



College Students Who Are Identity Theft Victims: What You Need To Know about Effects and Recovery

Axton Betz, Ph.D. Student
Department of Human Development &
Family Studies
Iowa State University



Overview of Presentation

- Overview of Identity Theft
- Axton's Experiences as a Victim
- Effects of Identity Theft
- Recovery Processes



What is Identity Theft?

- The use of someone else's personal information to gain benefits such as credit cards, utilities, employment, and medical procedures

Identity Theft Subtypes

- Financial
 - Example: Identity thief opens up credit cards in a student's name
- Medical
 - Example: Identity thief uses a student's insurance information to obtain medical benefits in their name
- Character
 - Example: Identity thief gets arrested and gives a student's name at the time of arrest
- Familial
 - Example: Family member steals the identity of another family member
- Child
 - Child under age 18 has their identity stolen, often by a parent or relative

How Does an Identity Thief Get Others' Information?

- Variety of ways (thieves are opportunists!)
 - Dumpster-diving
 - Wallet/purse snatching
 - Hacking into databases
 - Phishing
 - Stealing personal documents of roommates
 - Stealing backpacks
 - Etc.



What Information Do Thieves Look For?

- Social Security number
- Birth date
- Mother's maiden name
- Home address
- Financial account information
- Health insurance information
- Etc.



What Questions Do You Have So Far?

My Experience as a Child Victim of Identity Theft

- Identity stolen at age 11
 - My parents' identities were stolen at the same time
- Financial identity theft=primary subtype
 - Me: Credit cards
 - Parents: Bank fraud, utilities fraud, etc.
- I didn't know about my identity theft until age 19
 - Establishing electric service

My Experience as a Child Victim of Identity Theft

- Sample of Effects as an Undergraduate
 - Credit score @ 19 = 380
 - Courses canceled
 - Could not get a credit card until I was 23
 - 1st car loan = 18% interest
 - Frustration, anger, distracted, “always waiting for the other shoe to drop”, wondering “Why me?”
 - Loss of family relationships
 - Lawsuits, threats of lawsuits from collection agencies

My Experience as an Adult Identity Theft Victim

- Certegy Data Breach—age 25
 - 8.5 million individuals' personal information stolen by an employee and sold to third parties
 - SSN
 - Checking account numbers
 - Birth dates
 - Home addresses
 - Debit card numbers
 - Debit card expiration dates
 - Some transaction data
 - Etc.

My Experience as an Adult Identity Theft Victim

- Sample of Effects as a Graduate Student
 - Bank's reaction: "You've been victimized again?!?"
 - Stop payment on checks—new checking account number, new debit card number
 - The bank gave me three checks to survive on for 7-10 days



Effects of Identity Theft

- Psychological—loss of trust, anger, betrayal, frustration, etc.
- Physical—headaches, stomachaches, insomnia, etc.
- Social—related to standard of living: if you can't buy the same level of "stuff" as your friends it can be harder to stay friends with them
- Financial—standard of living decreases if you can't get credit

The First Step to Recovery

- Encourage students to file a police report
 - This gives them credibility as a victim
 - I prefer filing reports with the State Police
 - Greater jurisdiction
 - Less community politics
 - Encourage students to get the name of the officer they work with so they can re-contact them if needed



Next Steps (Financial Identity Theft)

- File a fraud alert with the three major credit reporting agencies
 - Experian
 - Equifax
 - Transunion
 - Can do this via annualcreditreport.com
- Contact the original creditors of the fraudulent accounts
 - File fraud affidavits

IMPORTANT!

- Encourage students to keep records of all of the contacts they have regarding cleaning up the identity theft
 - Buy a notebook to log date and time of calls, **whom they spoke with**, and the main points of the calls
 - Keep copies of all paperwork
 - Send copies of fraud affidavits, etc. via certified mail.
 - It does cost around \$4-\$5 per mailing, but someone has to sign for the mailing and the student gets the card back with the signature of the person who signed for it.

Self-Education

- Encourage students to become familiar with federal and state laws regarding identity theft
 - Identity Theft and Assumption Deterrence Act of 1998
 - Fair Debt Collection Practices Act
 - State laws vary
- *Knowledge is power!*



Encourage Students to Find Sources of Emotional Support

- Don't assume the source should be parents
 - They could have perpetrated the identity theft!
- Ask the student who they think might be helpful to them and encourage them to go seek that support
- Develop a supportive culture of victims on campus



What questions do you have?