

Credit Repair Fraud Proliferates

BBB Advice on What You Can Do

The truth is, no one can legally remove accurate and timely negative information from a credit report. But the law does allow you to request a reinvestigation of information in your file that you dispute as inaccurate or incomplete. There is no charge for this. Everything a credit repair clinic can do for you legally, you can do for yourself at little or no cost.

According to the Fair Credit Reporting Act, you are entitled to a free copy of your credit report if you've been denied credit within the last 30 days. You can also dispute mistakes or outdated items for free. Ask the credit reporting agency for a dispute form or submit your dispute in writing, along with any supporting documentation.

If you decide to respond to a credit repair offer, the Better Business Bureau suggests you beware of companies that:

- do not tell you your legal rights and what you can do -- legally -- for free;
- recommend that you not contact a credit bureau directly;
- want you to pay for credit repair services before any services are provided; or
- advise you to dispute all information in your credit report or take any action that seems illegal, such as creating a new credit identity by obtaining a federal employer identification number to use instead of a social security number. If you follow illegal advice and commit fraud, you may be subject to prosecution.

It's a federal crime to make false statements on a loan or credit application, to misrepresent your Social Security Number, and to obtain an Employer Identification Number from the Internal Revenue Service under false pretenses.

If you have a complaint about a credit repair clinic, contact the Better Business Bureau, your state attorney general's office, and the Federal Trade Commission