



Department of
Job and Family Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 9, 2009

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Unemployment Scam Targeting Jobless Ohioans

(COLUMBUS, Ohio) - The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and Attorney General Richard Cordray's office have received widespread reports of a national scheme targeting recipients of unemployment compensation benefits in Ohio. Those targeted receive fraudulent text messages on their cell phones, claiming to be from state unemployment agencies. The fraudulent messages inform recipients that their unemployment benefits have been suspended and to call the provided phone number to reactivate. When recipients call, they are asked for personal information, including debit card numbers and personal identification numbers (PIN). At that point, unemployment benefits deposited on the debit card are accessed and withdrawn by the scam artist.

"We want to make all unemployment recipients in Ohio aware of this very real threat," said ODJFS Director Douglas Lumpkin. "ODJFS representatives will never ask for claimants' debit card information or their PIN numbers. Claimants should **not** give this information out over the phone."

According to complaints filed with the Attorney General's Office, several additional versions of this scam are currently circulating with similar messages that allege account problems with various credit cards issued by U.S. Bank. Recipients are encouraged to call the number and provide personal information. Attorney General Cordray strongly urges Ohioans to disregard the message and not provide any personal information.

"This is a prime example of how a scam can mutate and adapt to changing times and trends," Cordray said. "With the use of text messaging on the rise, it is no surprise that scammers have manipulated the system to target unsuspecting individuals. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of remaining vigilant and exercising extreme caution with personal information. In this case, disregard the message. Do not provide any personal information."

ODJFS is working with its debit card provider, U.S. Bank, to further protect, inform and educate its customers. Anyone who receives one of these fraudulent messages should **not** respond. Anyone who suspects funds have been inappropriately accessed should call the customer service number provided on the back of their U.S. Bank debit card: (866) 276-5114.

In response to the many complaints received by ODJFS and the Attorney General's Office, U.S. Bank has issued the following statement: "The safety and security of customers' accounts and information is a top priority of U.S. Bank. We would never ask a customer to place their personal information in jeopardy by contacting them and asking them to divulge it over the phone, via e-mail

or text messages. If customers have any questions or see suspicious activity on their account, they should contact the customer service number on the back of their cards.”

Cordray also urges Ohioans who have become victims of this scam or any other phishing scam to immediately report the incident to local police and contact his office at www.SpeakOutOhio.gov or by calling (800) 282-0515.