



# CITY OF PARMA OHIO

## LAW DEPARTMENT



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## **LAW DIRECTOR ADVISORY**

### **“Publishers Clearing House” Scam**

It has come to the attention of the City of Parma Law Director’s office that Parma residents are once again at risk of becoming victims of a scam, specifically targeted toward senior residents. During the week of October 2<sup>nd</sup>, a Parma resident noted that she received a call from (876) 808-4489, claiming to be Sam Christopher Gold with “Publishers Clearing House.” The caller stated that the resident won \$12 million. That caller noted that he would be coming to the resident’s house the next day with a check but first the resident must pay a “small tax.” Once the resident realized that this was a scam, she informed the proper authorities.

The Parma Law Director’s office encourages Parma residents to do the same as described above. Do not trust unfamiliar or unidentified callers. You should never provide or confirm sensitive information over the phone. If the caller is asking for money, do not send money, even if the caller appears to be from a legitimate organization. Should you believe the organization to be legitimate, you should conduct research to ensure it is not a scam. One step you can take to ensure the call is legitimate is to look-up a customer service number for the organization and inquire as to the legitimacy of the phone call. In this case, the resident could have called Publishers Clearing House’s customer service number and asked to confirm that she indeed won a prize. It is important to note that if you are being pressured to act immediately, hang up the phone as it is most likely a fraudulent call.

The caller in this instance was calling from an 876 area code. Numbers with an 876 area code are foreign numbers that are subject to charges. Do not call an 876 number or provide any money or information to them. Area code 876 is the area code for Jamaica, and is one of the most common areas for telemarketing scams. Attached on the next page are a few tips to keep in mind if you receive a call from an 876 area code.

Please be aware of these potential threats. While the caller in this case claimed to be from “Publishers Clearing House,” another caller could be pretending to be from a different organization. Should you believe you were contacted by a scammer, do not hesitate to call and report your suspicions to the Parma Police Department Non-Emergency Number at (440) 885-1234 or the Federal Trade Commission at (877) 382-4357.

Please keep these tips in mind if you receive a call from an 876 area code:

- You must enter to win.** Remember lottery tickets must be purchased and sweepstakes must be entered to win. Sweepstakes usually involve application paperwork that you have personally completed and government grants have a thorough application process as well.
- Never pay any money to collect supposed sweepstakes winnings.** If you have to pay to collect your winnings, you're not winning. Legitimate sweepstakes don't require you to pay "insurance," "taxes" or "shipping and handling charges" to collect your prize.
- Never wire money.** Scammers pressure people to wire money through commercial money transfer companies because wiring money is the same as sending cash. When the money's gone, there's very little chance of recovery. Con artists recommend these services so they can get their hands on your money before you realize you've been cheated.
- Never provide personal information.** Scammers can be very charming and charismatic and will lure or pressure for personal information, which could be used for identity theft.
- Be very suspicious of advance fee loan calls.** Even if the loans are real, interest rates can be extremely high or the business can be an outright scam. Always do business with local companies with brick and mortar locations when possible.
- Try to avoid payday loans or other high interest loans at all costs,** especially from online companies. Try to find other means to meet financial obligations, such as short-term financial help from family or friends.
- Don't let the promise of extra cash or lower monthly payments get in the way of your good judgment** about whether the cost you will pay for the loan is really worth it. (Know how much the loan will cost you at the date of pay off.)
- Be extremely cautious when giving out any personal information** online such as Social Security and bank account numbers. Be alert for websites that force you to give that information before even telling you whether you qualify for a loan.