

IDENTITY
THEFT
VERIFICATION
*P*ASSPORT

Criminal Justice Initiatives Section

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL'S IDENTITY THEFT UNIT AND PASSPORT PROGRAM
FY 2007 ANNUAL REPORT



MARC DANN
ATTORNEY GENERAL

STATE OF OHIO

-Ohio Attorney General's Identity Theft Unit and Passport Program-

FY 2007 Annual Report

Identity theft is the fastest growing crime in the United States. It affects an estimated ten million persons yearly, yet less than 250,000 cases are reported to authorities. In sum, Americans spend an estimated 300 million hours per year resolving problems related to identity theft.

Credit cards, utilities, bank accounts, employment records, tax returns, medical documents, and residential leases are among the fertile grounds for identity thieves. And while the statistics are often cited to illustrate the vast scope of the epidemic, it must not be forgotten that identity theft exacts an emotional and psychological impact on its individual victims, similar to that experienced by targets of violent crime.

Ohio Attorney General Marc Dann recognizes the seriousness of the identity theft problem. His Criminal Justice Initiatives Section houses the Attorney General's Identity Theft Unit, which works in conjunction with law enforcement, financial institutions, and community organizations, as well as educates the public on identity theft issues. And for those persons who become victims of identity theft, the Identity Theft Unit is a direct service provider of guidance and assistance to repair, restore and resolve credit and other identity theft related issues.



PRESENT SERVICES

-Identity Theft Verification Passport Program-



The Passport program provides victims of identity theft with a wallet-sized card that can be used to help demonstrate – to law enforcement, financial institutions, businesses, and others - their status as a victim, to begin rehabilitating their credit history and respond to any fraudulent criminal charges. In order to obtain a Passport, victims must go to a law enforcement agency and file a police report. When law enforcement finds probable cause that an identity theft occurred, they apply for a Passport on behalf of the victim via OHLEG (Ohio Law Enforcement Gateway). As part of the application process, the following digital data is obtained from the victim: (1) photo; (2) fingerprint; and (3) signature. This information is stored in OHLEG's secure database along with the other basic information that is needed as part of the application process.

Since its inception on December 14, 2004, nearly 1100 Passport cards have been issued to identity theft victims throughout Ohio. In FY 2007, there were 417 Passport applications, and as a result, 349 Passport cards were issued.¹ Throughout Ohio, 316 law enforcement agencies trained in using the Passport equipment in FY 2007. This brings the total number of agencies with Passport equipment to 892 – over 92% of the total law enforcement agencies in Ohio.

A November 2006 Survey of 700 Ohio identity theft victims revealed the following about the Passport program:

- 31% felt that Passport gave them a sense of comfort and security because they could prove that they were a victim of identity theft.
- 33% said that Passport had already been helpful to them in: filing necessary paperwork; obtaining new drivers' licenses; preventative measures against identity theft; and proof of identity in various situations.
- 86% would recommend the program to future victims because it was one of the only resources available that helps victims.

Specific comments about Passport included:

This was the only help I had during this horrible situation, thank God for your Passport help.

Without the passport I was completely helpless. I am very secure with it.

I believed in this program. It was a tremendous help to me.

Good, solid program that is professionally administered.

I hope this program will continue to go on.

I'd like to thank the Attorney General's Office for helping me get my license back last year. If it weren't for his help I know I'd still be trying to get it back now. Thank you!

Further evidence of the program's success can be found in the efforts of the Division of Privacy and Identity Protection at the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). The FTC working group has been tasked by the President of the United States' Task Force on Identity Theft to examine programs that enable victims of identity theft to obtain credentials verifying this fact. The working group contacted the Ohio Attorney General's Identity Theft Unit, as the recognized national leader in this area, to extensively discuss the details of Ohio's Passport program. This working group will continue to work with the Ohio Attorney General's Identity Theft Unit as they move forward.

¹ Upon receipt of the Passport application, the Ohio Attorney General's Office verifies the information and then orders from their vendor a Passport card to be issued. The time between order by the Ohio Attorney General's Office and issuance of the Passport card by the vendor is typically ten to fourteen business days. Thus, at the end of FY 2007, there were cases where applications had been filed but cards had yet to issue.

-I-PAC-

In response to the national epidemic of identity theft, several states formed the Identity Theft Passport Advisory Council (I-PAC). I-PAC is comprised of the ten states that have established Passport programs. As the founding member of I-PAC, the State of Ohio sits as chair of the group.² I-PAC is comprised of the following member-states:

Arkansas	Nevada
Delaware	Ohio
Iowa	Oklahoma
Mississippi	Texas
Montana	Virginia

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the National Notary Association (NNA) are also partners with Ohio in leading this initiative.³

Relevant portions of the I-PAC Mission are as follows:

- 1) *Agree that the problem of identity theft is a growing concern to the citizens of each respective state and the Passport Program can help the victims restore their good name and credit;*
- 2) *Educate and help victims recover from this particularly harmful crime through public awareness campaigns including standardized prevention techniques and establishing recovery resources;*
- 3) *Understand that the creation of such a network requires an elevated level of communication, commitment and sharing of resources among the participating states.*

² The member states look to Ohio for guidance on most issues. For example, Ohio is overseeing the drafting of model national identity theft Passport legislation for non-member states to implement. In FY 2007, the non-member states that contacted the Identity Theft Unit to inquire about duplicating the success of Ohio's Passport program were Colorado, Minnesota and Florida.

³ The FTC, DOJ, and NNA, while I-PAC members, do not operate as active service providers.

-Assistance-

In FY 2007, the Identity Theft Unit responded over 3,200 phone inquiries. The majority of these calls were from victims or potential victims seeking help in responding to specific instances of identity theft and related issues. Working in connection with law enforcement and national credit reporting agencies, the Identity Theft Unit helped resolve numerous cases from across Ohio.⁴

In addition to the calls regarding specific instances of identity theft, the Identity Theft Unit responded to inquiries - from individual victims, organizations, and law enforcement - concerning an array of cases involving private and public sector entities. Among these were calls related to the June 2007 Ohio Department of Administrative Services data breach. The Identity Theft Unit organized the Attorney General's emergency call center, staffing phones after normal business hours as well as on weekends, to address questions and concerns. The efforts of the Identity Theft Unit allowed Attorney General employees to staff a comprehensive identity theft call center that met the needs of concerned citizens.⁵

-Education-

The Identity Theft Unit conducted dozens of identity theft prevention and Passport presentations to groups across Ohio in 2007. These groups included law enforcement (instructional training for officers), financial institutions, senior citizen groups, community organizations, and civic groups, members of the Judicial and Legislative branches, victim advocates, and various student groups ranging from high school to post-graduate.

In FY 2007, the Identity Theft Unit also responded to several inquiries from the media in connection with media pieces on identity theft related issues. These stories furthered the public education efforts of the unit - occasionally even on the national level. See generally http://cbs4denver.com/crime/local_story_264092004.html (video footage).

⁴ As part of these efforts, the Identity Theft Unit worked with a multitude of jurisdictional authorities, some from outside the state of Ohio. For example, an Ohio truck driver lost his commercial driver's license due to a theft of his identity and resulting criminal charges that the identity thief incurred in Florida. The Identity Theft Unit worked with Florida authorities to clear the truck driver's criminal record and restore his license.

⁵ Though the Identity Theft Unit responded to other security breaches of personal information prior to and following that time, the DAS breach was the most publicized and largest in terms of total number of affected persons.



MOVING FORWARD

Attorney General Marc Dann is making the Identity Theft Unit a One-Stop-Shop. This will help streamline the recovery process by providing victims with one central location to address their needs. The One-Stop-Shop will provide a variety of services for Identity Theft victims, while housing the expertise necessary to train citizens, law enforcement and prosecutors on prevention, assistance, and prosecution. The One-Stop-Shop will also be a place where financial institutions and government entities can turn for identity theft critical needs. Whether the request is for an identity theft prevention speaker, information on the Passport program, or advice on how to investigate or prosecute an identity theft case – the One-Stop-Shop will be available to assist. By building on the services that the Criminal Justice Initiatives Section and its Identity Theft Unit currently offer, Attorney General Dann will continue to provide a comprehensive response to the challenges of identity theft.



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