

More information can be found on HUD website
<http://www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/hcc/hcs.cfm>