

Identity Theft & Children

Iowa Identity Theft Victim
Assistance Coalition

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Director

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Identity Theft & Children – It's Real!

- ▶ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/yes-your-child-could-be-a-victim-of-identity-theft/>

Identity Theft & Children – Defining the Issue

2011 Carnegie Mellon University Study

- ▶ First large child ID theft report ever published, based on identity protection scans of over 40,000 U.S. children.
- ▶ Unused Social Security numbers are uniquely valuable as thieves can pair them with any name and birth date. This is particularly useful for illegal immigration.
- ▶ The probability of discovery is low, as the child will not be using it for a long period of time. Parents typically don't monitor their children's identities.
- ▶ The potential impact on the child's future is profound; it could destroy or damage a child's ability to win approval on student loans, acquire a mobile phone, obtain a job or secure a place to live.

Identity Theft & Children – Defining the Issue

Key Findings

- A. 4,311 or 10.2% of the children in the report had someone else using their Social Security number – 51 times higher than the 0.2% rate for adults in the same population.
- B. Child IDs were used to purchase homes and automobiles, open credit card accounts, secure employment and obtain driver's licenses.
- C. The largest fraud (\$725,000) was committed against a 16 year old girl. Social Security number was linked to eight different suspects living in border states. The suspects opened 42 open accounts including mortgages, auto loans, credit cards, and bills in collections including medical, credit cards, and utilities
- D. The youngest victim was five months old; 303 victims were under the age of five.

Identity Theft & Children – Defining the Issue

Types of Records Involved – Carnegie Mellon Study

Loan & Credit Accounts	6,948	70%
Utility	1,767	18%
Property Assessments, Deeds, Mortgages, Foreclosures	537	5%
Driver's License	415	4%
Vehicle Registration	235	2%



Doug Wolfe

Program Planner

Iowa Department of Human
Services

Warning Signs

- ▶ Child is turned down for government benefits because benefits are being paid to another account using child's Social Security Number.
- ▶ Parents receive notice from IRS saying the child didn't pay income taxes, or that the child's SS# was used on another tax return.
- ▶ Collection calls or bills for products or services the child didn't receive.

Check for a Credit Report

- ▶ Contact the three main credit bureaus and request a manual search of the child's file.
- ▶ The bureaus will check for files relating to the child's name and SS#, and then just for the SS#.
- ▶ Credit bureaus may require copies of:
 - ▶ Child's birth or adoption certificate
 - ▶ Child's Social Security card
 - ▶ Parent or guardian's government-issued ID card, such as a DL, or copies of documents proving legal guardianship
 - ▶ Proof of address, such as a utility bill.

Repair the Damage

- ▶ Contact the companies where fraud occurred.
 - ▶ Tell them child is a minor. Ask for fraudulent account to be closed and proof of closure in writing.
- ▶ Report the ID theft to the FTC – [IdentityTheft.gov](https://www.IdentityTheft.gov)
- ▶ Contact the credit bureaus
 - ▶ Tell them child is a minor and ask them to remove any fraudulent accounts from child's credit report.
 - ▶ Consider freezing all credit reports for child. (See next frame.)

Freeze a Child's Credit Report

Protected Security Freeze (Minors and others) – Iowa Code Section 714G.8A.

- ▶ Contained within chapter 714G, this section permits an adult to require credit reporting companies to create a credit report for the adult's minor child under 16 years of age and to freeze that credit report.
- ▶ Protected consumers under the law also include an incapacitated person and protected persons for whom a guardian or conservator has been appointed.

Freeze a Child's Credit Report

Protected Security Freeze (Minors and others) – Iowa Code Section 714G.8A.

- ▶ The protected consumer may request that the freeze be lifted if he or she submits proof to the consumer credit agency that the previously submitted proof of authority to act on the consumer's behalf to seek imposition of the security freeze is no longer in effect.
- ▶ Consumer credit agencies may not charge for the placement or removal of a security freeze under this section.

Prevention

- ▶ Create and Freeze a child's credit report
 - ▶ <https://www.experian.com/freeze/form-minor-freeze.html>
 - ▶ <https://www.transunion.com/credit-freeze>
 - ▶ https://assets.equifax.com/assets/personal/Minor_Freeze_Request_Form.pdf

Prevention

- ▶ Keep your child's information in a safe, secure place.
- ▶ Never share your child's SS# unless you know and trust the other party.
- ▶ Ask if the requestor will take a different form of ID or just last 4 digits of the SS#.
- ▶ Shred any documents that contain your child's SS# that you don't need.
- ▶ Remember that if you a break-in, theft, or electronic breach, your child's information may be lost along with or instead of your own.

Limit the Risk

- ▶ Find out who has access to your child's personal information.
- ▶ Pay attention to forms from school that may seek personal information about your child.
- ▶ Read all notices from your child's school, including the annual notice of your right to:
 - ▶ Inspect and review your child's education records
 - ▶ Approve the disclosure of personal information in your child's records
 - ▶ Ask to correct errors in the record.

Limit the Risk

- ▶ Ask the school about its school directory policy
 - ▶ Find out exactly data will appear in the directory.
 - ▶ If you want to opt your child's data out of the directory, make sure to put it in writing and keep a copy.
- ▶ Find out whether your child will be listed in any school communications about any extracurricular activities in which your child engages, the type of information included, and your right to opt out.
- ▶ Take action if your child's school experiences a data breach. Make sure to get all the details about the data to which access was gained.

Contacting Bill

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