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I. Introduction

To provide an effective response to the growing problem of identity crime, law enforcement must be knowledge-able about the crime and how it is perpetrated — allowing officers to conduct better investigations and help members of their communities prevent and respond to such crimes.

There are several general resources that provide a comprehensive overview of identity crime:

- IDSafety.org (www.idsafety.org), a joint project of the International Association of Chiefs of Police and Bank of America, which is designed to help consumers and law enforcement combat identity crime.
- The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has an extensive identity crime Web site: "Deter, Detect, Defend" (www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/). In addition to a Web site that has information for consumers and victims, it also has a Web site dedicated to law enforcement: (www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/law-enforcement/index.html), which seeks to provide law enforcement officers with the necessary resources to help them fight back against identity crime and to support victims.

The following resources are divided into four separate, but equally important categories: investigations, responding to victims, laws and legislation, and community relations. If you are aware of a resource that you believe would be useful to other law enforcement officers and should be included on this list, please e-mail the link to idsafety@theiacp.org.
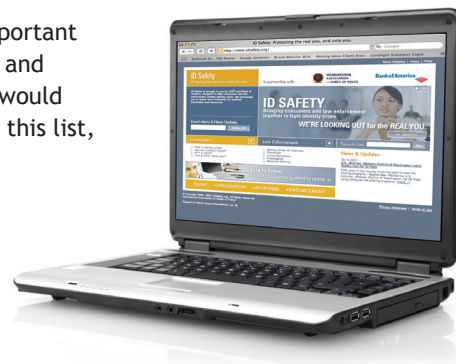
II. Resources for Investigations

There are many resources available to help law enforcement officers improve their existing investigations on identity crime, either by utilizing federally available databases or by providing advice on how to work collaboratively with other agencies:

- The FTC Web site offers many resources for law enforcement investigations. Its main page for investigations provides information on the Identity Theft Data Clearinghouse, including how to sign up, and how to obtain a victim's identity crime-related transaction records from creditors without first obtaining a subpoena once there is an authorization from the victim. (www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/law-enforcement/investigations.html)
- For more information on the FTC's Identity Theft Data Clearinghouse, see: www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/general/gen09.pdf.
- For more information on the requirement of businesses to provide victims and law enforcement with transaction records relating to identity crime, see the following FTC fact sheet: www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/business/idtheft/bus66.pdf.
- To conduct an in-depth assessment on your jurisdiction's problem with identity crime and your response to this crime, refer to the following article: "Understanding Your Local Problem," from Graeme R. Newman from the, "Identity Theft, Problem-Oriented Guides for Police, Problem-Specific Guides Series No. 25, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services," (pp.21-28), which can be found at www.popcenter.org/Problems/PDFs/Identity%20Theft.pdf.

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II. Resources for Investigations (cont'd)

- Expand the investigative tools available to your officers by utilizing the FTC's secure online access to a database of consumer complaints related to fraud, known as Consumer Sentinel. This database helps investigators track patterns, work across jurisdictional lines, and identify clusters of victims: www.ftc.gov/sentinel/cs_signup.pdf.

- "Best Practices For Seizing Electronic Evidence," a joint project of the U.S. Secret Service and the IACP (www.secretservice.gov/electronic_evidence.shtml) and pocket guide for first responders (www.forwardedge2.com/pdf/bestpractices.pdf).

- Forward Edge II (www.forwardedge2.com/) is an interactive, computer-based training program that trains law enforcement officers in conducting electronic crime investigations. A product of the Secret service, it uses DVD, CD-ROM and the Internet to enhance the training experience. To request copy: www.forwardedge2.usss.gov/requestACopy.aspx.

- Access the Secret Service's eLibrary, a secure Web site for law enforcement and qualified financial crime investigators that provides resource databases on many topics, including the "Forward Edge II Field Guide." The guide includes updated electronic crime statutes, technology briefs regarding devices that store information, investigative resources for each state and other resources for investigators (https://www1.einformation.usss.gov/elib/welcome.nsf/AbouteLibrary).

- Stay current on the latest scams and learn how to work with the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) to prevent and respond to crimes at the U.S. Postal Inspection Service: (http://postalinspectors.uspis.gov).

- Join a Secret Service Electronic Crime Task Force (www.ectaskforce.org). To find a task force operating in your area: (http://ectaskforce.org/Regional_Locations.htm).

- Join or start a regional identity crime task force. Here are some examples of existing task forces:
  - Metro-Richmond Identity Theft Task Force (www.richmondidtheft.com/), which includes 15 federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.
  - Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD) Identity Theft Task Force: "A Metropolitan Approach to Identity Theft" by Robert F. Berardi, Sergeant, Los Angeles County: (www.policechiefmagazine.org/magazine/index.cfm?fuseaction=display&article_id=1188&issue_id=52007).

- Apply for federal grant funds to strengthen your department's response to the identity crime problem in your jurisdiction (www.ojp.usdoj.gov/funding), prevention and response to these crimes. As noted, this is a difficult undertaking as the crime is much less visible than violent crime, is far less likely to be reported to police by victims, and is extremely difficult for police to investigate.

III. Resources for Helping Victims

Victims of identity crime come to police departments seeking help during a very stressful period of their lives. Responding to identity crime can be a very time-consuming and frustrating experience for victims. Fortunately, there are many steps that law enforcement agencies can take to make this experience easier:

- The FTC "Helping Victims" Web site provides a step-by-step guide to help victims of identity crime. (www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/law-enforcement/helping-victims.html)

- The Web site instructs law enforcement to provide victims with a copy of "Take Charge: Fighting Back Against Identity Theft," which tells consumers how to minimize the risk of and how to recover from identity crime. Request a free CD-ROM, which you can use to print copies with your department's logo on the cover. (www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/idtheft/idt04.shtm)

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III. Resources for Helping Victims (cont'd)

- "What To Tell Victims About Identity Theft" (www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/posters/pst05.pdf).
- Refer victims to free resources available online, such as the FTC's ID Theft Web site: (www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/) and the IACP's IDSafety.org (www.idsafety.org).
- To improve your relationship with identity crime victims, it helps to recognize the perceptions victims have about the process: "Enhancing Identity Theft Victim – Investigator Communications" (www.idtheftmostwanted.org/artman2/publish/v_fact_sheets/Fact_Sheet_112_Identity_Theft_victim_-_Investigator_Communications.shtml).
- Be sure to remind your community that all Americans are entitled to a free annual credit report (www.annualcreditreport.com) from the three major credit reporting agencies: Equifax (www.equifax.com), Experian (www.experian.com), and Trans Union (www.transunion.com).

IV. Laws and Legislation Related to Identity Crime

Laws regarding identity crime are constantly changing in order to keep up with the new ways identity thieves operate. It is important to stay up-to-date on federal and state laws and possible legislation:

- Check this Web site for links to federal agencies related to identity crime: www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/law-enforcement/laws.html.
  - Federal Credit Laws, including the Fair Credit Reporting Act: (www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/law-enforcement/federal-laws-credit.html) (www.ftc.gov/os/statutes/031224fcra.pdf).
  - Federal Criminal Laws: Identity Theft and Assumption Deterrence Act, which establishes penalties for aggravated identity crime (www.consumer.gov/idtheft/pdf/penalty_enhance_act.pdf).
- Visit IDSafety.org (www.idsafety.org/map/) to learn about identity crime laws and the rate of identity crime victimization in your state.
- Check out this matrix (www.idsafety.org/files/pdfs/state-by-state-id_crime_laws.pdf) to see how your state's laws compare to others.
- To learn more about advocacy for improved legislation on identity crime, see the U.S. Public Interest Research Group's (USPIRG) Web site: www.uspirg.org/financial-privacy-security/identity-theft-protection.
- Learn more about the federal government's response to identity crime by visiting the Web site of the President's Task Force on Identity Theft (www.idtheft.gov/index.html), which seeks to serve as a "one-stop resource for government information about identity crime." It contains the final recommendations of the Task Force on combating Identity Theft (www.idtheft.gov/reports/StrategicPlan.pdf), a comprehensive list of federal government resources on identity crime (www.idtheft.gov/takeaction.html), and information on the Task Force and its actions (www.idtheft.gov/about.html).

V. Community Relations

Your community members are most likely fearful of identity crime and looking for information on how they can prevent this crime from happening to them and for advice on what to do if it does happen. Reaching out to your community can be a beneficial experience for both your agency and your community members.

- Speak to community crime watch meetings about identity crime prevention and deterrence. Downloading this free and informative PowerPoint presentation on identity crime would be useful to share at such meetings: www.mc.vanderbilt.edu/medschool/finaid/docs/Grand_Theft_Identity.pdf.

V. Community Relations (cont'd)

- At Chamber of Commerce or other group meetings, talk about the prevalence of identity crimes in your community, and also offer tips on how businesses can protect themselves and their data. The FTC has a concise primer for businesses on how to prevent their customers' information from becoming compromised (www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/business/idtheft/bus59.shtm). This information can be distributed to businesses either in person or electronically. Another good resource for businesses is: http://i.i.com.com/cnwk.1d/i/bnet/BNET_10_Ways_To_Protect_Your_Data1.pdf.

- Senior citizens are often victims of identity crime, so presentations to this group can be very effective. Here is some useful advice for seniors: www.seniorjournal.com/NEWS/Money/Valentine/6-10-05-GreatIdeasForSenior.htm.

- Promote your agency's anti-identity crime efforts in the local media. This is an excellent, easy-to-use guide to obtaining media coverage for your cause: www.causecommunications.com/diy/getnewscoverage.html

- Consider creating a page on your agency's Web site on the topic of identity crime, including prevention tips and resources for victims. Some examples include Tempe, AZ Police Department (www.tempe.gov/cpu/IdentityTheft.htm), the University of Oklahoma Police Department (www.ou.edu/oupd/inetmenu.htm), and the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police Department (http://mpdc.dc.gov/mpdc/cwp/view,a,1237,q,543161,mpdcNav_GID,1555.asp).

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In partnership with:
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Defending America Against Identity Crime

The International Association of Chiefs of Police
515 N. Washington Street, Alexandria, VA 22314
Telephone: 1.800.843.4227   www.theiacp.org