



Students need to be leery of work-at-home scams

By Doug Kerns
Staff Reporter

The old adage, "If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is," is a perfect touchstone for students to avoid work-at-home schemes, according to Dan Parsons, special assistant to the Nebraska attorney general.

The office of Don Stenberg, Nebraska Attorney General, recently released a consumer bulletin to media outlets, consumer groups, public libraries and chambers of commerce across the state, urging them to use caution and discretion when considering work-at-home offers.

"Probably the best advice is to be diligent in asking questions and beware of those offers which ask you to put money up front before having the opportunity to learn more about the company," Parsons said.

Parsons said college students are good targets for this type of fraud.

"They are targeted toward those in that age group who show that they're looking for a second income or a way to make some money without spending a lot of time doing it."

Many work-at-home offers, legitimate or not, are advertised in the clas-

sified section of major newspapers. "There is no requirement by law that any publication check out the truthfulness of an ad before running it," Parsons stated.

Parsons admitted it is often difficult to tell between a true and a fraudulent ad.

"Quite frankly, it is sometimes difficult even for us to discern which ones might be legitimate and which ones aren't without doing some further checking," he said.

The punishments for running these scams can be severe. "We can ask the judge to fine them up to \$2,000 for every one of the people they scammed, so that could add up in a hurry," Parsons said.

Unfortunately, the attorney general's office usually hears of this type of consumer fraud after it is too late.

"We find out usually after the fact from people who have been scammed, although some consumers do alert us to ads in papers."

If you have any information about a possibly fraudulent work-at-home scheme, contact Attorney General Don Stenberg, Consumer Protection Division, 2115 State Capital Building, Lincoln, NE 68509, or call 471-2682.