



FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

## Consumer Information

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# Scammers go after international students' money

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We try to let you know when we learn about new scams, so you can avoid them and warn your friends and family. Here's another one: scammers pretending to be from the federal government are scaring international students into paying them money.

We've been getting reports that foreign students, particularly from South Asian countries, are getting phone calls that look like they're from the government. The caller typically knows about a student's immigration status and the program or school they're attending. He'll say there's a problem with the student's immigration documents or visa renewal. And then he'll demand immediate payment, often thousands of dollars, for a fee or bogus immigration bond. These callers have made threats, including arrest or deportation, if the students don't pay, and they ask to be paid with gift cards (like Google Play or iTunes) or a cryptocurrency (like Bitcoin).

What are the signs that these are scam calls? The federal government wouldn't make such calls, wouldn't make such threats, and wouldn't ask for such payments. And any callers who want to be paid with gift cards or cryptocurrency are scammers, who like those payment methods because they can get the money and disappear without a trace.

If you get a call that's anything like this, hang up the phone. If you're not convinced it was a scam, talk to someone you trust about the call. Several people report that they figured out the call was a scam after talking with a relative, the local police, or a school official. It's likely that others in your community got the same call, so talking about the call could help others in your area. And if you're concerned about your visa or immigration documentation, call USCIS's National Customer Service Center at 800-375-5283.

Information about how these scams work helps us stop them, so please go to [FTC.gov/Complaint \(ftc.gov/complaint\)](https://www.ftc.gov/complaint) to let us know if a scammer has contacted you or someone you know.

Blog Topics: [Money & Credit \(consumer.ftc.gov/blog/money-%26-credit\)](https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog/money-%26-credit)