



## Supreme Court of Florida

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### **Florida Supreme Court warns of phone and email scams telling people to appear in court or pay money to courts**

The Florida Supreme Court is warning of several widespread email and phone scams that try to trick people by saying they must come to a Florida state court to face charges or must pay money related to a Florida state court action.

The scams appear to heavily target those with limited English-language skills, the elderly, health-care workers, or the relatives of people who recently died – though anyone can be a target.

People can avoid being victimized with a little foreknowledge. Most importantly, state courts in Florida do not make initial contact by email or by phone to tell people to appear before a judge or to pay money. You normally would be told in person or by regular-delivery mail.

Several different kinds of scams have been reported:

- One scam sends emails saying that the recipient – often a health-care worker – is a defendant in a “Court of Appeals” case about a “Health Care Service Violation.” In reality, no Florida state court would ever make its initial contact with any “defendant” by email.
- A separate telephone scam targets Spanish speakers in Southeast Florida, especially Dade and Broward Counties. It often displays a fake Caller ID phone number that spoofs the actual phone number of the Florida Supreme Court clerk’s office. Usually the caller tells the intended victims they must pay money or make a wire transfer to avoid being charged with offenses like kidnapping, child pornography or human trafficking.

- A third scam targets the family or heirs of people who recently died, claiming that someone else owes money to the deceased person's estate. Usually the scam occurs by asking the family or heirs to pay an upfront "tax" or some other fee in order to receive payment. At least one email scam of this type included the bogus signature of a Florida judge.
- A fourth scam widespread throughout the United States can come by phone or email and relates to jury duty. Usually it falsely claims that the person must pay a fine for missing jury duty or must disclose sensitive personal information like a Social Security number that can be used in identity theft.

Anyone receiving similar emails or phone calls should not give out any sensitive personal information and may wish to report them to law enforcement or the Florida Attorney General's Office.

Links or attachments in these scam emails should not be clicked or opened. They may contain computer viruses or stealth programs that damage computers or steal personal information for possible identity theft.

People who need to check any suspicious email or telephone contact allegedly coming from a Florida state court can forward them to the Florida Supreme Court at [supremecourt@flcourts.org](mailto:supremecourt@flcourts.org).

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