



COWBOY COLLECTOR

Wyoming Collection Agency Board

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What You Should Know About Consumer Credit Counseling Services

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Collection Agency Board

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The Collection Agency Board has been made aware of Wyoming consumers who have had problems with businesses providing credit counseling services. The Board does not regulate these businesses; however, the Board does feel strongly about unscrupulous credit counselors who could be causing further harm to these consumers. If a consumer should tell you that they plan to use a credit counseling service, please provide them with the following information.

The State of Wyoming has a statute (W.S. 33-14-101) entitled, Debt Adjusters, which allows credit counseling services in this state under two circumstances. They must be provided by a tax exempt, non-profit entity or by an attorney.

Wyoming consumers who are going to use the services of a credit counseling agency should be cautious and do some research to determine if the agency is a legitimate credit counseling agency. The Mountain States Better Business Bureau lists six Wyoming credit counseling services on their website. The Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Northern Colorado, which has an office in Cheyenne, is a United Way funded agency. The other five are members of the Better Business Bureau.

In an article, which appears on the Better Business Bureau's website, the following suggestions are made:

- Seek a counselor yourself rather than automatically taking the offer of one that has contacted you by mail or phone. Consider looking for a local agency that will be there when you have questions or changes in your situation.
- Contact several agencies to compare their programs. Any reputable credit-counseling agency should provide free information about its services and fee structure without requiring detailed personal or financial information from you.
- Find out what services the business provides, what they will cost and how they collect their fees. Be wary of fees paid in advance for services not yet given.
- Get everything in writing.
- Find out when payments will be sent to your creditors.

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"Seek a counselor yourself rather than automatically taking the offer of one that has contacted you by mail or phone."

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A frequent complaint consumers make with the Better Business Bureau concerning debt consolidation services is that the agency did not make payments on their behalf on time, further damaging their credit.

- Verify that the organization is accredited with a national regulatory body. A reputable agency will adhere to ethical standards designed to help consumers get out of debt and learn to manage money wisely. Reputable debt counseling agencies don't solicit business by telemarketing, by expensive advertising campaigns or by using high-pressure sales tactics. One of the oldest regulatory organizations for debt counselors is the National Foundation for Credit Counseling. Their website is www.nfcc.org.

If a consumer has had a problem with a credit counseling agency, he should contact the Consumer Protection Unit of the Wyoming Attorney General's Office. The telephone number in Cheyenne is (307) 777-7874, or (800) 438-5799.

The Board has copies of several articles prepared by the Federal Trade Commission that might be helpful for consumers in your area who might need the assistance of a credit counseling agency. They are entitled, "Fiscal Fitness—Choosing a Credit Counselor", "Advertisements Promising Debt Relief May Be Offering Bankruptcy", and "Knee Deep in Debt". We will provide copies of the articles upon request, or they can be found on the FTC's website at www.ftc.gov.

**Wyoming Collection Agency Board
Semi-Annual Administrative Report
July 1, 2003 through December 31, 2003**

LICENSING:	TOTALS:
Number of Agencies as of July 1, 2003	158
Agencies added	24
Agencies closed	0
In-State Agencies	19
Out-of-State Agencies	163
Total Current number of Licensed Agencies as of December 31, 2003	*182
* A 15% increase in six months	
COMPLAINTS:	TOTALS:
Number of Complaint Calls Received from 7/1/03 through 12/31/03	15
Complaint Forms Filed with the Board	11
Complaints Dismissed	6
Complaints Closed with Conditional Terms of Settlement	0
Complaints Resolved by Private Letter of Reprimand or Advisement	0
Complaints Resolved in Informal Manner	4
Complaints out of the Board's Jurisdiction	1
Complaints Currently Under Investigation	0
CEASE AND DESIST LETTERS:	TOTALS:
Cease and Desist Letters Sent	3



**Announcing:
New
Resident
Manager
Examination
Process**

The process to become a Wyoming resident manager has just become a little easier! The Board's rules still require a resident manager applicant to take a written examination; however, that examination is now open book consisting of 25 multiple-choice questions.

The exam is sent by e-mail or regular mail to resident manager applicants. Once the exam is completed, the applicant can return the completed exam to our office in a similar manner.

The resident manager oral interview with the Board can be accomplished in person or via conference call during a regularly scheduled monthly Board meeting.

✓ Check Out the New Consumer Complaint Form ✓

The Collection Agency Board recently revised the Verified Complaint Form and removed the questions that may have been perceived as leading. The new form is available on the Board's website at: <http://audit.state.wy.us/banking>, or can be obtained by calling the Board's office.





- The *Cowboy Collector* is a publication of the Wyoming Collection Agency Board.
- It is published semi-annually and emailed to all Wyoming licensed collection agencies through its Wyoming Resident Manager.
- The newsletter is also available on the Board's website.