

Written by

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Hmong American Partnership (HAP) is joining with federal, state, and local government agencies and national organizations to celebrate the 13th annual National Consumer Protection Week (NCPW) March 6-12, 2011.

Hmong American Partnership is a social service and community development organization whose mission is: to empower the community to embrace the strengths of our cultures while achieving our potential. HAP was established in 1990 to address the needs of Minnesota's growing Hmong population. Since its inception, HAP has expanded to serve community members from a wide variety of cultural and ethnic groups. HAP provides critical services and support to more than 4,000 refugees, immigrants, and low-income mainstream community members annually through five program departments: Education & Training; Employment Services; Health, Wellness & Elderly Services; Housing & Economic Development; and Youth & Family Services.

During NCPW, groups nationwide share tips and information that help consumers protect their privacy, manage money and debt, avoid identity theft, and avoid frauds and scams. Unfortunately, this year an estimated 4 million households nationwide are expected to face the risk of foreclosure. Millions of homeowners will try to reduce their mortgage payments with a loan modification. The scammers know this.

Hmong American Partnership, a partner of the national Loan Modification Scam Alert campaign, has 10 tips to help St. Paul and Minneapolis homeowners seeking foreclosure prevention assistance this year:

1. **Contact your lender first** as soon as you get concerned about paying your mortgage.
2. **Determine your options** by speaking to your lender's loss mitigation department.
3. **Be patient but persistent with your lender**, because getting a loan modification takes time.
4. **Call Hmong American Partnership, a local HUD-approved counseling agency at 651-495-1539 (Ramsey County) or 612-377-6482 ext. 200 (Hennepin County)** that provides loan modification assistance services for free. Or visit www.LoanScamAlert.org.
5. **Meet with a counselor at Hmong American Partnership**, where trained counselors are available to provide assistance in English and Hmong.
6. **Beware of loan modification scams.** Some companies and individuals are out to take advantage of homeowners seeking loan modifications.
7. **Avoid anyone who asks for a fee prior to providing any loan modification service**, including companies, individuals and even some lawyers.
8. **Avoid anyone who guarantees to get your loan modified or stop a foreclosure**, because nobody has the power to make this promise.
9. **Avoid companies that tell you to stop paying your mortgage and to pay them instead**. This is a sure sign of a scam.
10. **Report loan modification or foreclosure scams at any time** by visiting www.LoanScamAlert.org or calling 1-888-995-HOPE (4673).

"We have seen a number of community members fall prey to loan modification scams," says

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Sheng Lee, HAP Housing & Economic Development Director, “We are excited to be a part of the Loan Modification Scam Alert campaign because it helps us to reach people proactively and prevent them from getting scammed.”

Loan modification scams are proliferating at a rapid pace—costing unsuspecting homeowners thousands of dollars and often their homes. To help combat this issue, Congress asked NeighborWorks America® to launch a national public education campaign in 2009. Today, the Loan Modification Scam Alert campaign empowers homeowners to protect themselves against loan modification scams, find trusted help and report illegal activity to authorities. For more information about the campaign, visit www.LoanScamAlert.org .