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5-year-old's Social Security number stolen to set up bank accounts

August 14, 2006

By **DON DARE**
6 On Your Side Reporter

KNOXVILLE (WATE) -- Thieves often use Social Security numbers to get personal information and ruin the credit of adults. But there's another type of ID theft that's growing in popularity. Stealing the SSN of a child.

Caroline Jennings is five. Her parents got a Social Security number for her two days after she was born. It was never used, until recently.

"I opened her a savings account at our local credit union and they ran a random check system as they do on everyone's Social and it came back with a hit, that hers was already being used by Jose Morales," says Caroline's mother, Traci Jennings.

Through some police work of her own, Traci found Jose Morales, of Phoenix, Arizona's North 30th Place, had opened a bank account using Caroline's Social Security number soon after her birth.

"I was stunned because I have never given it to anyone. Even her doctors don't have her Social on file," Traci says.

She found Morales had opened four accounts at two different banks using her daughter's number.

First, Traci spoke with her bank. "They told me to notify Check Systems which is the agency that ran the check and identified the hit. And Check Systems told me to file a police report."

However, local police said since the crime didn't occur here, their hands were tied. "I talked to Social Security who referred me to the credit agency who referred me to the Federal Trade Commission," Traci says.

At Social Security, regional Director Jim Rovere says Traci did everything right. He says it's a long process but the agency is now investigating.

"We referred this to the Office of the Inspector General and they will take over the case and try to identify the person who using or is misusing it fraudulently and prosecute them if possible," Jim says.

Fortunately, no financial harm has come to Caroline yet. But the potential is there, if the man using her number isn't stopped.

If you think someone is using your Social Security number for work purposes, contact your **Social Security office** and the **Federal Trade Commission**.

If someone using your number is creating a credit problem, call the creditor who approved the credit, file a police report and **contact** the fraud department of the three major credit bureaus.



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Traci has contacted Equifax, Experian and TransUnion Credit Bureaus.

Jim Rovere says the process takes time. Patience is required because this type of crime is increasing.

"I'm waiting on the credit bureaus to find out what they've done. I have mailed the information saying my daughter's Social has been used fraudulently. I'm waiting to hear back from them," Traci says.

It's tough to have a new Social Security number assigned but your local office will begin the process of helping you.



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