



Pinellas County Consumer Protection

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www.pinellascounty.org/consumer



Protect
regulate
Investigate
educate

Buyer Beware!

Sometimes it is hard to spot fraud when it is happening. Scams can be large or small, sophisticated or simple, but the people behind them have two things in common: they want to steal your money and avoid being caught. The reality is anyone could fall victim to a scam, no matter what your age, intellect or economic status.

Most consumer transactions are completed satisfactory. On occasion however, any consumer could experience unresolved problems, such as defective products, erroneous bills or non-delivery of goods or services. When you are confronted with such a situation, the dedicated employees of Pinellas County Consumer Protection are here to assist you. Investigators are available to speak with you regarding a consumer transaction at (727) 464-6200.



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We Investigate

We work to find solutions that restore fairness and ensure legal compliance. Millions of dollars have been recovered for consumers through refunds, adjustments and court-ordered restitution. For assistance with a consumer problem, the first step is to file a written complaint online, by email or at our office location.

Dispute Resolution

Our goal is to assist the parties in reaching a satisfactory resolution. The mediation process is conducted through telephone contacts and informal hearings, which are held at the offices of Consumer Protection, the consumer's residence or the business location.

Criminal Investigations

Violations of consumer protection laws can lead to criminal charges resulting in punishment for the offender and possible monetary reimbursement through court ordered restitution.

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We Regulate

The Office of Consumer Protection is responsible for licensing and enforcement of certain county ordinances that help protect the citizens of Pinellas County. These include:

Licensing

- Organizations conducting bingo
- High-prescribing health clinics
- Adult Use establishments in unincorporated areas of Pinellas County

Monitoring

- Towing rates
- Human Trafficking public awareness signs
- Price gouging during a state of emergency
- Charitable solicitations
- Moving services

We Educate

Our goal is to prevent you from becoming a victim of a scam.

- Consumer education presentations are given FREE to local civic groups, high schools and at community events.
- Consult our Consumer Resources Guide at www.pinellascounty.org/consumer for consumer tips and direct links to regulatory agencies.
- Always verify that a business has the proper license for the job or service and check their complaint history.
- Knowledge is your best defense against consumer fraud.

We Protect

Keep these helpful tips in mind:

- Visit www.DoNotCall.gov to reduce unwanted solicitation calls by placing your telephone number on the national *Do Not Call Registry*.
- Read the fine print before signing a document or finalizing a purchase.
- Beware of fraudulent offers and promotions that are too good to be true. These may include email solicitations, home improvement scams or high pressure sales transactions.
- Never “wire” money to an unknown person. You should not have to send money to receive a free prize or promise of employment.
- Protect your personal information to reduce the chances of becoming a victim of identity theft.
- Visit www.annualcreditreport.com to review your credit report annually.
- Shop around, compare prices and obtain more than one quote for a product or service.

