



**Division of
Consumer Protection**

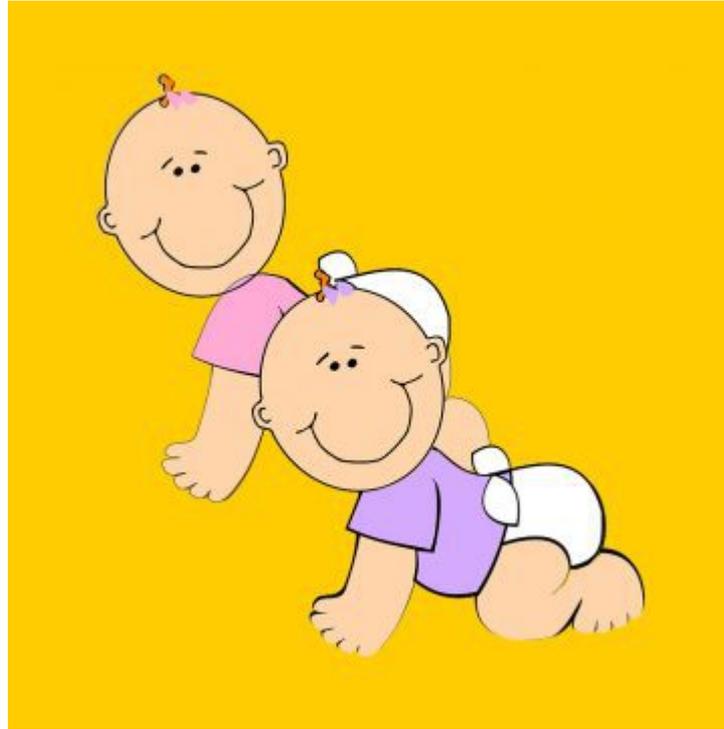
Preventing & Responding to Child Identity Theft

**NYSERDA Low-Income Forum on Energy
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How do you protect
your child's financial
future?



What is Child Identity Theft?

- The practice of stealing a child's personal information to fraudulently obtain goods, property, credit, utility services, employment or government documents
- Can damage your child's long-term finances, credit history and reputation



Why are children targeted?

- There is no way for companies to verify the name and birthdate attached to a child's unused social security number.
- Thieves can attach a clean social security number to any name and birthdate they desire.
- Children are **35x more likely** to become victims of identity theft than adults.



What are some of the warning signs of child identity theft?

- Your child receives offers for pre-approved credit cards in the mail or collection calls about accounts you didn't authorize.
- You find an existing credit report under your child's name.
- You may obtain written notices from the IRS stating your child has not paid income taxes or that your child's social security number was used on another tax return.
- Receive a request for employment verification when your child is unemployed and a minor.
- Turned down for government benefits or even student loans because the benefits are being paid to another account using your child's social security number.

How does child identity theft occur?



- Some thieves predict a social security number, other purposely aim to steal a particular number.
- Most parents have a limited need for their child's social security besides school paperwork or tax purposes. This "gap" leaves your child vulnerable for almost 18 years!
- Thieves know the gaps in the system and exploit it.
- It is not until the child applies for credit for the first time that the child's social security number is introduced to the credit reporting agencies.
- After setting up one account, thieves can open other accounts until it is time to cash out.

Who are the thieves?

- Financial opportunists who see this as a “victimless crime”
- Parents, guardians and family members who use a child’s social security to overcome hardships or just extend their credit options



What can you do to prevent child identity theft?

Prevent, Detect and Resolve it!

Prevent:

- Keep birth certificates, social security numbers and other sensitive information locked away.

- Only provide your child's social security number when absolutely necessary and always ask why and how will it be used.

- Shred paper with sensitive information instead of discarding it.
- Talk to your child about internet safety and securing personal information online.
- Review the websites your family uses and monitor submission of personal information.

What can you do to prevent child identity theft?

Prevent, Detect and Resolve it!

Place a Security Freeze

- In NYS you can place a freeze on your child's social security number as soon as they have one and your child's social will remain frozen until the age of 16.
- You must notify the credit bureaus individually and begin a "protected consumer" freeze with each one.
- Certain bureaus charge for the freeze and others (Equifax) do not but **ALL** bureaus must be contacted in order for the freeze to be effective.

How does a freeze protect my child's identity?

- Prevents anyone from opening a credit account un your child's name.
- Prevents credit bureaus from releasing your child's credit report to third parties.



What can you do to prevent child identity theft?

Prevent, Detect and Resolve it!

Detect:

- Ask for a credit report under your child's name and social security number through www.annualcreditreport.com.
- If no report exists – ask for a manual search of your child's credit report under just your child's social security number.

NOTE: Checking for a credit report alone under your child's name, social security number and birthdate is not always enough since thieves can use a different name under your child's social security number.

What can you do to prevent child identity theft?

Prevent, Detect and Resolve it!

Resolve it!



- If you notice fraudulent activities on your child's credit report, don't waste time, contact the three credit bureaus immediately.
- Contact every business where your child's information was misused and ask to close the fraudulent account and flag it to show it is a result of identity theft.
- File an identity theft report with the Federal Trade Commission.

Remember, you can place a freeze on your child's social security number.

New York State's Identity Theft Resource



The Division of Consumer Protection's consumer advisors can act as liaisons to intervene and troubleshoot for consumers to help victims recover from the damages of identity theft.

DCP's website www.dos.ny.gov/consumerprotection hosts new and updated identity theft-related information to assist consumers and liaisons and provide free mediation services.

Questions?



**Division of
Consumer Protection**

www.dos.ny.gov/consumerprotection

Advocating for and Empowering NY Consumers

**Consumer Hotline:
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