

COLLECTION AGENCY BLUES?

Trap

Ed from Lake Worth found himself overwhelmed with unexpected medical bills that caused him to fall behind on his credit card payments. His unpaid balances were then sent to collection, and he found himself bombarded by letters and calls from various collection agencies at odd hours. Some were even calling his employer and his neighbors in an effort to contact him. Ed said the situation was causing him a lot of stress and affecting his ability to work.

Tips

The Federal Fair Debt Collection Act prohibits collection agencies from harassing you at home or at work. Debt collectors are not permitted to:

- contact you before 8 a.m. or after 9 p.m.
- contact you at work when your employer disapproves
- use threats of violence or harm against your reputation
- publish your name or contact friends and neighbors about your debt
- use obscene or abusive language
- threaten to have you arrested.

Here are some actions you can take:

- Send a letter asking for proof of the debt. Carefully review the documentation to determine if it is your debt.
- If you feel you are being harassed, consider sending a certified letter to the collection agency asking them to stop contacting you. Then the collector can only contact you again if it is their decision to take some form of legal action.
- Consider negotiating a settlement with the collector. Often they are willing to accept a reduced amount to settle the matter.
- Contact the Federal Trade Commission at 1-877-FTC-HELP to file a complaint or get additional information.

For more information call Palm Beach County Consumer Affairs at 561-712-6600 (Boca/ Delray 888-852-7362 - toll free).