

City Seeks to Prevent Swindling of Immigrants Over Visa Lottery

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Body

The New York **City** Department of Consumer Affairs said yesterday that it would **seek** to steer **immigrants** from unscrupulous businesses that claim to help them in a **lottery** for **visas**.

Through its Diversity **Immigrant Visa** Program, the federal State Department will award 50,000 **visas** granting permanent residency to applicants.

In the past, people, sometimes posing as immigration lawyers, have cheated **immigrants** of thousands of dollars, often falsely assuring them that they will win the **lottery**.

The commissioner of Consumer Affairs, Jane S. Hoffman, said: "It is very important to realize that you don't need to pay any person, any lawyer or any business to apply. You cannot pay a lawyer or business organization to get a green card or to automatically become a citizen. If anyone is telling you that, it's a scam."

As part of its campaign to **prevent** such schemes, her department will distribute a brochure in nine languages -- English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Arabic, French, Haitian-Creole, Italian and Korean.

The brochure advises **immigrants** to take precautions, such as not to pay in cash and to be wary of people claiming to have inside connections.

Ms. Hoffman said that **immigrants** should report schemes to her agency, which does not typically report information on illegal **immigrants** to the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

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