



Identity Theft is a Growing Concern: Are You Protected?

by George W. Gonser Jr., MBA, CDHC

DO YOU OWN A CREDIT OR DEBIT CARD? DO YOU HAVE a checking or banking account? Do you access the Internet? Are you on one of the many lists of personal information leaks reported each month?

If you answered "Yes" to any of the above questions, you are at risk of identity theft.

It's been prevalent in the news these last couple of years, but what exactly is identity theft? Simply put, identity theft is a crime in which someone steals your personal information— name, date of birth, address, social security number—and creates a "new you." The stolen personal information is used to open credit cards (and run up the cards with lavish purchases), apply for loans for cars, houses, etc. Oftentimes, you are not even aware that your identity has been stolen until it's too late and the new "you" has already racked up thousands of dollars' worth of debt—all in your name. As a result, you are victimized financially while piling up hours of time and effort to recover and restore your name and good credit.

Some of the industry statistics regarding identity theft are startling and downright scary:

- Identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in the United States.
- More than 10 million cases of identity theft occurred in the United States in 2005, and that number is skyrocketing.
- The cost of identity theft in the United States is more than \$50 billion annually.
- The average case of identity theft costs more than \$10,000 in money, goods, and services.
- In 2005, more than 100 incidents of data leaks affected over 50 million individuals.

To address this growing issue, MDS Insurance Services, Inc., is now offering a benefit-rich, aggressively priced insurance product designed for the individual and/or group. The Identity Guardian product is offered two ways:

- Employer-paid group-based product available for a monthly premium of \$8.95 per employee and his or her family
- Employee-paid voluntary-based product available for a monthly premium of \$4.95 per employee and his or her family

The benefits include the following:

- Identity theft insurance coverage of \$25,000 for lost wages and restoration expenses backed by AIG
- A personalized theft case worker to facilitate the recovery process in the event of a theft
- Prevention of unauthorized exposure of your personal information, including personal, public, and financial records
- Ability to opt out of marketing databases and unsolicited offers
- Access to all important identity data sources
- Identity protection console with updates, threat assessments, and identity theft education modules.

Learn more about identity theft at our Web site, www.mdsis.org, or by calling one of our experienced MDSIS agents at (800) 821-6033. For a few dollars a month, you could be saving thousands.

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