**Beware of COVID-19 Vaccination Card Fraud and Scams**

By District Attorney Summer Stephan

California has at long last reopened. Vaccines are available to the public, and many social distancing regulations have been relaxed or eliminated altogether. These steps toward a return to pre-pandemic normalcy are encouraging, but consumers still need to be cautious about COVID-19 related scams and other fraudulent activity.

Although it appears that California will not be implementing a vaccination passport system, vaccination verification may be necessary to enter some businesses and large events. The government issued COVID-19 Vaccination Record Cards are now the official method of vaccine verification in California. And of course, that means vaccination verification has created a market for fraudulent and stolen vaccine cards nationwide.

The San Diego County District Attorney’s Office and other offices across the state have reported incidents regarding the attempted sale of official blank vaccination cards. Scammers are also selling forged cards in person and online. In San Diego county, we’ve received reports of social media ads targeting consumers by selling fake vaccination cards. And, on various social media platforms, fraudsters have been stealing personal identifying information from photos of legitimate vaccination cards posted by users.

It is illegal to fraudulently produce vaccination cards bearing official U.S. Government seals. In some cases, such actions could include charges, such as identity theft and falsifying medical records and forgery. Currently, an estimated 35% of San Diegans have not been vaccinated, and there is a large population at risk of becoming a victim of any of these predatory schemes. Here are some tips to identify and avoid them:

* Only official vaccine distributors can provide an official COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card. You can find an official distributor at <https://myturn.ca.gov>. Official vaccination cards will always include the name of the person vaccinated, the type of vaccine provided, and dates of when the doses were administered. The COVID-19 vaccination and the accompanying record card are **always free**. Any request for money or compensation is a scam.
* Photos of vaccinations cards are a valid form of vaccine verification in California as well as documentation from a healthcare provider. Sharing this information on social media puts your personal identifying information at risk of theft or fraud. Do not post images of your vaccination card or medical records on social media.
* Be cautious about federal or state government imposters**.** Today, there is no official national or California vaccine verification app, certificate, or passport. Any contact from the state or federal government asking for personal information or money to obtain these forms of verification are scams and can be reported to the Consumer Protection Unit of the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office.
* Confirm any vaccine verification policies with all activity and event venues directly.Do not rely on information from third parties about whether vaccine verification is needed.
* Review California’s official vaccination verification policy at <https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines> before you attend an activity or event.
* Research before you buy or provide personal information for COVID-19 related goods and services.Always be sure you are dealing with a reputable business and official or authorized government entity. Check review sites and scam alerts before moving forward with purchases or providing personal information.
* Monitor the FTC’s scam alerts at <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/scam-alerts>, as well as the San Diego County District Attorney’s news page at <https://danewscenter.com/news>.

As your District Attorney, I’m committed to increasing communication and accessibility between the [DA’s Office](https://www.sdcda.org/office/meet-da.html) and the public. I hope these consumer and public safety tips have been helpful.

The Consumer Protection Unit is comprised of Deputy District Attorneys, Investigators and Paralegals dedicated to protecting consumers and law-abiding businesses from fraudulent or unfair business practices. To report a consumer complaint, you can call (619) 531-3507 or email consumer@sdcda.org.