



Fair Credit Reporting Act

Office of Attorney General, Consumer Protection Division

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There are many types of consumer reporting agencies, including credit bureaus and agencies that sell information about your check writing history, medical records, and rental history records. The federal Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) promotes the accuracy, fairness, and privacy of information in the files of consumer reporting agencies; it also gives consumers certain rights.

Your Credit File

You must be told if information in your file has been used against you. Anyone who uses a credit report or other type of consumer report to deny your application for credit, insurance, or employment - or to take another adverse action against you - must tell you, and must give you the name, address, and phone number of the agency that provided the information.

File Disclosure

You have the right to know what is in your file. You may request and obtain all the information about you in the files of a consumer reporting agency. You will be required to provide proper identification, which may include your social security number. In many cases, this disclosure is free. You are entitled to a free file disclosure if:

- You are the victim of identity theft and place a fraud alert in your file;
- Your file contains inaccurate information as a result of fraud;
- A person has taken adverse action against you because of information in your credit report;
- You are on public assistance or you are unemployed but expect to apply for employment within 60 days.

Credit Score

You have the right to ask for a credit score. Credit scoring is a system creditors use to help determine whether to give you credit, and how much to charge you for it. A high credit score indicates a good credit worthiness, and will qualify the score holder for loans at lower interest rates.

To arrive at a credit score, the consumer reporting agencies look at your bill-paying history, late payments, collection actions, the number of credit accounts, etc., and assigns points to each factor. The total score, which may differ slightly between the three consumer reporting agencies, is reported to creditors when your application for credit or a loan is processed.

You can obtain your credit score from the consumer reporting agencies, but you will have to pay for it. If you have recently obtained a personal property loan, that lending company may give you the credit score information for free.

Free Annual Credit Report

You are entitled to receive one free credit report each year from each of the three major credit reporting agencies - Experian, TransUnion, or Equifax - for a total of three free reports a year. You can choose to order these free credit reports all at the same time, or order a different credit bureau's free report every few months (but only one time per year).

The free credit reports must be ordered through the national central clearing house. If you request one directly from the credit reporting bureau or through an advertisement, you will have to pay for the information. In order to receive a free report, you must provide proper identification, including your social security number, date of birth and current address. Order your free credit reports through the Annual Credit Report clearing house:

- Online at: **www.annualcreditreport.com**. This clearing house website links you to the special webpage for the selected credit reporting agency; OR
- by mail to: Annual Credit Report Request Service PO Box 105283, Atlanta, GA 30348-5283.

The credit agencies also offer several additional options to choose from, including getting a credit score, but these options are not free. You do not have to buy any of the additional services to get the free credit report.

Inaccurate Information

You have the right to dispute incomplete or inaccurate information. If you identify information in your file that is incomplete or inaccurate, write a letter to the consumer reporting agency. Include with your letter copies of any documents that support your position. You should also include a copy of the report on which you have marked the information you dispute.

The agency contacts the information provider to investigate the disputed information, usually within thirty days. When the investigation is complete, the consumer reporting agency must give you the results in writing and include the name, address, and phone number of the information provider. If the dispute results in a change, the agency also must provide you with a free copy of your report. This free report does not count as your annual free report.

If you ask, the consumer reporting company must send notices of any corrections to anyone who received your report in the past six months. If an investigation doesn't resolve your dispute with the consumer reporting company, you can ask that a statement of the dispute be included in your file and in future reports.

- For more information, contact the Federal Trade Commission, at www.ftc.gov.

Outdated Information

Consumer reporting agencies may not report outdated negative information. In most cases, a consumer reporting agency may not report negative information that is more than seven years old or bankruptcies more than ten years old.