Bank of Marin

# Identity Fraud Prevention

In 2021 alone, $24 billion were lost and 15 million U.S. consumers were impacted due to traditional identity fraud losses - information was stolen without any direct interaction with the consumer- resulting use of a consumer's personal information to achieve illegal financial gain, according to a Javelin Strategy and Research study released in 2022.

The same study found that losses from identity fraud scams - involving direct contact between the criminal and the victim - totaled $28 billion and affected 27 million consumers in the United States.

It's a growing problem that has expanded in new ways since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted wide changes in digital behaviors.

## Take steps to protect yourself.

Take the following actions to help prevent identity fraud:

- Store all financial documents in a secure location.
- Shred outdated or unnecessary financial documents after using them.
- Adopt a "Zero Trust" contact policy. This means never trust, always verify.
- Use a digital wallet on your cell phone or tablet to manage in-store and online payments.
- Use two-factor authentication wherever possible AND never share one-time passwords via text or phone call. For sites without two-factor authentication, use strong passwords or a password manager to secure them.
- Secure computer and mobile devices by using a screen lock, data encryption, and install anti-malware. (Anti-malware protection is essential for all devices). Avoid using public WiFi whenever possible.
- Place a security freeze on credit reports - A freeze on your credit reports helps prevent others from opening one in your name and there is no cost. If you need to open an account requiring a credit inquiry, the freeze can be lifted.
- Sign up for alerts on all of your accounts - Many financial service providers, including banks, credit card issuers and brokerages, offer alert notifications of suspicious account activity - as do businesses in other industries, such as email and social media providers.

**TIP** **Keep your cellphone number current with your service providers so you receive alerts!**

## If you suspect identity theft, act immediately.

- **Contact your bank or financial service provider**.
- Start fresh with new payment card numbers, user logins and passwords. Choose user logins and passwords that are not specific to your name or personal information. Passwords should be complex and have a minimum of 8 characters.
- Place a "Fraud Alert" on your credit report and review the report carefully. The three nationwide consumer reporting agencies have toll-free numbers:
  - Equifax: (800) 349-9960
  - Experian: (888) 397-3742
  - TransUnion: (888) 909-8872
- Close any accounts that have been established without your knowledge. Follow up in writing with the financial institution that holds the account and with the credit bureaus.
- File a report with local law enforcement officials to help you with creditors who may want proof of the crime.
- Keep records of your conversations and any documents including written communication with law enforcement or creditors stating your case.
- Ask for verification that the disputed account has been closed and the fraudulent debts have been discharged.
- Report the theft to the Federal Trade Commission to help law enforcement officials in their investigations.

  Online at **www.ftc.gov/idtheft** or

  Call at **1-800-ID-THEFT** (1-800-438-4338)

  Contact Your State's Attorney General's Office at **www.oag.ca.gov/idtheft**
- For additional information about internet crimes, visit the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center at **www.IC3.gov**

**Javelin Strategy and Research study released in 2022.*

**For additional Fraud Prevention Resources visit WWW.BANKOFMARIN.COM/PREVENTFRAUD**