

# COVID-19 FRAUD BULLETIN

## ➔ Fraud Prevention Tips and Resources



★★ OFFICE of ★★  
INSPECTOR GENERAL

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF  
HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

## FOR RENTERS

April 2020

In response to the pandemic caused by the coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19), Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), which provides protections to renters who receive assistance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Be aware that dishonest people may take advantage of the crisis and could attempt to harm renters through the following scams or forms of harassment.

- ➔ **Upfront payment** - HUD assistance programs do not require upfront payments and new evictions cannot be processed against assisted tenants until after July 25, 2020. Offers for obtaining rental assistance or help with an eviction that require upfront payments are typically not legitimate.
- ➔ **Spoofing** - Individuals may use “spoofed” phone numbers or emails to make their communications appear legitimate. Verify phone numbers and email addresses before providing any information.
- ➔ **Unsolicited Contact** - Be suspicious of unsolicited contact from persons reporting to be affiliated with your landlord or apartment’s management company. Request the person’s name and contact information; then contact your landlord using your normal method.
- ➔ **Harassment** - It is illegal for landlords to attempt to exploit your financial situation with unwanted touching, sexual harassment, or date requests. It is also illegal for landlords to try to coerce you into a sexual relationship in exchange for waiving rental payments. This behavior will not be tolerated and any landlord or other person who has control over housing and engages in this sort of misconduct may be referred to the U.S. Department of Justice for action. Further, this behavior is a violation of the Fair Housing Act. For more information, please see the Fair Housing guidance recently published on HUD’s official website, <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/FHEO/documents/secretary%20fh%20statement%20covid-19%204.3.20.pdf>.

Remember, HUD staff will not contact you directly unless you have contacted them first.

Renters should report possible fraud to HUD’s Office of Inspector General at [hotline@hudoig.gov](mailto:hotline@hudoig.gov) or the official website, <https://www.hudoig.gov/hotline>.

Renters who experience sexual harassment or discrimination from their landlord or prospective landlord may also contact HUD’s Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at (800) 669-9777 or submit an online complaint at [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/fair\\_housing\\_equal\\_opp/online-complaint#\\_How\\_to\\_File](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/online-complaint#_How_to_File)

