

Seniors can get help from the BBB

The Better Business Bureau has become a guardian to senior citizens susceptible to consumer fraud and identity theft. The organization uses various programs to instruct seniors on ways to better recognize and avoid being drawn into one of these situations.

In 2008 the Better Business Bureau began The Senior Awareness Initiative, a program that outreaches to assisted living facilities, in-home health care services, senior centers and other organizations that aid the elderly.

One of the most prominent features of The Senior Awareness Initiative is the Senior Alert System. This system sends quarterly articles identifying the most current ploys and tactics used by scammers to con seniors into giving them their personal or financial information. The articles will briefly depict a notable incident involving a current trend amongst scammers, then inform the readers of ways to be aware or avoid the situation.

Another program the Better Business Bureau offers is the Senior Fraud Program. This organization works closely with senior community groups and local law enforcement to target fraudulent ruses in the area and develop better ways to prevent them.

These organizations help by spreading the word so that senior citizens are able to recognize ploys used by scammers. The new found acumen developed through these programs gives them a sense of independence by allowing them to identify tactics of scammers on their own.

In addition to these projects, the Better Business Bureau has their own Complaint Resolution System that allows consumers to file a complaint against a business member that will be further investigated by the Better Business Bureau.

The Complaint Resolution System is operated quickly and efficiently. Typically, a resolution is made between the consumer and the company within 30 days of the complaint being made.

The process operates as follow:

1. A complaint is filed to the Better Business Bureau by a consumer.
2. Over the next day or two the Better Business Bureau processes the consumer's complaint.
3. The business in which the complaint was directed will be given 14 calendar days from the date the complaint was filed to provide a response.
4. The Better Business Bureau will notify the consumer of the business' response, then ask the consumer to send a counter-response to the business.
5. A resolution is achieved.

All businesses accredited by the Better Business Bureau have made a commitment to respond to these complaints. Even if a company is not accredited by the Better Business Bureau the Complaint Resolution team still makes an attempt to contact the business; however, contacting non-accredited businesses does not always lead to a response.

When issues occur and a resolution is not made between the consumer and the business, the Better Business Bureau will request a second or follow up response to be made by the business. If issues continue to progress the Better Business Bureau may offer mediation or arbitration to better assist in resolving the issue.

You may visit our website at www.wrightabshire.com. Wesley E. Wright and Molly Dear Abshire are attorneys with the firm Wright Abshire, Attorneys, P.C., with offices in Bellaire, the Woodlands, and Carmine. Both are Board Certified by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization in Estate Planning and Probate Law and are certified as Elder Law Attorneys by the National Elder Law Foundation. Nothing contained in this publication should be considered as the rendering of legal advice to any person's specific case, but should be considered general information. Thank you to Wright Abshire's Summer Williamson who contributed to the article.