



# CONNECTICUT CONSUMER PROTECTION MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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## SCAM ALERT

**What it is:** Extortion  
Scams

### How it works:

Scammers use fake dating profiles to target LGBTQ+ individuals. They send explicit photos and pressure you to respond in kind. If you do, they threaten to expose your images and conversations unless you pay them.

### How to protect yourself:

Don't share intimate photos with people you don't know. Always verify who you are speaking with and be wary of fast-moving conversations that turn sexual. Never pay a blackmailer, always opt to block, report, and save all messages for your local authorities.

## What is Notario Fraud?

"Notario" is a commonly used term for a legal professional in Latin American countries. Notario fraud targets undocumented individuals pursuing legal U.S. citizenship. Scammers sometimes open a street-front office in a non-English speaking immigrant community and identify as a Notario or immigration lawyer, promising to assist individuals with citizenship documents, or indicating they can get papers faster. However, the imposter does not have the legal knowledge or credential to do so in this country. This is a scam. *Real immigration lawyers cannot predict the timeline, as the process can take several years.*

Notario fraud attempts to take advantage of the complex process of becoming a citizen, preying upon those overwhelmed by it. Imposters create a false sense of community posting advertisements at local churches, schools, laundromats, etc. The scheme attempts to steal money and personal information and leaves the individual without an application for citizenship, or worse yet, a faulty application which can lead to deportation.

### Warning Signs of Notario Fraud

- Promises a speedy path to citizenship
- Demands a cash payment upfront (can range from \$500 to \$5,000)
- Offers to complete forms for their client
- "Notario" tells clients to only call them for case updates
- Charges for application forms (The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services does **not** charge for immigration application forms)
- Lacks credential or proof of a law degree

Victims of Notario fraud are often reluctant to share their stories due to fear of revealing their undocumented status. The Federal Trade Commission estimates that 1 in 5 individuals that want to become citizens were targeted by Notario imposters.



### **SPEAKING REQUESTS**

*Want DCP to speak to your organization, or table at your event? Contact Catherine Blinder at [Catherine.Blinder@ct.gov](mailto:Catherine.Blinder@ct.gov) to submit a request.*

### **Contact Us**

#### **Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection**

450 Columbus Boulevard,  
Suite 901

Hartford, CT 06103-1840

**Main Line:** (860) 713-6100  
(8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.)

#### **Consumer Complaint Center**

(860) 713-6300

Toll Free: (800) 842-2649

8:30am-4:30pm

Email:

[DCP.complaints@ct.gov](mailto:DCP.complaints@ct.gov)

### **VISIT US ONLINE**

**[CT.GOV/DCP](http://CT.GOV/DCP)**

Over the last decade, Notario imposters used flyers and advertisements, but today individuals should be wary of text, email, or phone calls promoting Notario services.

#### **Ways to stay protected:**

- Ask for immigration lawyer recommendations from family and friends
- Complete your own forms and maintain a personal file of your paperwork
- Keep track of your case online, do not rely on others for updates
- Verify the cost of filing fees through the USCIS website
- Avoid hiring anyone who demands cash payments and/or use high-pressure tactics

Fraud types that use cash payments have little to no recourse. However, victims of Notario fraud should report their story to the Federal Trade Commission by visiting [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](http://ReportFraud.ftc.gov). FTC reports can build cases against scammers and help prevent future harm.

To learn more, [listen to the Connecticut Public Radio interview on Notario Fraud with DCP's Chief Education and Outreach Officer Catherine Blinder.](#)

#### ***End-of-Life planning?***

##### ***Make sure you know what should be in a prepaid funeral service contract.***

A prepaid funeral contract establishes funeral funding and services in advance and is sometimes called a “pre-need” contract.

Consumers may choose to enter into a pre-need contract as part of their end-of-life planning to ensure funds are set aside for their funeral and other services.

Consumers may establish a pre-need contract by contacting the licensed funeral home of their choice, but before you do, make sure you know what should be included in that contract and how you can keep track of your escrow funds by visiting our website at [ct.gov/DCP](http://ct.gov/DCP).

***Have a tip we missed? A topic you want more information about? Send us an email at [DCP.Communications@ct.gov](mailto:DCP.Communications@ct.gov).***