



Office of the Inspector General

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

What Attorneys Need to Know About Section 1140 of the Social Security Act

Section 1140 of the *Social Security Act* is a powerful consumer protection tool. The programs administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA) are critical to millions of Americans, providing retirement, disability, and survivors benefits to those who are eligible to receive them. One way the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) helps ensure the integrity of Social Security's programs is by enforcing Section 1140 of the *Social Security Act* and imposing civil monetary penalties (CMPs) for violations of the law.

Section 1140 prohibits people or companies from exploiting SSA's importance to Americans by giving a false impression of association with or endorsement by SSA when advertising, soliciting services, or otherwise communicating with the public. These communications can take many forms, including mailed or televised advertisements, Internet sites, social media accounts, telephone marketing campaigns, and mobile applications. Section 1140 also prohibits the reproduction and sale of Social Security publications or forms without SSA's authorization, and for the charging of services that SSA provides for free without providing proper notice.

OIG continually explores outreach opportunities to educate the public on how to recognize, avoid, and report scams.

How Can I Be Aware?

Some examples of fraudulent activity include:

- Websites, billboards, and print or television advertising that give the false impression that an attorney or law firm is endorsed or recommended by the Social Security Administration.
- Building or door signs that give the false impression that a law office is an official Social Security Administration field office or is otherwise officially associated with the Social Security Administration.
- Correspondence that gives the false impression of originating from the Social Security Administration.
- Telephone marketing campaigns in which the caller gives the misleading impression that they are working with or calling directly from, the Social Security Administration regarding benefits, benefit applications, or benefit eligibility.
- Misleading telephone calls or recorded messages that misrepresent that the caller has reached an official Social Security Administration office.



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Penalties

OIG may impose CMPs of up to **\$12,799.00** for each violative communication. For violative telecasts or broadcasts – OIG may impose CMPs of up to **\$63,991.00** per telecast/broadcast.

How Do I Report Fraud?

Reporting is easy, safe, and secure. You can reach us by internet, phone, mail, or facsimile.

Internet: <https://oig.ssa.gov/report>

U.S. Mail: Social Security Fraud Hotline, P.O. Box 17785, Baltimore, Maryland, 21235

Fax: (410) 597-0118

Telephone: 1-800-269-0271 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time

TTY: 1-866-501-2101 for the deaf or hard of hearing

Connect With Us

Website: oig.ssa.gov | **Twitter:** @TheSSAOIG | **Facebook:** www.facebook.com/oigssa

YouTube: @TheSSAOIG | **Instagram:** @TheSSAOIG



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What Clients Need to Know About Section 1140 of the Social Security Act

Section 1140 of the *Social Security Act* is a powerful consumer protection tool. The Social Security Administration's Office of Inspector General (SSA-OIG) manages a consumer protection program to protect you as a member of the American public from fraud.

Section 1140 prohibits people or companies from giving you the false impression that they are approved, endorsed, or affiliated with the Social Security Administration. Fraudsters may communicate with you by mail, telephone, e-mail, or text. You may also find scams on websites, social media, and in television advertisements.

Section 1140 also prohibits the reproduction and sale of Social Security publications or forms without SSA's authorization, and for the charging of services that SSA provides for free without providing proper notice.

OIG continually explores outreach opportunities to educate the public on how to recognize, avoid, and report scams.

How Can I Be Aware?

Members of the public should notify SSA-OIG if they believe they have been victimized by a scam. Please remember the following:

- Impersonation scams – Scammers may contact you by telephone, letter, text, email, or through your social media account pretending to work for the Social Security Administration or the Office of the Inspector General. They may even use the name of an actual Social Security employee.
- Imposter scams – Scammers may create a website or social media account that looks official because it uses the Social Security emblem or a picture of a Social Security card. They may attempt to sell you official SSA forms that you can obtain for free from the Social Security Administration. Scammers may create links to steal your personally identifiable information (PII).
- Spoofing – If you have caller ID, you may think you know whether you are talking to a Social Security employee. Unfortunately, scammers can spoof official government phone numbers.
- Social media – SSA will not initiate contact with you or request that you contact them by private message through a social media account. Unfortunately, scammers can create fraudulent social media accounts that may look as if they originated with SSA.
- The Social Security Administration will never threaten to suspend your card or threaten you with arrest or legal action if you don't agree to pay money immediately.



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