



# OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

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## **Attorney General Ford Continues to Caution Nevadans to Be Aware of Scams Related to COVID-19 Vaccine, Treatment, Relief**

**Carson City, NV** – Nevada Attorney General Aaron D. Ford warns Nevadans of ongoing scams related to the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine and planned financial relief from the U.S. government.

“Now, more than ever, people are being lured by fraudsters regarding the COVID-19 vaccine, treatment, and relief,” **said AG Ford**. “I want Nevadans to be extremely cautious of these scammers and mindful of the misinformation is going around. Stay vigilant and file a complaint if you have encountered scams relating to COVID-19.”

### **Posting COVID-19 Vaccine Card on Social Media**

As the vaccine is distributed to Nevadans, many people are excited to share that they have gotten the vaccine on social media by posting a photo of their COVID-19 vaccine card. Beware that if you do so, you could be unwittingly sharing information that compromises your identity.

Vaccine cards include your full name, date of birth and patient number information, all of which can be used to steal your identity. Even the place where you were vaccinated should be kept private. Particularly on social media platforms, any information you post may be more widely distributed or copied than just to those on your friends list.

If you want to share your vaccine status on social media, consider posting a photo of something else—such as the bandage on your arm or a vaccination sticker. If you have already posted a photo of your card, consider removing it or editing the photo to redact your personal information. Keep in mind that it is always a good idea to think twice before posting *anything* on social media platforms that could be used to steal your identity or reveal personal information that you do not want widely shared.

## COVID-19 Cures and Vaccine Distribution

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently approved emergency use for various COVID-19 vaccines. While the federal and local governments are working together to make these vaccines available to various members of the public, AG Ford cautions Nevadans to be aware of fraudulent products and misinformation related to the vaccine, cures, treatments or prevention of COVID-19.

The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Interpol have issued warnings about fake vaccine distribution scams in which scammers are using email and messaging apps promising to deliver shots within days for a fee. Some of the vaccines are also being offered on the dark web. No health department or vaccination site will allow you to receive the vaccination ahead of schedule for a fee.

Additionally, make sure that you only sign up for the vaccine through a verified platform. Check to make sure that the website is affiliated with local health departments or a local pharmacy.

Fraudulent products can come in the form of dietary supplements, foods, teas, essential oils, or other products claiming to be tests, drugs, medical devices, or vaccines. Consumers should also be on alert for black market or fake vaccines.

The Office of the Nevada Attorney General's Bureau of Consumer Protection offers the following tips to identify misleading health claims:

- Receive your vaccination at a certified vaccination center or by a certified healthcare provider. If you would like to confirm your vaccine provider is legitimate, go to: <https://www.immunizenevada.org/covid-19-vaccine-locator>;
- Be suspicious if a product claims to treat a wide range of diseases;
- Evaluate scientific evidence provided and do not be swayed by personal testimonials that are not backed up by research or scientific analysis. Stick to credible sources for information rather than unknown journals, websites, or social media platforms;
- Be on alert of any product advertised as a "quick fix." Many diseases and conditions take time to treat;
- Consider the source of information. The FDA takes time to evaluate the efficacy of various products. You will generally hear about COVID-19 and other health-related treatments for several months before it becomes widely available to the public; and
- If it seems too good to be true, it probably is.



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For now, vaccines will be administered in conjunction with local health districts, hospitals and pharmacies. If you have a question about a treatment or test you found online, your health care provider or doctor is the best source of information. Speak to your pharmacist about if you have questions about a medication.

If you have any questions about the safety or efficacy of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines, please speak with your healthcare provider and consult the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](#).

If you feel you have encountered a fraudulent COVID-19 cure, treatment, or vaccine, please file a [complaint](#) with our office.

### **Paycheck Protection Program**

While many small businesses qualify for forgiveness by the U.S. Treasury Department and Small Business Administration, loan recipients may be contacted by debt relief service companies and others offering to negotiate with the government and other creditors to settle or reduce business owners' repayment obligations. Some of these businesses may be legitimate, but others are interested only in taking your money while providing you no relief.

Scam debt relief companies promise consumers to pay, settle, or eliminate their debts for an up-front fee. However, over time, these companies do not pay consumers' accounts, leaving consumers in default, with damaged credit scores and potentially facing lawsuits from creditors.

If you need assistance with your debt, look for a legitimate resource. You can speak to your creditors directly to negotiate a modified payment plan or seek credit counseling. Ask those you trust for a referral for services, and do your research on any service you are considering using.

If you decide to work with a for-profit debt relief service, the Nevada Attorney General's Office Bureau of Consumer Protection offers the following tips to help you decide:

- Be alert if a company asks you to pay fees up front before it settles your debt or places you in a debt management plan. A seller or telemarketer who guarantees or represents a high likelihood of you getting a loan or some other extension of credit may not ask for — or accept — payment until you get the loan or the service has been fully performed;
- Be on guard if the company promise to stop all debt collection calls and lawsuits. No one can guarantee to make your unsecured debt go away, or guarantee that your unsecured debts can be paid off for pennies on the dollar;
- Do not provide your financial information, such as credit card account numbers and balances, before you have had a chance to contract with the company and have



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done your homework on its legitimacy. Similarly, do not provide such information to **anyone** over the phone or email if you are not aware of the source—even if they are claiming to be from a government agency such as the U.S. Small Business Administration;

- Avoid organizations that try to enroll you in a debt relief program or in a debt management plan without reviewing your financial situation or teaching you about money management; and
- Remember that anything that these companies offer to do for a fee, you can do yourself, for free. Only you can make the decision about whether a legitimate debt relief company is right for your situation.

If you have encountered a debt relief company that you believe is legitimate, please file a [complaint](#) with our office or with the [Federal Trade Commission](#).

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