



City of Parma, Ohio

LAW DEPARTMENT



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LAW DIRECTOR ADVISORY

FRAUD ALERT – FAMILY MEMBER IN JAIL

People across Northeast Ohio have reported being the target of a telephone scam involving claims that a family member is in trouble. Two men from Tampa, Florida have recently been arrested locally for this scam. They are accused of scamming over \$150,000 from residents in nearly a dozen Northeast Ohio communities and other places across the US.

These scammers will pretend to be a family member who is in jail for causing a serious accident or arrested for a DUIA and in immediate need of money to post bail. They have used highly publicized fatal traffic accidents to authenticate their story to the victim. Once the victim is convinced of the story, the scammer will instruct the victim to give the money to a courier who will arrive at the victim's home. The courier often pretends to be working for the family member's attorney. In one particular case, a man posing as courier drove to a victim's home in a U-Haul truck to pick up the cash.

The Parma Law Director's Office urges Parma residents to be aware of these potential threats and to report any suspicious behavior. You should **never** provide or confirm sensitive information over the phone. If you are pressured to pay someone's bond immediately, hang up the phone as it is most likely a scam.

Below are a few tips to protect yourself from and avoid any potential scams:

- **Spot the scam:** You should be very weary if someone calls posing as a relative or an attorney of a relative asking for money. This is a common scam. The scammer is tugging at the victim's heart strings. Do not trust them.
- **Verify:** If you are unsure a call from a family member or his/her attorney is legitimate, ask for details regarding the arrest. A genuine caller will be able to tell you what jail he or she is being held in, who the arresting officers were, and what the charges are. You should also ask the caller personal questions that only a family member knows the answers to. Do not call back any number given by the caller to confirm the caller's story. Do call the jail where the caller is allegedly held to confirm the story. Demand from any courier who appears at your home for identification and proof of employment.

- **Report:** If you believe that you are the target or victim of a scam, call and file a report with the Parma Police Department at (440) 885-1234. Victims should also report scams to the Cuyahoga County Department of Consumer Affairs at (216) 443-7226. Victims can also report scams to the Ohio Attorney General's office by way of:

Online : www.OhioProtects.org (victims may remain anonymous)

Telephone: 800-282-0515 (open Monday – Friday 8 a.m. – 7 p.m.)

Mail: 30 E. Broad St., 14th Floor, Columbus, OH 43215