



Identity Theft Alert: Accredited Representatives Targeted by Scammers

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CLINIC has been alerted that some Accredited Representatives have been targeted in identity theft schemes in which their names are being used by scammers posing as authorized practitioners to defraud immigrants out of thousands of dollars. In at least two instances, this identity theft was uncovered when victims, realizing that they had been scammed, searched for the name of the Accredited Representative and contacted the Recognized Organization where that person worked. Further research led to the discovery that several Accredited Representatives' names were posted on a website purporting to be a law firm that assisted not only with immigration but other legal services. CLINIC took immediate action to notify each Accredited Representative whose name appeared on the website and will continue to monitor the site closely.

How To Protect Yourself

While the reports received were specific to Accredited Representatives, all practitioners are at risk of this type of identity theft. Practitioners are encouraged to do the following to be proactive in identifying whether they have been targeted:

1. Conduct an internet search of all combinations of names/nicknames and aliases.
2. Conduct an internet search for your image.
3. Check all social media profiles for potential identity theft.
4. If you receive messages from someone asking if you are their lawyer, follow up to see if your name was provided by a scammer.
5. Monitor your U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) accounts to ensure that someone else is not signing G-28's or E-28's under your name.

How To Report Fraud

To help ensure appropriate action is taken, CLINIC recommends the following steps:

1. Begin gathering all necessary documentation to support and file a report with the appropriate federal and state agencies. CLINIC suggests trying to collect as much detail, if possible.
 - Print the website as a PDF and record the website's changes by using the [Wayback Machine](#). This will document all changes made to the website, even if it is later taken down, allowing you to show authorities what has occurred.
 - Keep records of screenshots of the website, communications from the impersonators, social media posts and takedown requests, all reports and correspondence.
2. File a report with relevant federal agencies, such as:
 - **Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI):** If the fraud occurred online, reach the FBI through its [Internet Crime Complaint Center](#).
 - **Federal Trade Commission (FTC):** Use [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](#) to file a complaint. Include all relevant details, including the website URL, screenshots, and how the impersonation was discovered.
 - **USA.gov Scam Reporting Tool:** This tool helps direct your report to the appropriate agency. Visit [USA.gov scam reporting page](#) and follow the prompts.
 - **USCIS:** Unauthorized Practice of Immigration Law can be reported to USCIS through their [tip form](#).
 - **EOIR, Recognition and Accreditation Program, Office of Legal Access Programs:** Use [R-A-Info@usdoj.gov](#). They will not be able to investigate fraud, *but* informing EOIR of the fraud using your name *can help* to protect you from any negative impact on accreditation.
3. File a report with relevant state agencies, such as:
 - Your local Police Department
 - State Attorney General's Office
 - Consumer Protection Division
 - District Attorney's Office
 - State Bar Authority

We recommend filing a report as soon as possible to protect BOTH the impacted party(ies) and the Accredited Representative.

5. Contact the Protection Department within the appropriate consulate if your staff member is foreign-born.
 - Report the website to the Hosting Provider. If the domain is registered through an ICANN-accredited registrar, file a complaint here: ICANN Domain Abuse Reporting (<https://www.icann.org/complaints-office>).
7. Report to Google and Other Search Engines
 - Report phishing or fraudulent content to [Google: Google Safe Browsing Report](#)
 - Request removal of impersonating content: [Google Content Removal Tool](#)
8. Alert your legal and communications teams about the issue.
9. Continue monitoring any additional unauthorized use of your staff or organization's information.

How To Help Clients if They Are the Victim of Fraud

Given the prevalence of immigration legal services fraud, practitioners may encounter situations where they wish to assist the victims with their immigration cases.

In some cases, victims received fake or altered receipt notices and discovered that their documents had never been filed. In others, applications were filed, but promises to represent clients in immigration court were later broken, leaving them abandoned at a critical time.

If the person was in removal proceedings and ordered removed, action will need to be taken to try and get the case re-opened. See CLINIC's toolkit on [Motions to Reopen](#). As a reminder, Partially Accredited Representatives would need to refer the client to an attorney or Fully Accredited Representative. See CLINIC's practice pointer, [Ethical and Regulatory Boundaries for Partially Accredited DOJ Representatives Assisting Noncitizens in Immigration Court](#).

Next, if the person is not sure if the documents were filed, they will need to file a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to discover what – if anything – was filed. For example, a pending asylum case can complicate matters significantly more than a case where no application was filed. If an asylum case is pending, the victim will need to consult with someone to determine how to proceed, since withdrawing the application could result in the issuance of a Notice to Appear (NTA). Additionally, there is also risk of fraud findings that could impact future benefits.

Once there is an understanding of the current landscape and impact of the scam, the next step may be to consider other options for relief. Here is a [practice advisory](#) on *notario* fraud. This could be helpful in determining next steps.

We Are Here to Support You

Please don't hesitate to reach out if we can support your efforts in any way. You can use the [Affiliate Support Form](#) (you must be signed into your account to use this link) to request further information and assistance in addressing this issue. CLINIC also has a list of resources on immigration legal services scams and the unauthorized practice of immigration law [here](#).