**Top 10 Tips in 2016 to Help Avoid Foreclosure and Scams**

The national **Loan Modification Scam Alert campaign** has ten tips to help homeowners avoid foreclosure and loan modification scams in 2016:

1. **DON’T WAIT!! Call your lender and ask for the loss mitigation department as soon as you get concerned about your mortgage.** The phone number can be found on your mortgage statement.
2. **CALL the Homeowner's HOPE HOTLINE at 1-888-995-HOPE (4673) FOR FREE MORTGAGE HELP**. Trained counselors are available 24 hours a day to provide assistance in multiple languages. They can also direct you to the local housing HUD-approved counseling agency closest to you.
3. **BEWARE OF loan modification or foreclosure RESCUE COMPANIES.** These types of companies, and even some lawyers, may try to scam you out of your money or home.
4. **DO NOT PAY any money BEFORE YOU CONFIRM a loan modification has been approved by your lender.** It is illegal to be charged fees in advance of a confirmed loan modification approval. Attorneys may, under limited circumstances, charge fees but the funds must be placed in a client trust account.
5. **CONFIRM a loan modification OFFER IS FROM YOUR LENDER by calling the phone number on your mortgage statement.** Scam companies are sending fake loan modification approval letters (by mail, fax and email) that look legitimate and contain requests for “trial” payments. Confirm the offer is from your lender before sending any payments.
6. **BEWARE OF companies or individuals that request PAYMENTS** via post-dated checks, credit card authorization forms, or wire services like MoneyGram or Western Union. You could lose your money, and your home if your lender does not receive your payment.
7. **AVOID companies that offer MONEY-BACK GUARANTEES or promises of success** to get your loan modified or stop a foreclosure. A “money-back guarantee” is unnecessary because advance fees are usually illegal.
8. **DON’T STOP paying your mortgage or talking to your lender.** Being told to stop paying or to send payments to anyone besides the lender is a sign of a scam.
9. **AVOID companies that offer “OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT” or “PRESIDENT OBAMA” LOAN MODIFICATIONS.** They could be scams. Contact your lender and a HUD-approved counseling agency at 1-888-995-HOPE to see if you are eligible for federal programs like HAMP or HARP.
10. **REPORT loan modification or foreclosure SCAMS** anytime on LoanScamAlert.org or by calling 1-888-995-HOPE. Reports are added to the Federal Trade Commission’s Consumer Sentinel Database and are also sent to the Attorney General in your state.