Identity theft has become a serious problem in recent times for victims, prosecutors, and the police. According to the Identity Theft and Assumption Deterrence Act of 1998, identity theft is defined as a crime when someone

*“…knowingly transfers or uses, without lawful authority, a means of identification of another person with the intent to commit, or to aid or abet, any unlawful activity that constitutes a violation of Federal law, or that constitutes a felony under any applicable State or local law.”*

The most common form of identity theft is when someone uses someone else’s name and related credentials to acquire a product or service. It has affected victims of all incomes, races, and ages and often goes unnoticed by the victims until they are denied the ability to get a loan, purchase through a credit card, or contacted by the card company to determine the eligibility of their transaction. While the victims are often individuals, it is also possible for large corporations to have their identities stolen, where criminals purchase large items such as merchandise.

Another challenging aspect of identity theft is how it can be used for carrying out international terrorism activities. It can be used by crime rings including international members and many such incidents of identity theft demand swift police response. Furthermore, the increase of computer literacy and advancement in Information Technology has aided the way for increased identity thefts by criminals, who prefer it over conventional methods. The lack of consistency in investigation and prosecution also makes it a favorable choice for criminals, particularly those involved in cybercrimes.

Here, we will have a look at how lawmakers can respond to incidents of identity theft and combat the crime to avoid and decrease the frequency of potential future incidents.

1. **Reporting Procedures for Identity Theft**

For all criminal activities, the law enforcement authorities of the particular geographical area where the crime occurs are held responsible in terms of investigating, preparing police reports, and recording the incident. Identity theft does not depend upon one venue, since it may comprise of a series of events in different locations. The victim of identity theft may reside in one place, whereas the misuse of their information may take place in one or more different locations. This causes confusion over who holds the responsibility to investigate and prosecute, which causes inconsistency in action and reporting against the criminals.

The solution lies in either the local police departments taking the responsibility if the victim lives within their jurisdiction, regardless of the location of the fraud; or assign a specific legal venue as either the one where the victim lives, or the one where the crime occurs. This will provide the victim access to official reports that can help them resolve issues pertaining to misuse of their information in personal records and financial accounts. It will also provide the basis to build a comprehensive and consistent database of identity theft to allow development of effective strategies for combating identity theft.

1. **Collaboration and Partnership**

When an incident of identity theft occurs, the victim needs to end their financial vulnerability by freezing their accounts or [credit cards](http://www.cardzgroup.com/ContactLessSmartCard.html) and also serve as a key resource in providing information to law enforcement to capture and prosecute the criminals. Identity theft coordination centers should be built at state level and given the responsibility to collect identity theft police reports, investigate interstate or statewide cases, provide resources for prevention, develop investigative protocols, and work with financial institutions to create audit trails to discover, arrest, and prosecute identity theft criminals.

1. **Assistance to Identity Theft Victims**

Lawmakers should develop policies to assist victims that provide written Standard Operating Procedures to help them resolve financial impact resulting from identity theft. Victims often feel that the police don’t care as much about them as they do for other crime victims, such as those of robbery, physical assault, or loss of property. Many victims await follow-up about their case and are not dealt with urgency. Hence, there is a need to have clear policies on handling complaints of identity theft and communicating with victims at all stages of the proceedings to assure the victims that they are being assisted.

The specific needs of victims that need to be addressed include assisting them with how they can further stop their identity from being fraudulently used, providing them information about the procedures being followed to process their case, giving guidelines on the information they have to provide to case investigators, and helping them clear their personal and credit records and providing a list of names and contact numbers of people for the same purpose.

1. **Legislation**

It is important to create and maintain a detailed document that outlines identity theft legislation for the federal government and all the states. This is important to ensure a common language for successful partnership among financial sector, law enforcement, and public agencies. This legislation document can be accessed by all legislators, analysts and state level prosecutors dealing with identity theft cases.

1. **Training**

Identity theft is socially, legally, and in some cases, technologically complex. Law enforcement needs to assess and regularly conduct training for all its individuals to further ensure how citizens and businesses are prepared for preventing and responding to cases of identity theft. This includes inhouse training of police officers to process complaints of identity theft, specialized training of investigators, and officers training for victim assistance.

**Conclusion**

Identity theft can be prevented at individual level, but when it happens, it is how the lawmakers respond to it that can help in subsequent identification and prosecution of criminals. It is important to create a national level strategy for resolving identity theft cases to allow prompt response by the police in resolving them.