

Money mules are individuals who receive and transfer funds obtained from fraud victims, often following someone else's instructions. Some individuals knowingly assist fraudsters, while others may be unaware that they are participating in illegal activities, mistakenly believing they are simply following legitimate job instructions. Regardless of their intent, they inadvertently enable fraudsters to cause harm to others.

If you come across what appears to be a dream opportunity, it's essential to proceed with caution. To avoid becoming a money mule, look out for these red flags:

1**Too Good-to-Be-True Job Offer**

Be cautious if you receive unsolicited email or social media messages that promise easy money with minimal effort. Often, these messages refer to you as an "employee."

2**Easy Hiring Process**

Receiving a job offer without a standard interview process, especially if it occurs through social media, is a significant red flag. Legitimate employers typically follow a structured hiring process.

3**No Set Job Description**

Beware if there is no written job description detailing your responsibilities and compensation. Additionally, a lack of a regular pay schedule or established payment rate should raise concerns.

4**Deposit Money for Others**

Your "Employer" asks you to deposit money in:

- Your current bank account,
- Open a new account under your name, or
- Establish a new account for a company you create.

5**Sending Money to Unverified People**

Requests for sending money to unverified individuals by your "employer," whom you have never met in person, should raise alarm bells. This is a common tactic used in scams.

6**Ways of Transferring Money**

Criminals ask you to transfer money through standard payment methods. They exploit legitimate payment methods to conduct illegal activities.

Examples include*:

- Money service businesses (e.g., Western Union, MoneyGram).
- Bank services (e.g., wire transfer, ACH).
- Digital currency/crypto.
- Gift cards.
- Peer-to-peer applications (e.g., PayPal, Venmo, Zelle).
- ATM cash outs.

7**Keep the Money**

If instructed to keep a portion of the money you transfer, it's a clear warning sign. This practice may indicate involvement in illicit activities.

STOP!

Being a money mule is illegal!

Remember that being a money mule is illegal! Even if you are unaware of your actions, you can face prosecution for participating in money laundering. If you suspect you have been unwittingly involved, please contact WestStar for guidance on how to report it.

About the Alliance Consumer Financial Exploitation Project Team

This project team under the Payments Innovation Alliance, creates educational materials, resources and tools to enable the payments industry to fight financial fraud. The group also works with the financial crimes ecosystem, including law enforcement and consumer advocacy groups, to amplify networking and collaboration.

For more information, please visit: nacha.org/consumer-financial-project-team

