

**All users of consumer reports must comply with all applicable regulations. Information about applicable regulations currently in effect can be found at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's website, [www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore).**

## **NOTICE TO USERS OF CONSUMER REPORTS: OBLIGATIONS OF USERS UNDER THE FCRA**

The Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), 15 U.S.C. 1681-1681x, requires that this notice be provided to inform users of consumer reports of their legal obligations. State law may impose additional requirements. The text of the FCRA is set forth in full at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's (CFPB) website at [www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore). At the end of this document is a list of United States Code citations for the FCRA. Other information about user duties is also available at the CFPB's website. **Users must consult the relevant provisions of the FCRA for details about their obligations under the FCRA.**

The first section of this summary sets forth the responsibilities imposed by the FCRA on all users of consumer reports. The subsequent sections discuss the duties of users of reports that contain specific types of information, or that are used for certain purposes, and the legal consequences of violations. If you are a furnisher of information to a consumer reporting agency (CRA), you have additional obligations and will receive a separate notice from the CRA describing your duties as a furnisher.

### **I. OBLIGATIONS OF ALL USERS OF CONSUMER REPORTS**

#### **A. Users Must Have a Permissible Purpose**

Congress has limited the use of consumer reports to protect consumers' privacy. All users must have a permissible purpose under the FCRA to obtain a consumer report. Section 604 contains a list of the permissible purposes under the law. These are:

- As ordered by a court or a federal grand jury subpoena. Section 604(a)(1)
- As instructed by the consumer in writing. Section 604(a)(2)
- For the extension of credit as a result of an application from a consumer, or the review or collection of a consumer's account. Section 604(a)(3)(A)
- For employment purposes, including hiring and promotion decisions, where the consumer has given written permission. Sections 604(a)(3)(B) and 604(b)
- For the underwriting of insurance as a result of an application from a consumer. Section 604(a)(3)(C)
- When there is a legitimate business need, in connection with a business transaction that is initiated by the consumer. Section 604(a)(3)(F)(i)
- To review a consumer's account to determine whether the consumer continues to meet the terms of the account. Section 604(a)(3)(F)(ii)

- To determine a consumer’s eligibility for a license or other benefit granted by a governmental instrumentality required by law to consider an applicant’s financial responsibility or status. Section 604(a)(3)(D)
- For use by a potential investor or servicer, or current insurer, in a valuation or assessment of the credit or prepayment risks associated with an existing credit obligation. Section 604(a)(3)(E)
- For use by state and local officials in connection with the determination of child support payments, or modifications and enforcement thereof. Sections 604(a)(4) and 604(a)(5)

In addition, creditors and insurers may obtain certain consumer report information for the purpose of making “prescreened” unsolicited offers of credit or insurance. Section 604(c). The particular obligations of users of “prescreened” information are described in Section VII below.

## **B. Users Must Provide Certifications**

Section 604(f) prohibits any person from obtaining a consumer report from a consumer reporting agency (CRA) unless the person has certified to the CRA the permissible purpose(s) for which the report is being obtained and certifies that the report will not be used for any other purpose.

## **C. Users Must Notify Consumers When Adverse Actions Are Taken**

The term “adverse action” is defined very broadly by Section 603. “Adverse actions” include all business, credit, and employment actions affecting consumers that can be considered to have a negative impact as defined by Section 603(k) of the FCRA – such as denying or canceling credit or insurance, or denying employment or promotion. No adverse action occurs in a credit transaction where the creditor makes a counteroffer that is accepted by the consumer.

### **1. Adverse Actions Based on Information Obtained From a CRA**

If a user takes any type of adverse action as defined by the FCRA that is based at least in part on information contained in a consumer report, Section 615(a) requires the user to notify the consumer. The notification may be done in writing, orally, or by electronic means. It must include the following:

- The name, address, and telephone number of the CRA (including a toll-free telephone number, if it is a nationwide CRA) that provided the report.
- A statement that the CRA did not make the adverse decision and is not able to explain why the decision was made.
- A statement setting forth the consumer’s right to obtain a free disclosure of the consumer’s file from the CRA if the consumer makes a request within 60 days.
- A statement setting forth the consumer’s right to dispute directly with the CRA the accuracy or completeness of any information provided by the CRA.

## **2. Adverse Actions Based on Information Obtained From Third Parties Who Are Not Consumer Reporting Agencies**

If a person denies (or increases the charge for) credit for personal, family, or household purposes based either wholly or partly upon information from a person other than a CRA, and the information is the type of consumer information covered by the FCRA, Section 615(b)(1) requires that the user clearly and accurately disclose to the consumer his or her right to be told the nature of the information that was relied upon if the consumer makes a written request within 60 days of notification. The user must provide the disclosure within a reasonable period of time following the consumer's written request.

## **3. Adverse Actions Based on Information Obtained From Affiliates**

If a person takes an adverse action involving insurance, employment, or a credit transaction initiated by the consumer, based on information of the type covered by the FCRA, and this information was obtained from an entity affiliated with the user of the information by common ownership or control, Section 615(b)(2) requires the user to notify the consumer of the adverse action. The notice must inform the consumer that he or she may obtain a disclosure of the nature of the information relied upon by making a written request within 60 days of receiving the adverse action notice. If the consumer makes such a request, the user must disclose the nature of the information not later than 30 days after receiving the request. If consumer report information is shared among affiliates and then used for an adverse action, the user must make an adverse action disclosure as set forth in I.C.1 above.

### **D. Users Have Obligations When Fraud and Active Duty Military Alerts are in Files**

When a consumer has placed a fraud alert, including one relating to identify theft, or an active duty military alert with a nationwide consumer reporting agency as defined in Section 603(p) and resellers, Section 605A(h) imposes limitations on users of reports obtained from the consumer reporting agency in certain circumstances, including the establishment of a new credit plan and the issuance of additional credit cards. For initial fraud alerts and active duty alerts, the user must have reasonable policies and procedures in place to form a belief that the user knows the identity of the applicant or contact the consumer at a telephone number specified by the consumer; in the case of extended fraud alerts, the user must contact the consumer in accordance with the contact information provided in the consumer's alert.

### **E. Users Have Obligations When Notified of an Address Discrepancy**

Section 605(h) requires nationwide CRAs, as defined in Section 603(p), to notify users that request reports when the address for a consumer provided by the user in requesting the report is substantially different from the addresses in the consumer's file. When this occurs, users must comply with regulations specifying the procedures to be followed. Federal regulations are available at [www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore/](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore/).

## **F. Users Have Obligations When Disposing of Records**

Section 628 requires that all users of consumer report information have in place procedures to properly dispose of records containing this information. Federal regulations have been issued that cover disposal.

## **II. CREDITORS MUST MAKE ADDITIONAL DISCLOSURES**

If a person uses a consumer report in connection with an application for, or a grant, extension, or provision of, credit to a consumer on material terms that are materially less favorable than the most favorable terms available to a substantial proportion of consumers from or through that person, based in whole or in part on a consumer report, the person must provide a risk-based pricing notice to the consumer in accordance with regulations prescribed by the CFPB.

Section 609(g) requires a disclosure by all persons that make or arrange loans secured by residential real property (one to four units) and that use credit scores. These persons must provide credit scores and other information about credit scores to applicants, including the disclosure set forth in Section 609(g)(1)(D) (“Notice to the Home Loan Applicant”).

## **III. OBLIGATIONS OF USERS WHEN CONSUMER REPORTS ARE OBTAINED FOR EMPLOYMENT PURPOSES**

### **A. Employment Other Than in the Trucking Industry**

If information from a CRA is used for employment purposes, the user has specific duties, which are set forth in Section 604(b) of the FCRA. The user must:

- Make a clear and conspicuous written disclosure to the consumer before the report is obtained, in a document that consists solely of the disclosure, that a consumer report may be obtained.
- Obtain from the consumer prior written authorization. Authorization to access reports during the term of employment may be obtained at the time of employment.
- Certify to the CRA that the above steps have been followed, that the information being obtained will not be used in violation of any federal or state equal opportunity law or regulation, and that, if any adverse action is to be taken based on the consumer report, a copy of the report and a summary of the consumer’s rights will be provided to the consumer
- **Before** taking an adverse action, the user must provide a copy of the report to the consumer as well as the summary of consumer’s rights. (The user should receive this summary from the CRA.) A Section 615(a) adverse action notice should be sent after the adverse action is taken

An adverse action notice also is required in employment situations if credit information (other than transactions and experience data) obtained from an affiliate is used to deny employment. Section 615(b)(2)

The procedures for investigative consumer reports and employee misconduct investigations are set forth below.

## **B. Employment in the Trucking Industry**

Special rules apply for truck drivers where the only interaction between the consumer and the potential employer is by mail, telephone, or computer. In this case, the consumer may provide consent orally or electronically, and an adverse action may be made orally, in writing, or electronically. The consumer may obtain a copy of any report relied upon by the trucking company by contacting the company.

## **IV. OBLIGATIONS WHEN INVESTIGATIVE CONSUMER REPORTS ARE USED**

Investigative consumer reports are a special type of consumer report in which information about a consumer's character, general reputation, personal characteristics, and mode of living is obtained through personal interviews by an entity or person that is a consumer reporting agency. Consumers who are the subjects of such reports are given special rights under the FCRA. If a user intends to obtain an investigative consumer report, Section 606 requires the following:

- The user must disclose to the consumer that an investigative consumer report may be obtained. This must be done in a written disclosure that is mailed, or otherwise delivered, to the consumer at some time before or not later than three days after the date on which the report was first requested. The disclosure must include a statement informing the consumer of his or her right to request additional disclosures of the nature and scope of the investigation as described below, and the summary of consumer rights required by Section 609 of the FCRA. (The summary of consumer rights will be provided by the CRA that conducts the investigation.)
- The user must certify to the CRA that the disclosures set forth above have been made and that the user will make the disclosure described below.
- Upon the written request of a consumer made within a reasonable period of time after the disclosures required above, the user must make a complete disclosure of the nature and scope of the investigation. This must be made in a written statement that is mailed or otherwise delivered, to the consumer no later than five days after the date on which the request was received from the consumer or the report was first requested, whichever is later in time.

## **V. SPECIAL PROCEDURES FOR EMPLOYEE INVESTIGATIONS**

Section 603(x) provides special procedures for investigations of suspected misconduct by an employee or for compliance with Federal, state or local laws and regulations or the rules of a

self-regulatory organization, and compliance with written policies of the employer. These investigations are not treated as consumer reports so long as the employer or its agent complies with the procedures set forth in Section 603(x), and a summary describing the nature and scope of the inquiry is made to the employee if an adverse action is taken based on the investigation.

## **VI. OBLIGATIONS OF USERS OF MEDICAL INFORMATION**

Section 604(g) limits the use of medical information obtained from consumer reporting agencies (other than payment information that appears in a coded form that does not identify the medical provider). If the information is to be used for an insurance transaction, the consumer must give consent to the user of the report or the information must be coded. If the report is to be used for employment purposes – or in connection with a credit transaction (except as provided in federal regulations) – the consumer must provide specific written consent and the medical information must be relevant. Any user who receives medical information shall not disclose the information to any other person (except where necessary to carry out the purpose for which the information was disclosed, or as permitted by statute, regulation, or order).

## **VII. OBLIGATIONS OF USERS OF “PRESCREENED” LISTS**

The FCRA permits creditors and insurers to obtain limited consumer report information for use in connection with unsolicited offers of credit or insurance under certain circumstances. Sections 603(1), 604(c), 604(e), and 615(d). This practice is known as “prescreening” and typically involves obtaining from a CRA a list of consumers who meet certain preestablished criteria. If any person intends to use prescreened lists, that person must (1) before the offer is made, establish the criteria that will be relied upon to make the offer and to grant credit or insurance, and (2) maintain such criteria on file for a three-year period beginning on the date on which the offer is made to each consumer. In addition, any user must provide with each written solicitation a clear and conspicuous statement that:

- Information contained in a consumer’s CRA file was used in connection with the transaction.
- The consumer received the offer because he or she satisfied the criteria for credit worthiness or insurability used to screen for the offer.
- Credit or insurance may not be extended if, after the consumer responds, it is determined that the consumer does not meet the criteria used for screening or any applicable criteria bearing on credit worthiness or insurability, or the consumer does not furnish required collateral.
- The consumer may prohibit the use of information in his or her file in connection with future prescreened offers of credit or insurance by contacting the notification system established by the CRA that provided the report. The statement must include the address and toll-free telephone number of the appropriate notification system.

In addition, the CFPB has established the format, type size, and manner of the disclosure required by Section 615(d), with which users must comply. The relevant regulation is 12 CFR

1022.54.

## **VIII. OBLIGATIONS OF RESELLERS**

### **A. Disclosure and Certification Requirements**

Section 607(e) requires any person who obtains a consumer report for resale to take the following steps:

- Disclose the identity of the end-user to the source CRA.
- Identify to the source CRA each permissible purpose for which the report will be furnished to the end-user.
- Establish and follow reasonable procedures to ensure that reports are resold only for permissible purposes, including procedures to obtain:
  - (1) the identify of all end-users;
  - (2) certifications from all users of each purpose for which reports will be used; and
  - (3) certifications that reports will not be used for any purpose other than the purpose(s) specified to the reseller. Resellers must make reasonable efforts to verify this information before selling the report.

### **B. Reinvestigations by Resellers**

Under Section 611(f), if a consumer disputes the accuracy or completeness of information in a report prepared by a reseller, the reseller must determine whether this is a result of an action or omission on its part and, if so, correct or delete the information. If not, the reseller must send the dispute to the source CRA for reinvestigation. When any CRA notifies the reseller of the results of an investigation, the reseller must immediately convey the information to the consumer.

### **C. Fraud Alerts and Resellers**

Section 605A(f) requires resellers who receive fraud alerts or active duty alerts from another consumer reporting agency to include these in their reports.

## **IX. LIABILITY FOR VIOLATIONS OF THE FCRA**

Failure to comply with the FCRA can result in state government or federal government enforcement actions, as well as private lawsuits. Sections 616, 617, and 621. In addition, any person who knowingly and willfully obtains a consumer report under false pretenses may face criminal prosecution. Section 619.

The CFPB's website, [www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore), has more information about the FCRA, including publications for businesses and the full text of the FCRA.

**Citations for FCRA sections in the U.S. Code, 15 U.S.C. § 1618 et seq.:**

Section 602	15 U.S.C. 1681
Section 603	15 U.S.C. 1681a
Section 604	15 U.S.C. 1681b
Section 605	15 U.S.C. 1681c
Section 605A	15 U.S.C. 1681c-1
Section 605B	15 U.S.C. 1681c-2
Section 606	15 U.S.C. 1681d
Section 607	15 U.S.C. 1681e
Section 608	15 U.S.C. 1681f
Section 609	15 U.S.C. 1681g
Section 610	15 U.S.C. 1681h
Section 611	15 U.S.C. 1681i
Section 612	15 U.S.C. 1681j
Section 613	15 U.S.C. 1681k
Section 614	15 U.S.C. 1681l
Section 615	15 U.S.C. 1681m
Section 616	15 U.S.C. 1681n
Section 617	15 U.S.C. 1681o
Section 618	15 U.S.C. 1681p
Section 619	15 U.S.C. 1681q
Section 620	15 U.S.C. 1681r
Section 621	15 U.S.C. 1681s
Section 622	15 U.S.C. 1681s-1
Section 623	15 U.S.C. 1681s-2
Section 624	15 U.S.C. 1681s-3
Section 625	15 U.S.C. 1681t
Section 626	15 U.S.C. 1681u
Section 627	15 U.S.C. 1681v
Section 628	15 U.S.C. 1681w
Section 629	15 U.S.C. 1681x



**All furnishers of information to consumer reporting agencies must comply with all applicable regulations. Information about applicable regulations currently in effect can be found at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's website, [www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore).**

## **NOTICE TO FURNISHERS OF INFORMATION: OBLIGATIONS OF FURNISHERS UNDER THE FCRA**

The federal Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), 15 U.S.C. 1681-1681x, imposes responsibilities on all persons who furnish information to consumer reporting agencies (CRAs). These responsibilities are found in Section 623 of the FCRA, 15 U.S.C. 1681s-2. State law may impose additional requirements on furnishers. As to Maine consumers, please review Maine's Fair Credit Reporting Act at Me. Rev. Stat. Ann. 10 §1311 et seq. All furnishers of information to CRAs should become familiar with the applicable laws and may want to consult with their counsel to ensure that they are in compliance. The text of the FCRA is available at the website of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB): [www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore). A list of the sections of the FCRA cross-referenced to the U.S. Code is at the end of this document.

Section 623 imposes the following duties upon furnishers:

### **Accuracy Guidelines**

The FCRA requires furnishers to comply with federal guidelines and regulations dealing with the accuracy of information provided to CRAs by furnishers. Federal regulations and guidelines are available at [www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore). Section 623(e).

### **General Prohibition on Reporting Inaccurate Information**

The FCRA prohibits information furnishers from providing information to a CRA that they know or have reasonable cause to believe is inaccurate. However, the furnisher is not subject to this general prohibition if it clearly and conspicuously specifies an address to which consumers may write to notify the furnisher that certain information is inaccurate. Sections 623(a)(1)(A) and (a)(1)(C).

### **Duty to Correct and Update Information**

If at any time a person who regularly and in the ordinary course of business furnishes information to one or more CRAs determines that the information provided is not complete or accurate, the furnisher must promptly provide complete and accurate information to the CRA. In addition, the furnisher must notify all CRAs that received the information of any corrections, and must thereafter report only the complete and accurate information. Section 623(a)(2).

### **Duties After Notice of Dispute from Consumer**

If a consumer notifies a furnisher, at an address specified for the furnisher for such notices, that specific information is inaccurate, and the information is, in fact, inaccurate, the furnisher must thereafter report the correct information to CRAs. Section 623(a)(1)(B).

If a consumer notifies a furnisher that the consumer disputes the completeness or accuracy of any information reported by the furnisher, the furnisher may not subsequently report that information to a CRA without providing notice of the dispute. Section 623(a)(3).

Furnishers must comply with federal regulations that will identify when an information furnisher must investigate a dispute made directly to the furnisher by a consumer. Under these regulations, furnishers must complete an investigation within 30 days (or 45 days, if the consumer later provides relevant additional information) unless the dispute is frivolous or irrelevant or comes from a “credit repair organization.” Section 623(a)(8). Federal regulations are available at [www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore). Section 623(a)(8).

### **Duties After Notice of Dispute from Consumer Reporting Agency**

If a CRA notifies a furnisher that a consumer disputes the completeness or accuracy of information provided by the furnisher, the furnisher has a duty to follow certain procedures. The furnisher must:

- Conduct an investigation and review all relevant information provided by the CRA, including information given to the CRA by the consumer. Sections 623(b)(1)(A) and (b)(1)(B).
- Report the results to the CRA that referred the dispute, and, if the investigation establishes that the information was, in fact, incomplete or inaccurate, report the results to all CRAs to which the furnisher provided the information that compile and maintain files on a nationwide basis. Sections 623(b)(1)(C) and (b)(1)(D).
- Complete the above steps within 30 days from the date the CRA receives the dispute (or 45 days, if the consumer later provides relevant additional information to the CRA). Section 623(b)(2).
- Promptly modify or delete the information, or block its reporting. Section 623(b)(1)(E).

### **Duty to Report Voluntary Closing of Credit Accounts**

If a consumer voluntarily closes a credit account, any person who regularly and in the ordinary course of business furnishes information to one or more CRAs must report this fact when it provides information to CRAs for the time period in which the account was closed. Section 623(a)(4).

### **Duty to Report Dates of Delinquencies**

If a furnisher reports information concerning a delinquent account placed for collection, charged to profit or loss, or subject to any similar action, the furnisher must, within 90 days after reporting the information, provide the CRA with the month and the year of the commencement of the delinquency that immediately preceded the action, so that the agency will know how long to keep the information in the consumer's file. Section 623(a)(5).

Any person, such as a debt collector, that has acquired or is responsible for collecting delinquent accounts and that reports information to CRAs may comply with the requirements of Section 623(a)(5) (until there is a consumer dispute) by reporting the same delinquency date previously reported by the creditor. If the creditor did not report this date, they may comply with the FCRA by establishing reasonable procedures to obtain and report delinquency dates, or, if a delinquency date cannot be reasonably obtained, by following reasonable procedures to ensure that the date reported precedes the date when the account was placed for collection, charged to profit or loss, or subjected to any similar action. Section 623(a)(5).

### **Duties of Financial Institutions When Reporting Negative Information**

Financial institutions that furnish information to "nationwide" consumer reporting agencies, as defined in Section 603(p), must notify consumers in writing if they may furnish or have furnished negative information to a CRA. Section 623(a)(7). The CFPB has prescribed model disclosures, 12 CFR Part 1022, App. B.

### **Duties When Furnishing Medical Information**

A furnisher whose primary business is providing medical services, products, or devices (and such furnisher's agents or assignees) is a medical information furnisher for the purposes of the FCRA and must notify all CRAs to which it reports of this fact. Section 623(a)(9). This notice will enable CRAs to comply with their duties under Section 604(g) when reporting medical information.

### **Duties When ID Theft Occurs**

All furnishers must have in place reasonable procedures to respond to notifications from CRAs that information furnished is the result of identity theft, and to prevent refurnishing the information in the future. A furnisher may not furnish information that a consumer has identified as resulting from identity theft unless the furnisher subsequently knows or is informed by the consumer that the information is correct. Section 623(a)(6). If a furnisher learns that it has furnished inaccurate information due to identity theft, it must notify each CRA of the correct information and must thereafter report only complete and accurate information. Section 623(a)(2). When any furnisher of information is notified pursuant to the procedures set forth in Section 605B that a debt has resulted from identity theft, the furnisher may not sell, transfer, or place for collection the debt except in certain limited circumstances. Section 615(f).

The CFPB's website, [www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore), has more information about the FCRA, including publications for businesses and the full text of the FCRA.

**Citations for FCRA sections in the U.S. Code, 15 U.S.C. § 1681 et seq.:**

Section 602	15 U.S.C. 1681	Section 615	15 U.S.C. 1681m
Section 603	15 U.S.C. 1681a	Section 616	15 U.S.C. 1681n
Section 604	15 U.S.C. 1681b	Section 617	15 U.S.C. 1681o
Section 605	15 U.S.C. 1681c	Section 618	15 U.S.C. 1681p
Section 605A	15 U.S.C. 1681c-1	Section 619	15 U.S.C. 1681q
Section 605B	15 U.S.C. 1681c-2	Section 620	15 U.S.C. 1681r
Section 606	15 U.S.C. 1681d	Section 621	15 U.S.C. 1681s
Section 607	15 U.S.C. 1681e	Section 622	15 U.S.C. 1681s-1
Section 608	15 U.S.C. 1681f	Section 623	15 U.S.C. 1681s-2
Section 609	15 U.S.C. 1681g	Section 624	15 U.S.C. 1681s-3
Section 610	15 U.S.C. 1681h	Section 625	15 U.S.C. 1681t
Section 611	15 U.S.C. 1681i	Section 626	15 U.S.C. 1681u
Section 612	15 U.S.C. 1681j	Section 627	15 U.S.C. 1681v
Section 613	15 U.S.C. 1681k	Section 628	15 U.S.C. 1681w
Section 614	15 U.S.C. 1681l	Section 629	15 U.S.C. 1681y