

It's Okay To Be Skeptical About Free-Meal Seminars **Do your homework before accepting an invitation**

The offer of free meals, door prizes, and/or free advice may lead you to attend a seminar when you wouldn't otherwise. Some invitations make you feel it's urgent to register due to "limited space." A nice restaurant, an expensive meal, and a well-dressed presenter may be impressive, but it doesn't mean that what they're selling is right for you.

You should know that if you put personal information on a registration form, that information likely will be used to market products or services to you, or to schedule meetings with you after attending the seminar.

Do your homework before you attend a seminar or meet with an insurance or financial expert. Verify that the person is licensed to sell the product by contacting the Nebraska Department of Insurance licensing division at 402-471-4913. Ask if there have been complaints or enforcement actions against this person. Information can also be found on the Department of Insurance website at doi.nebraska.gov.

Does this product or service make sense for you? Always be sure you understand what's being sold. Insurance and financial products can be complicated even for the most informed consumer. Don't hesitate to ask questions, especially if you don't understand something. You should be able to explain a product in your own words to someone (other than the salesperson) in a way that makes sense to both of you. It's rare that one product or service will meet the financial needs and goals of everyone attending a seminar.

Be cautious about any promises that one product can meet all of your financial needs. The product must be right for you, your lifestyle, your financial goals, and your tolerance for risk. If you attend a seminar, you may be exposed to high pressure tactics, frightening stories about people who don't have enough money to live on in retirement and promises of unrealistic financial returns. Decide before you go that you won't give out any personal information, sign any documents, or make any decisions while you're there. Leave your checkbook at home and consider getting a second opinion before you sign anything. It never hurts to seek a second opinion before making a major purchase.

Report suspected scams. Anyone can find themselves the victim of a financial scam so don't let fear, embarrassment, or uncertainty keep you from reporting. Your report will help prevent others from becoming victims too. To file a complaint, visit the Nebraska Department of Insurance website at doi.nebraska.gov or call the toll-free consumer hotline at 1-877-564-7323.