

Your Friend is Not Pitching Grant Scams on Facebook

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MADISON – Wisconsin consumers are reporting a grant scam that uses Facebook Messenger to transmit phony pitches for free money. Messages look like they are coming from friends, but they are not.

The messages state that the consumer's name appeared on a list as being eligible to receive grant money, and that the consumer will receive thousands of dollars in grant funds after paying a fee. The consumer is encouraged to contact a company via an email address or phone number that is provided.

One Wisconsin consumer reported that a trusted friend (actually an imposter) reached out via Messenger to find out if she had received a payout from the “Department of Human Service Grant Program fund.” The “friend” said that she was on the list of randomly selected names to receive money from the fund and that she was eligible for \$50,000 in cash after paying a delivery and tax clearance fee.

None of the consumers that reported this scam to DATCP have fallen victim.

Tips to avoid grant scams include:

- Promises of free grant money are common scams. Consumers who receive contacts about free money should delete the message and not respond.
- Remember that you should never pay money to win a prize or to receive “free” grant money.
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) does offer grants to social service programs, but not to individuals.
- It is illegal to ask someone to pay to apply for a federal grant or to increase their odds of being awarded a grant.

For additional information on grant scams, read DATCP’s “Government Grant Scams” fact sheet: <https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Publications/Grants427.aspx>.

For additional information, visit the Consumer Protection Bureau at <http://datcp.wi.gov>, send an e-mail to datcphotline@wi.gov or call the Consumer Protection Hotline at 1-800-422-7128.

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