



HAMILTON COUNTY COALITION to **STOP** FRAUD, SCAMS & ABUSE



Protect yourself from Spring Break travel scams February 22, 2011

As you begin planning your dream Spring Break trip this year, you may have encountered offers for 'All expenses paid!', 'Great deals!', or 'Cheap flights!' But before you turn over the cash for these 'amazing' offers, the Hamilton County Coalition to Stop Fraud, Scams & Abuse and Better Business Bureau caution you against falling victim to the many travel scams that can ruin your Spring Break – or your credit.

You can sniff out a scam by staying alert for suspicious signs. Offers that require you to wait at least 60 days before taking your trip, ask for payment to be sent via overnight mail or by messenger, or are sold using high-pressure sales tactics are often ploys to make a quick buck.

Soliciting you with vacation offers may also be a maneuver to steal your identity. You should never give any personal information, such as your Social Security Number, your credit card number or your bank account information, without seeing the entire offer in writing. If you do share any private information, make sure you monitor your bank accounts and credit cards closely for suspicious activity. Alert your local police department immediately if you notice unauthorized charges on any of your statements.

The best way to avoid losing your money or your identity is to do your research. Read the small print on any offers, ask detailed questions and check out any travel companies with Better Business Bureau before turning over your credit card. As with any financial decisions, being smart and prepared upfront can help you avoid a costly mess later.

To learn more about student scams and how you can avoid consumer fraud, identity theft and scams, visit www.hamilton-co.org/fraud.

To find a Better Business Bureau-accredited travel company, check out a business or charity, or file a complaint, visit www.cincinnati.bbb.org.

About the Hamilton County Coalition to Stop Fraud, Scams & Abuse

The Hamilton County Coalition to Stop Fraud, Scams & Abuse was started by Commissioner Greg Hartmann in 2010 with the purpose of pro-actively educating Hamilton County residents on the dangers of consumer fraud, identity theft and scams in our community. As a partnership with social service agencies, the business community, nonprofits and law enforcement, the Coalition has released a *Comprehensive Community Plan* to help consumers detect, prevent and report fraud and scams. To learn more, visit www.hamilton-co.org/fraud.

About Better Business Bureau

Better Business Bureau (BBB), the leader in advancing marketplace trust, is an unbiased non-profit organization that sets and upholds high standards for fair and honest business behavior. Businesses that earn BBB accreditation contractually agree and adhere to the organization's high standards of ethical business behavior. BBB provides objective advice, free business BBB Reliability Reports[®] and charity BBB Wise Giving Reports[®], and educational information on topics affecting marketplace trust. To further promote trust, BBB offers complaint and dispute resolution support for consumers and businesses when there is a difference in viewpoints. The organization is also a recognized leader in developing and administering self-regulation programs for the business community, and, with respect to the advertising industry, does that through a joint venture in conjunction with National Advertising Review Council partners. The first BBB was founded in 1912. Today, 123 BBBs serve communities across the U.S. and Canada, evaluating and monitoring more than four million local and national businesses and charities. Visit www.bbb.org for more information.