



# TEXAS TEENS: BEWARE OF SUMMER JOB SCAMS

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

WITH THE SCHOOL YEAR WINDING DOWN, thousands of Texas teenagers will start looking for summer jobs. Teens can gain valuable skills and build a solid work ethic from part-time or seasonal employment. Whether saving for college, helping with the family budget, or simply earning some extra spending money, summer jobs provide valuable experience to teen Texans.

When considering a summer job, parents and teens alike should be cautious of employment scams. If an offer sounds “too good to be true,” it usually is. Some prospective employers target teens for work that involves long hours and minimal pay or benefits.

For example, some traveling sales crews recruit teens to sell magazines or other products door-to-door, in parking lots or local strip malls. While many of these are legitimate businesses, some organizations falsely claim to be charities, inviting teens to work for a social cause, like the environment or a scholarship drive.

Crew bosses attract teens with fliers promising a fun job, travel, new friends, parties, prizes, and above all: money. The reality of a traveling sales crew is usually much different. Teens often work at night with no adult supervision,

travel in cramped passenger vans and peddle magazine subscriptions in unfamiliar neighborhoods across the country. Despite 16-hour days and no benefits, the money teens earn from subscription sales is often siphoned off by crew leaders for meals, lodging, and other expenses.

Teens who join traveling sales crews are often employed as “independent contractors,” which allows crew bosses to escape most labor regulations and other protections. As a result, these young workers can be held liable for neglecting to charge sales tax, making false claims about a product or operating without a permit.

Teens should also be wary of classified ads looking for “mystery shoppers.” This scheme has cost unsuspecting job hunters thousands of dollars. After responding to the ad, job seekers receive a cashier’s check and a letter of congratulations instructing the job seeker to send the money to an address out of the country. The checks turn out to be bogus, and victims have difficulty recouping their losses.

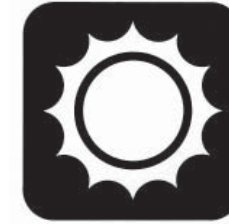
Internet job offers should also be approached with caution, particularly if they are unsolicited offers from unknown senders. With the advent

of social networking sites, millions of teens are online every day. Just as an online predator can pose as a 14-year-old child, a scam artist posing as an employment recruiter or potential employer can exploit online teens.

Online scammers pitch attractive employment opportunities that usually contain some variation of the same hook: the job seeker must first either pay in advance for out-of-pocket expenses or provide sensitive personal information like bank account numbers or social security numbers. Requirements like these should send up a red flag to any job hunter that this may be a job scam. Note, however, that federal law requires employers to collect employees’ social security numbers, so even reputable companies will require that information from their employees.

Thousands of summer jobs will be available to Texas teens in the coming weeks, and most of those will be legitimate work opportunities. Teens should beware, however, of any offers that include high-pressure sales pitches, advance fees or offers from unfamiliar companies or organizations. Offers that sound “too good to be true” usually are!

## POINTS TO REMEMBER



### SUMMER JOB TIPS

- Be wary of unsolicited job offers that arrive through E-mail.
- Verify the identifying information of the company with which you are applying, including telephone numbers, fax numbers, and main address.
- Do not trust offers from outside the area, especially overseas.
- Never trust a company or individual that requires you to pay fees up-front to find work.
- Be wary of requests for sensitive personal information.

Information on this and other topics is available on the Attorney General’s Web site at [www.oag.state.tx.us](http://www.oag.state.tx.us).



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