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Avoiding Scams: What You Need To Know

Avoiding Scams: What You Need To Know
by Angela Smith, HEAL National Coordinator/Co-Founder

There are many types of scams one can fall for and there are general ways to protect yourself from becoming a victim. This particular article will be devoted to exploring how to check whether or not an academic service provider offering diplomas, certification, or degrees of any sort is accredited, licensed, and any credits earned are legitimately transferable. In general, you should verify claims made about any product or service before making any purchases. And, if you have particular health conditions such as allergies, know what you are allergic to and read labels before using any product regardless of claims of being hypoallergenic. Now, with academic services, including, but not limited to, boarding schools, private schools, private certification programs, and more, you should do the following:

1. See if the school, university, program, or academic service is accredited by a legitimate accreditation body. They may claim any accreditation is valid. But, one way to check is to contact a legitimate university such as the University of Alabama and ask if credits earned will be accepted for enrollment at the university. If not, then the service or school you are considering is likely a diploma mill and scam. For more on this see: <http://www.heal-online.org/blessboys.htm>
2. If higher education is not your plan, but, serving in the military is, you will want to look out for fake military academies as well or those promising military preparation. A young man was denied entry into the Marines as a result of falling for such a scam. His parents paid for it. It made the papers. Learn more: <http://www.heal-online.org/mtcarmel.htm>

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**HEAL**

HEAL is an egalitarian network of activists self-empowered to plan events, create change, and make the world a better place for all life. Our goals include the liberation of humans, nonhuman animals, and the earth! We work in cooperation with like-minded organizations that put compassion in action!

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3. If you are looking into post-secondary academic or training services for education or specialization for your field, check to make sure it is an accredited school or service to avoid being taken advantage of by frauds. You can verify here:

<https://ope.ed.gov/dapip/> And, you should check with your state as well regarding any private education service. If in California, for example, you can check with:

https://www.bppe.ca.gov/schools/approved_schools.shtml It allows you to search all private post-secondary schools or academic services approved by the Department of Consumer Affairs.

4. If you are looking into primary or secondary education services, you will want to check with the state where it is operating to see if it is approved to issue diplomas. You can do this by checking with the equivalent of the Department of Education where the school or program operates to see if it is approved to issue diplomas. Another option is to return to number 1 above and see if the accreditation is recognized by a legitimate university and any credits will be transferable or accepted. Most of the facilities on **HEAL's watch-list** claim to offer educational services and we have found many do not hold any legitimate accreditation nor offer transferable academic credits. So, regardless of other issues, if you care about someone's education, including your own, you should really exercise due diligence to avoid being scammed and ruining yours or a loved one's life for the foreseeable future.

5. You may also wish to ask any school or academy what universities, military branches, or schools have accepted credits from their school, program, academy, or service. And, check those academic institutions for accreditation as well since many scams recommend each other. So, if dealing with a primary or secondary school or program, get a list of post-secondary academic services that accept their credits and then check to see if those services are accredited here: <https://ope.ed.gov/dapip/>. If not, that should be a serious red flag because if the secondary or primary school is recommending or sending kids off to enroll in unaccredited programs, then they likely aren't smart enough to educate anyone themselves. And, if the post-secondary schools listed are accredited, contact those schools to verify they accept credits from the primary or secondary school you are considering.

You may also wish to check for licensure for any services claimed including those related to wellness, healthcare, behavioral and/or mental health. And, you should check with the Department of

Health, professional licensing boards, and law enforcement for complaint records or proof of licensure before signing any contracts or paying for any services.

Failing to do the above is often considered failing to exercise due diligence in the eyes of the law. And, when that happens and fraud is involved, you may or may not be able to recover your expenses. This becomes a serious setback for individuals who invest their money for college or other expenses in unaccredited academic services. It is important that you know for sure you are getting something of value out of your time and expense. And, because it is a free country and we don't live in a pre-crime world where law enforcement psychically knows everyone who commits crime and everywhere a crime is happening before it even initiates, it is up to us as citizens to be pro-active in exercising due diligence and reporting scams, cults, or other frauds that endanger the public to the proper authorities.

For more information on diploma mills and academic scams, visit:

<https://www.ftc.gov/tips-advice/business-center/guidance/avoid-fake-degree-burns-researching-academic-credentials>

Addendum: You may also wish to verify any certification, diploma, or degree issued will be recognized by the professional licensing board for your field in the state where you wish to practice if license is required. For example, if your course claims you will be certified to provide healthcare of any sort, such as respiratory therapy, you will want to check with the respiratory licensing board in your state to see if that certification is worth the paper it is written on. In California, you would check here for that information:

<https://www.rcb.ca.gov/>

Posted by **HEAL** at **1:58 AM**

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