

FROM THE OFFICE OF WELD COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
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Fraud Alert!

TAKE THE MYSTERY OUT OF MYSTERY SHOPPING



Family budgets are tightening during these tough economic times, and many people are looking for ways to bring home extra income. While mystery shopping may sound appealing, be sure to read the fine print before committing to a program otherwise you may find yourself the victim of a scam.

The idea behind mystery shopping is simple: a marketing research company hires people to go into retail stores, restaurants and other businesses to evaluate the quality of service provided to the customer. Since the mystery shoppers are unknown to the people in the store, the theory is that the interaction between the store employees and the mystery shopper will be genuine (versus the interaction between the evaluator and the store staff when the staff knows they are being evaluated and who is doing the evaluating). In return for an evaluation, the mystery shopper is reimbursed and can keep the product or service. There are legitimate mystery shopping opportunities available, but you need to know what to look for so you don't become the victim of fraud.

Fraudulent mystery shopping companies usually try to create the impression that there is a lot of money to be made through the opportunities they claim to provide. "Professional" mystery shoppers, however, will tell you that mystery shopping is a part-time activity that certainly won't allow you quit your day job. If you find a mystery shopping job through the help-wanted section of the newspaper or in an email be wary, and if the company charges a fee to submit an application to become a mystery shopper, steer clear. There are legitimate opportunities to be found on the internet, and legitimate companies that provide mystery shopping opportunities will not charge an application fee. Companies that guarantee jobs as a mystery shopper or charge a fee to access mystery shopping opportunities are more likely than not fraudulent companies as well.

As with anything, take your time to research the company or business you are considering applying to. Do your homework with regard to mystery shopping and don't pay money to a company for something you can receive for free for such as mystery shopping opportunities or the ability to submit applications. If you think you have fallen victim to a mystery shopping scheme, contact the Better Business Bureau, the State Attorney General or the Federal Trade Commission.

Contact your local police agency if you think you are a victim of a crime. To contact the Weld County District Attorney's Office, call (970) 356-4010 ext. 4702.