

The State of Hawaii
Department of Commerce
and Consumer Affairs

MILITARY CONSUMER GUIDE



335 Merchant Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

<https://cca.hawaii.gov>



The State of Hawaii Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA) is a regulatory agency that promotes a strong and healthy business environment by upholding fairness and public confidence in the marketplace. The department also strives to increase knowledge and opportunity for businesses and individuals, and to protect consumers against unfair and deceptive business practices.

This military consumer guide was created to equip Hawaii's service members and their families with information as the first line of defense against fraud. The guide will also enable our military community to make better and informed decisions when managing their money.

Hawaii is home to around 44,000 active duty service members and 5,500 National Guard personnel—many of whom face unique challenges due to redeployments and permanent change of stations. With such a large population of transient consumers, there is the unfortunate likelihood of targeted fraud or unfamiliarity with state laws for these service members and their families.

This booklet seeks to offer comprehensive guidance to protect oneself from fraudulent activities and provide the necessary information to live and work in the state of Hawaii. Information about various issues and consumer topics that often affect our military community are highlighted within. Some topics that will be covered are those about housing, buying a car, identity theft and more. We also cover the laws created for our military families involving a professional license in Hawaii and give you the steps required to start your own business.

The information contained in this guide is intended to supplement the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA), which provides legal and financial protections to enable servicemembers to focus on their mission. Visit <https://bit.ly/4eVGWg7> for more information on SCRA.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 01**
HOUSING.....3
 - Landlord and Tenant Information
 - Mortgage
 - Home Insurance
 - Home Repairs

- 02**
TRANSPORTATION.....11
 - Buying a New Car
 - Buying a Used Car
 - Leasing a Car
 - Automobile Repair
 - Motor Vehicle Insurance

- 03**
LIFE INSURANCE.....21

- 04**
INVESTMENTS.....23

- 05**
DEBT COLLECTION.....24

- 06**
PROTECTIONS.....26

- 07**
IDENTITY THEFT.....27

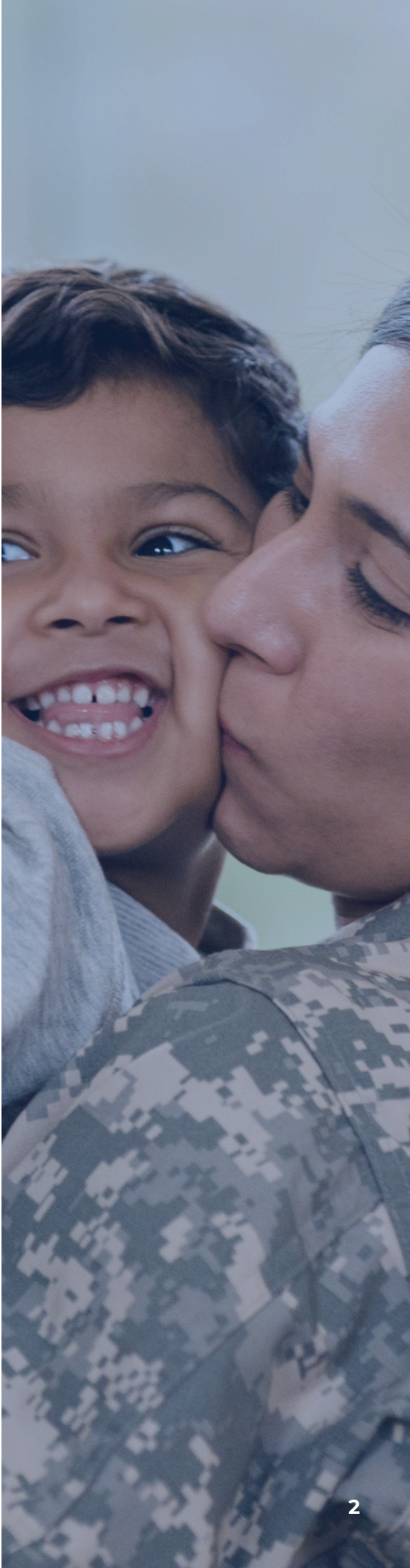
- 08**
CONSUMER COMPLAINTS.....29

- 09**
PROFESSIONAL LICENSES.....31
 - Getting a Professional License
 - Renewing a License
 - Advertising as a Professional

- 10**
STARTING A BUSINESS IN HAWAII.....36

- 11**
EDUCATION & TRAINING.....39

- 12**
CONTACT INFORMATION.....40





1. HOUSING

Renting a home in Hawaii can be confusing. There is a handbook that can help you understand what's expected of both the landlord and the tenant.

LANDLORD-TENANT HANDBOOK

The Landlord-Tenant Handbook contains information from the Hawaii Residential Landlord-Tenant Code, Chapter 521, of the Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) that explains Hawaii's landlord-tenant laws and addresses the questions and concerns most frequently expressed by Hawaii landlords and tenants. The recurrent intent of the Code is equal justice for both landlords and tenants.

Much of the confusion and difficulty so common in landlord-tenant disputes would be minimized or eliminated if there were better understanding and communication between landlords and tenants. One way of achieving this is through the use of clearly written agreements and understandings, and ensuring that the agreements are signed by the parties in duplicate, with copies provided to each. Agreements that are not clearly understood should be discussed, clarified, and put into writing.

HOW TO OBTAIN A COPY OF THE LANDLORD-TENANT HANDBOOK

A physical Landlord-Tenant Handbook is available for purchase at DCCA or available free online. To purchase a handbook in person, please visit either location below:

DCCA Cashiers Office

335 Merchant Street, #301
Honolulu, HI 96813
Cost: \$2

Office of Consumer Protection

235 S. Beretania Street, #801
Honolulu, HI 96813
Cost: \$2

You may also order a copy by sending your request to:

DCCA Cashier's Office

PO Box 541
Honolulu, HI 96809
Cost: \$2

Please include a check payable to: DCCA
Include: Your name, mailing address, publication requested, payment or visit <https://cca.hawaii.gov/landlordtenant> to download a free handbook.

RESIDENTIAL LANDLORD-TENANT INFORMATION CENTER

The Office of Consumer Protection operates the Hawaii Residential Landlord-Tenant Information Center.

This free service offers information to the general public about Hawaii's Residential Landlord-Tenant Code and other laws affecting residential landlords and tenants.

Callers can access the Information Center via one of the numbers listed below between 8:00 am and 12:00 pm:

- **Honolulu Office (Oahu/Kauai):**
(808) 586-2634
- **Maui Office (Maui/Molokai/Lanai):**
(808) 243-4648
- **Hilo Office (Hawaii Island):**
(808) 933-0910

If you encounter a pre-recorded message, please leave a message and your call will be returned in the order it was received on the same or next business day.

Or you can talk to an investigator in-person at:

Office of Consumer Protection
235 South Beretania Street, #801
Honolulu, HI 96813

8:00 am to 12:00 pm
Monday through Friday,
except state holidays.

Information is also available online at
<https://cca.hawaii.gov/landlordtenant>.



MEDIATION

If a landlord and tenant are unable to resolve their disagreement(s), they may require legal assistance. However, many times, parties are able to settle their disputes without the use of attorneys and the added expense of time and resources. Mediation may be an option as an informal process in which an impartial third party assists in resolving disputes.

Visit the Hawaii State Judiciary landlord-tenant claims website https://www.courts.state.hi.us/self-help/landlord/tenant_claims for more information on getting legal help and mediation (also known as alternative dispute resolution).

If you have questions on a landlord-tenant matter, contact the Office of Consumer Protection residential landlord-tenant information line at (808) 586-2634 or consult an attorney.

MORTGAGE

Looking for the Best Rates

Ready to buy that new home? As a smart consumer, you should shop around for the best rates when looking for a mortgage. Compare terms from various mortgage companies and negotiate for the best deal. Make sure you check with the Division of Financial Institutions for a list of licensed mortgage services online at <https://cca.hawaii.gov/dfi> or by calling (808) 586-2820.

Fair lending is required by law. You may review the Equal Credit Opportunity Act for your consumer rights. This law prohibits lenders from discriminating based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, or whether you receive income from a public assistance program. It may be prohibited under the Hawaii Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) to ask for some of the information, depending on the type of mortgage, but they cannot use it as a reason to deny you credit.

Another protection you have is with the Fair Housing Act. This law offers you protection in buying or renting a unit based on your inclusions in any of the protected classes such as race, color or religion.

Falling Behind on Payments

If you are currently having trouble paying your mortgage or expect problems in the future, it's crucial that you get help immediately. If you fall behind and don't act, your lender will take steps to foreclose on your home. If that happens, you may lose your home and the money you have already invested in it. Call your lender, discuss the situation with them, and see what kind of repayment plan you can work out. You can also contact a consumer credit counselor to receive assistance with your situation. They can help you develop a budget or create a strategy to stay on schedule. For free help dealing with foreclosure you should set up a meeting with a non-profit consumer credit counseling service or housing counselor to help you deal with your lender. See DFI's website for a HUD approved counselor <https://cca.hawaii.gov/dfi>.

FORECLOSURE RESCUE SCAMS



Many residents, despite their best efforts, are still faced with the possibility of foreclosure. If you can't avoid a foreclosure, you should still be aware of foreclosure rescue scams.

Capitalizing on the housing crisis, “foreclosure rescue” companies often scour foreclosure notices and filings to prey on consumers desperate to save their homes from being foreclosed. Their solicitations may be in person, by mail, telephone or e-mail, or via advertisements, including TV and radio commercials. These companies may claim they can assist you with obtaining a “loan modification” from your lender that will modify your existing mortgage to make it more affordable. Other companies or individuals may offer to arrange a “lease-back” or “repurchase” of your home, claiming they will pay your mortgage and rent your home back to you.

Some loan modification companies violate Hawaii state law and charge customers thousands of dollars in up-front fees, promising that they will negotiate with the consumers’ banks to lower their mortgage interest rates, lock in fixed rates, get late fees and past due payments forgiven, and even reduce principal balance. Many of these companies lure consumers through false and misleading tactics, such as using company names and advertisements that give the false impression that they are affiliated with a government agency, falsely claiming to have extraordinarily high success rates – of as much as 100 percent, and falsely claiming to have a special relationship with the homeowner’s lender. In some cases, the “modifications” they obtain, require consumers to make higher monthly payments, a result that may be of little help to consumers already struggling to afford their mortgage payments and stay in their homes.

Companies involved in “lease-back” or “repurchase” schemes often require you to sign over the deed to your home with the option to buy it back later. However, the terms of such transactions are so complex or fraudulent that homeowners are rarely, if ever, able to repurchase their homes. Sometimes the property is sold to another party without the homeowner’s knowledge.

BEWARE OF THE FOLLOWING:

- Anyone who offers to arrange to stop or delay foreclosure for an upfront fee.
- Anyone who offers to pay your mortgage or save your home if you transfer the deed to your home.
- Anyone who offers to make your mortgage payments for you.
- Anyone who advises you to stop making your mortgage payments or to ignore calls from your lender or mortgage servicer.
- Direct solicitations sent via mail, e-mail, telephone or in-person solicitations at your home.
- For-profit companies with names suggesting a government affiliation or who claim to be approved by the government.
- For-profit companies that claim they have a relationship with attorneys but do not provide legal services.

If you feel you’re a victim of a mortgage scam, contact the Office of Consumer Protection at (808) 586-2630.

HOME/RENTERS INSURANCE

Homeowners or renters insurance is not required by law in Hawaii. Your lender, however, may require insurance on your home for the duration of your mortgage. Homeowners insurance provides protection for your dwelling, personal property, and on-site buildings if damaged by a covered peril. Perils are events (i.e., fire and explosion) which cause damage to property. Aside from property coverage for your home and outbuildings, each policy usually contains four additional coverages: personal property, additional living expenses, personal liability, and medical payments.

Your premium may be based on, but not limited to, the following factors: type of construction, loss prevention devices, public protection class, deductible level, amount of insurance, and policy form.

The key to insurance comparison shopping is identifying your desired deductible levels, coverage limits and provisions before getting premium quotes. Once your ideal policy parameters are selected, the quotes you receive should be on an “apples to apples” comparative basis. After obtaining multiple premium quotes, your personal preference dictates the importance of the following considerations: premium cost, service and financial stability.

Note: If your agent only represents one insurance company, you may need to contact an independent agent to obtain competing quotes. Check out the DCCA homeowners, condominium owners and renters premium comparison guides at <https://cca.hawaii.gov/ins>.

HOME REPAIRS

As your home ages, it may need repairs. You may decide to make the repairs yourself or contact a professional. When hiring a professional contractor, make sure you deal with a contractor that is licensed. A contractor’s license is required to perform projects totaling over \$1,500 in work and materials (or if a building permit is required). Getting three bids or estimates, preferably from licensed contractors, may help you decide if the work is necessary. It’s best not to pay cash, and never pay all the money for the job in advance.

Hire a Licensed Contractor

When making any renovations to your home, it’s important to hire a licensed contractor. Hiring a licensed contractor means that there are laws in place to protect you, the homeowner. Here’s why:

- **Training and experience.** To qualify for a contractor’s license, applicants must demonstrate they have the necessary training and experience. The Contractors License Board also requires applicants demonstrate “a good reputation for honesty, truthfulness, financial integrity and fair dealing,” submit tax clearances, proof of insurance, and other required qualifications.
- **Insurance.** Licensed contractors are required to carry liability insurance and are responsible if a worker is injured on a job site. Insurance is important because a lot can happen on a construction project - accidents, falling objects - not to mention fire, vandalism, malicious mischief, and theft of building items. This protects you as a homeowner from putting your property at risk if anything is damaged on your project or if anyone is injured.
- **Obtain required permits.** Licensed contractors are able to apply for and obtain building permits. Beware of a contractor that is asking you to apply for an owner-builder permit, it may be because they aren’t licensed and can’t get a building permit for you. For information about building, electrical, and plumbing permits, contact the planning and permitting department for your county.
- **Contractors Recovery Fund.** The Contractors Recovery Fund helps to compensate homeowners if something goes wrong with their project and is only available to consumers who have hired a licensed general contractor. For information about the Contractors Recovery Fund, or if you have questions about what kind of a contractor you may want to hire, call the Contractors License Board at (808) 586-2700.

TYPES OF CONTRACTORS



GENERAL ENGINEERING

"TYPE A" Contractors that have specialized engineering knowledge and skills.



GENERAL BUILDING

"TYPE B" Contractors that build structures, like houses and buildings.



SPECIALTY

"TYPE C" Contractors that are licensed in specialty areas like drywall, landscaping, flooring, or roofing.

It's important to hire the right kind of contractor for your particular job.

If you're just putting on a new roof, a specialty roofing contractor may be for you. But if your job includes more than two specialties (for example, an extension requiring framing, flooring, drywall, and roofing), you should consider hiring a general contractor.

A general contractor will be licensed to do most of the work and will hire licensed subcontractors to take care of any specialty work.

HIRING ELECTRICIANS AND PLUMBERS

Electrician

According to the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC), about 200 people die from electrocution each year. Deaths from residential fires run close to 700 annually. What can you do to limit the risk of injury or fire in your home? Hire a licensed electrician to handle any electrical jobs you may have.

Licensed electricians have the training and experience. In order to even apply for a license, an applicant must have at least 5 years of supervised experience in the trade (over 10,000 hours), and 240 hours of academic coursework. All applicants must also pass a written examination that includes information on the National Electric Code.

There's a difference between an electrical contractor and an electrician. "Licensed electrical contractors" are companies that employ electricians. "Licensed electricians" are individual tradesmen with the training and experience to do the actual work. So, you may hire a licensed electrical contractor to rewire your house, but you should see licensed electricians doing the work.

Licensed electrical contractors and electricians are able to apply for and obtain electrical permits. Permits are required for any electrical work that is greater than \$500 in a 12-month period. The permit requirement is waived for work less than \$500 in a 12-month period if you hire a licensed electrician. For information about building or electrical permits, contact the planning and permitting department for your county.

A license is required for any person who performs electrical work. Electrical work includes the installation, alteration, reconstruction, or repair of electrical wiring. If you have questions about whether you need to hire an electrical contractor or an electrician, call the Contractors License Board at (808) 586-2700 or the Board of Electricians and Plumbers at (808) 586-2704.

Plumber

Licensed plumbers have the training and experience necessary to complete the job. In order to apply for a license, an applicant must have at least 5 years of supervised experience in the trade (over 10,000 hours). The Board also requires all applicants pass a written examination that includes information about the Uniform Plumbing Code.

Licensed plumbing contractors and plumbers are also able to apply for and obtain plumbing permits. Permits are required for any plumbing work that is greater than \$500 in a 12-month period. The permit requirement is waived for work less than \$500 in a 12-month period if you hire a licensed plumber. Contact the planning and permitting department for your county for more information.

There's a difference between a plumbing contractor and a plumber. "Licensed plumbing contractors" are companies that employ plumbers. "Licensed plumbers" are individual tradesmen with the training and experience to do the actual work.

A plumber's license is required for any person who performs plumbing work. Plumbing work includes the installation, maintenance, extension, or alteration of piping, fixtures, appliances, and appurtenances. If you have questions about whether you need to hire a plumbing contractor or a plumber, call the Contractor's License Board at (808) 586-2700 or the Board of Electricians and Plumbers at (808) 586-2704.

Handyman

If your project is small and the total cost of your project, including labor and materials is not more than \$1,500, and does not require a building permit, you can hire a handyman. "Handymen" usually perform minor repairs and projects that are typically described as "odd jobs" or "fix-up tasks." Without a contractor's license, handymen may not work on projects that (1) are over \$1,500, or (2) require a building, electrical, or plumbing permit, (3) require electrical work, or (4) require plumbing work. If they perform work in these areas and do not have a license, they are engaged in unlicensed contracting. The penalties for unlicensed activity include fines, imprisonment, and injunctive relief. Regardless of the cost of your project, you may still want to consider hiring a licensed person.

Unlicensed Contractors

Each year, the Regulated Industries Complaints Office (RICO) receives hundreds of tips and complaints about unlicensed contractors. The complaints range from construction that has been poorly done, to money being taken and no work being done at all.

Unlicensed contractors may go door-to-door claiming they "just finished a job down the street," or "have materials left over from another job." They may try to pressure you, offering a discounted price, but only if you act today. Remember, a great deal today, will probably be just as good of a deal tomorrow, so take the time you need to consider the situation carefully.

Unlicensed contractors may even use a fake license number or a license number that belongs to someone else. So remember to check license information with DCCA. You may also want to ask to see a picture I.D. so you know exactly who you're dealing with.

And, most importantly, remember to never pay all of the money up front. Unlicensed contractors may ask for cash payments, substantial down payments, or for all of the money to be paid in advance. After they get the money, they may move a little dirt, or worse, demolish a wall or driveway, and not come back the next day.

Your home is the single biggest investment you'll probably ever make, so take your time, do your homework, and consider hiring a licensed contractor.

Unlicensed contracting and violations of Hawaii's licensing laws are investigated by RICO. To file a complaint, call (808) 587-4272 or visit <https://cca.hawaii.gov/rico/file>.



WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO HIRE A LICENSED CONTRACTOR

If you hire an unlicensed electrical or plumbing contractor, and work doesn't meet local building codes, or if the person doesn't pull the necessary permits (which an unlicensed contractor cannot do), as the homeowner, you'll be responsible if the project doesn't meet code.

Additionally, allowing work to be done by an unlicensed person could affect your homeowner's insurance policy, should a claim arise as a result of that work. Your home is the single biggest investment you'll probably ever make, so take your time, do your homework, and consider hiring licensed contractors, electricians, and plumbers.

On job sites, look for licensed electricians and plumbers. These licensed professionals should be easily identifiable as they are required by law to wear their license while on the job.

Check out an individual or business before you hire them. First, you want to find out if the contractor is licensed in the appropriate specialty to complete your project. Then you want to check out any prior complaints

BusinessCheck

Search for information about licensed contractors, electricians, and plumbers, including license status, license classifications, proof of insurance, complaints filed against licensees and for information about unlicensed contracting investigations at <https://businesscheck.hawaii.gov>.

Checking out a licensee or business on this site isn't a guarantee, but it's a good step to take that can help you to determine if the licensee or business is qualified to handle your particular job. It's also one of several steps you can take to protect yourself against unscrupulous or unqualified people.





2. TRANSPORTATION

Service members arriving in Hawaii are often faced with making a quick decision about transportation. Here are some things to keep in mind when shopping for a new or used car.

BUYING A NEW CAR

BEFORE YOU BUY:

- Decide what kind of car and what features you are looking for.
- Educate yourself about the car and its options.
- Check with your insurance company on the cost of insurance for the car you have in mind.
- Get pre-qualified for an auto loan from your lending institution so you know what you can afford.
- Compare your options by shopping around.

BEFORE YOU SIGN ANY DOCUMENTS:

- Be sure you have an entire copy of the contract.
- Review the contract and make sure you understand all its terms.
- If you do not understand any contract items, ask the salesperson to explain it to your satisfaction.
- Don't sign the contract if you do not agree to all the terms listed.
- Make sure all promises are in writing in your contract. Oral promises may not be enforceable.
- Generally, there is NO 3-day cancellation period once you sign the contract, so be sure that you want to purchase the car.
 - There may be a written reference to a 3-day rescission period noted in your contract, but this applies only to door-to-door sales and not to the average car sale transaction.
 - However, if you were sent a flyer offering you a free prize for going to the dealership to test drive a car, this may be considered a door-to-door sale even if you sign the contract at the dealership.
- As purchaser of the car, you are responsible for providing the insurance. The dealer is not obligated to cancel a contract because you cannot afford to pay for insurance.
- When you see an advertisement in the newspaper for a car, be aware there may be charges in addition to the stated price for tax, license and documentation fees. Always read the fine print.
- You should receive a written notice from the dealership setting forth the provisions of the new car "lemon law" when you purchase the car.

HOW WILL YOU

PAY FOR THE VEHICLE

- Deals may be subject to financing approval. If they are, it means you may have to consider the dealership's financing program as well as those offered by other financing entities.
- You have the option to obtain financing through the dealership or from your own financial institution.
- If you apply for financing through the dealership, you will have to sign a financing agreement. If you do not plan to obtain financing through the dealership, you do not have to sign the dealer's financing agreement as a "back-up."
- Do not sign the financing agreement until you receive an entire copy of the contract. Review it and make sure you understand all its terms.
- The dealer may allow you to take the car off the lot even though you have not yet qualified for financing. Be aware that you may be responsible for the vehicle when you take it off the lot.
- If the deal is subject to financing approval, and you do not qualify for financing either through the dealership or your financial institution, the contract may be void and you may have to return the car to the dealership.



ADDITIONAL FEES

The car purchase contract may list other fees in addition to the price of the car, such as

- extended warranties,
- guaranteed auto protection (GAP) fees,
- and vehicle theft registration (VTR) fees.

These fees are normally always optional and you may not want to purchase the services charged from those fees. If you do not know what the fee is or what it entails, ask the salesperson to explain it to you. If they tell you that a certain fee is required by law, ask them to specify what law they are referring to and check it out.

BUYING A USED CAR

DEALERSHIP OR INDIVIDUAL?

In Hawaii, both motor vehicle dealerships and salespeople who sell motor vehicles, must be licensed. If you've responded to an advertisement and the seller has several cars for sale, but does not have a car lot or a showroom, he or she may be an unlicensed motor vehicle dealer or salesperson.

A private individual can sell cars that have been used for the person's own personal, family, or business use, but the number of cars a private individual can offer to sell in a year is limited to 3. An unlicensed motor vehicle dealer (sometimes called a "curbstoner") may flip as many as 20 to 50 cars a year, buying them cheap, fixing them up to look decent, and then selling them for a profit. An unlicensed person may pose as the car's owner so he or she can get around state law requirements that limit the number of cars an individual can sell without a license.

Check licensing. If you're buying from a used car business or lot, make sure the lot is licensed and that the person you're dealing with is a licensed motor vehicle salesperson. Check out if the business you're dealing with is licensed and whether they have any prior complaints on the DCCA Business Check website at <http://businesscheck.hawaii.gov>.

Do your homework. If you're buying from an individual, get as much information as you can. Be wary if:

- The vehicles are for sale by the roadside, in vacant lots, or at shopping centers.
- The same phone number is listed for multiple vehicles in the newspaper or on Craigslist.
- The seller insists on a cash payment.
- The seller can't show you the car's title or offers to register the car for you.
- The seller admits he/she is a dealer but says it's a personal vehicle.

Buying from an unlicensed person may increase your risk of being unable to transfer a title. And, what may look like a great deal could actually be a previously totaled vehicle or one with a "rolled back" odometer. While an unlicensed person may not disclose this information, a licensed dealership will provide you with a written disclosure of any material mechanical defects that are known to the dealer. Protect yourself by doing your homework and getting as much information about the car and the seller as possible, and be sure to check complaint history information with RICO, especially if the person you're dealing with is unlicensed.

Before you sign the contract from a dealership, be sure you have an entire copy of the contract and review it. If you don't understand something, ask the salesperson to explain it. A sales contract may include additional fees, like extended warranties, guaranteed auto protection (GAP) fees, and vehicle theft registration (VTR) fees. These fees are optional and you may not want to purchase them. If you don't agree to all of the terms listed, you shouldn't sign the contract.

Start by making a list of what you want in your used car. Because inventory may vary, you don't want to forget you need room for your surfboard before you fall in love with a 2-seater. Consider building a target list of the cars you want to focus on and research them before you start looking. Then, decide how much you can spend. If you're taking out a loan, decide how much you can afford to pay each month. Try to put additional cash down to help reduce the monthly payment. And, if possible, arrange for financing before you start shopping. Interest rates tend to be lower if you're financing through a bank or credit union and higher if you finance through a dealership.

Some used cars may still be under factory warranty from the vehicle's manufacturer. Most new cars will have at least a 3-year/36,000-mile bumper-to-bumper warranty. So if you buy a car that is a year old with only 15,000 miles on it, you'll still have, at a minimum, 2 years and 21,000 miles remaining on the warranty. Make sure you understand what may be covered by warranty, the length of coverage, if there are deductible amounts, and what will be required to transfer the warranty (especially an extended warranty or a long-term power train warranty) to you.

It's always a good idea to do a test drive. There are some great used car checklists available on the internet. Make a list so you have an idea of what to look for before you hit the road. And, consider the following:

- Make sure the seller has the title for the car.
- Try to arrange the test drive so you have an opportunity to start the car while it's cold.
- Get in and sit. How does it feel? Check headroom, legroom, and make sure you can reach everything. If you're petite, make sure you can sit at a safe distance from the airbag.
- Test as much as you can with the car in idle (wipers, turn signals, electric door locks and windows). Don't feel rushed.
- Turn off the radio. During the test drive, make a point to listen to the engine and to concentrate on the driving experience.
- Try to simulate your normal driving pattern. Do things like drive on the highway and take the car up to the speed limit, idle in heavy traffic, and test the car on a steep slope.
- On the test drive, do things like accelerate from a stop, check for blind spots (visibility), pass another car (the car should accelerate and downshift quickly and smoothly), test the brakes, see how it corners, note the suspension (how's the ride?) and the alignment, and listen for rattles or squeaks.
- After the test drive, be sure to check the exterior of the car, including the cargo room. Check the undercarriage for rust and inspect the tires for even wear.
- Ask the owner to see maintenance records. Did the car have scheduled maintenance? Be cautious of a car that has been in a serious accident or has had a major repair, like an engine overhaul.
- Ask about the history – consider carefully if the car has been “salvaged,” “rebuilt,” or bought back through the State's Lemon Law program. Do not rely on a “clean” vehicle history report. Accidents, lemon law buybacks, or title branding may not show up for months or years, if at all. Consider taking the car to a mechanic for a thorough inspection.
- Once you decide on a car, don't leave the dealership until the financing has gone through, especially if you're leaving a trade in.

TYPES OF WARRANTIES



AS IS

A car sold as is is not covered by any warranty, and you will be responsible for any repairs that may be needed. Make sure you get any promises that are made to you in writing. Verbal promises may not be enforceable.



DEALER

Dealer certified pre-owned cars are certified by car dealerships and may not come with a warranty from a manufacturer.



FACTORY

Factory certified pre-owned cars are inspected by the manufacturer and come with a warranty from the manufacturer.

HAWAII'S USED CAR SALES AND WARRANTY LAW

When purchasing a used car from a dealership, the dealership must provide customers with:

1. A written disclosure of all material mechanical defects known to the dealer and whether any inspections have been conducted to determine if there are any; and
2. A written warranty on covered major mechanical parts of the vehicle if they fail during the specified warranty period.

Generally, warranty on the car will be required if your car:

- Is less than 5 years old
- Costs more than \$1,500
- Has between 12,000 and 75,000 miles
- Is not custom built or modified for show purposes or racing
- Is not inoperable or deemed a "total loss"

If the dealer fails to correct a defect or malfunction as required by the warranty after a reasonable period of time, the dealer must either refund your money or replace the car. Warranty periods for used cars are dependent on the mileage of the car sold.

- Less than 25,000 miles – 90 days or 5,000 miles
- Between 25,000 and 49,000 – 60 days or 3,000 miles
- Between 50,000 and 74,999 – 30 days or 1,000 miles

Only specified major mechanical parts are covered by this warranty. Parts that are of a cosmetic nature are not included. Covered parts are:

- Engine, including all lubricated parts, water pump, fuel pump, manifolds, engine block, cylinder head, rotary engine housings, flywheel gaskets, and seals;
- Transmission, including the transmission case, internal parts, torque converter, gaskets, and seals, except four-wheel drive vehicles are excluded from coverage as provided for in this paragraph;
- Drive axle, including front and rear drive axle housings and internal parts, axle shafts, propeller shafts, and universal joints, except four-wheel drive vehicles are excluded from coverage as provided in this paragraph;
- Brakes, including master cylinder, vacuum assist booster, wheel cylinders, hydraulic lines and fittings, and disc brake calipers;
- Radiator;
- Steering, including the steering gear housing and all internal parts, power steering pump, valve body, piston, and rack; and
- Alternator, generator, starter, and ignition system, excluding the battery.

To get your car repaired under the warranty, you must take the car back to the dealer before the warranty expires and provide written notice of the defect to the dealer.

LEASING A CAR

Leasing a car involves a commitment for the length of the lease. However, if you are on active duty, you might be able to get out of a lease if:

- You entered it prior to joining the military
- You are being deployed
- You are undergoing a Permanent Change of Station (PCS)

Most leases do not allow you to register the car out of state, so basically you can't take it with you. For more information, please read the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) 50 U.S.C. App. §§501-597b1.



HAWAII IS A “NO-FAULT STATE”

Hawaii's modified “No Fault” law applies to injuries and sets limitations as to when an injured person can sue the at-fault party for their injuries. Your motor vehicle insurance company will pay the bills for your injuries sustained as a result of the operation, maintenance, or use of your vehicle up to the personal injury protection benefits (PIP) limit.

MOTOR VEHICLE INSURANCE

Having motor vehicle insurance is essential to owning a motor vehicle in Hawaii. Hawaii State law requires that your vehicle, whether new or used, be insured throughout the motor vehicle registration period and that you have a valid Hawaii motor vehicle insurance identification card in your vehicle or accessible on a mobile electronic device at all times. You can be ticketed and fined if you operate a vehicle without the required motor vehicle identification card.

Your minimum motor vehicle insurance policy must have protection for injuries sustained as a result of the operation, maintenance, or use of your vehicle of \$10,000 per person personal injury protection (PIP) benefits. This is for paying medical and rehabilitative costs.

Your mandatory coverages also include a \$20,000 per person / \$40,000 per accident bodily injury liability and a \$10,000 per occurrence property damage liability. These cover damages for the injured party when you are at-fault in an accident.

Please note that the minimums will increase on January 1, 2026.

Optional coverages and options you may purchase include: collision and comprehensive, uninsured (UM) and underinsured (UIM) coverages, wage loss, alternative care, death benefits, funeral benefits, PIP deductible and PIP managed care.

Your insurance agent or company must advise you about your uninsured and underinsured motorist coverage options including your right to decline coverage in writing. You may purchase at a minimum \$20,000 per person uninsured motorist coverage to pay for serious injury or death if the driver at fault does not have insurance or in case of a hit and run accident. You may also purchase at a minimum \$20,000 per person underinsured motorist coverage to pay if the driver at fault does not have enough insurance. Your insurance company or insurance agent should help you decide on the best coverages for your individual situation and needs.



MOTORCYCLE

Hawaii law requires all motorcycle and motor scooter operators to purchase liability insurance for their vehicles. A valid I.D. card must be carried or accessible on a mobile electronic device by the operator at all times.

Be aware that insurance premiums are costly and may be difficult to get for a high-performance motorcycle or if you have a poor driving record. Check with an insurance agent before buying a motorcycle or a motor scooter. You don't want to find out after purchasing your motorcycle or scooter that you can't ride the motorbike because you can't afford the insurance or you don't qualify for it.

The motorcycle liability policy must include a \$20,000 per person / \$40,000 per accident bodily injury liability, which pays claims to those whom you cause death or injury. It must also include \$10,000 per occurrence property damage liability which pays for vehicles of property that you have caused damage to.

The insurance company must also offer you optional coverages which include personal injury medical payments coverage up to \$10,000; an income disability plan; and higher liability coverages.

The insurance company may also offer to sell you damage coverage for your motorcycle. To purchase a liability policy, you must have a valid motorcycle or motor scooter license. Those with a learner's permit, in order to obtain insurance, will need to have enrolled and successfully completed a motorcycle education course which has been approved by the state Department of Transportation and administered by the University of Hawaii.

For more information on the classes, please call:

- Oahu: (Leeward Community College (808) 455-0479 or (808) 455-0477
- Maui: (808) 984-3231
- Hawaii: (808) 974-7531
- Kauai: (808) 245-8318

There are seven sites where classes are held:

- Oahu: USCG Sand Island and Leeward Community College
- Hawaii: Hawaii Community College
- Maui: Wailuku War Memorial Stadium and Maui Community College
- Kauai: Vidinha Stadium and Kauai Community College

AUTOMOBILE REPAIR

Getting your car properly repaired can be a nightmare! But it doesn't have to be, if you know your rights. Automobile repair dealers and mechanics are required to have licenses to perform any repair which involves maintenance, modifications and repairs of a motor vehicle. When it comes to repairs, look for an established shop with a licensed mechanic.

A motor vehicle includes any passenger car, truck, truck tractor, motorcycle, or motor scooter. Mopeds are not considered a motor vehicle.

Motor vehicle repairs DO NOT include "tire repairs, changing tires, lubricating vehicles, installing light bulbs, batteries, windshield wiper blades, and other minor accessories, cleaning, adjusting, and replacing spark plugs, replacing oil and air filters, and other minor services...." (Section 437B-1, Hawaii Revised Statutes).

Before you authorize any repair of your car, be sure to obtain a written estimate of the work to be done. You may be charged a "reasonable fee" for this estimate. The final charge for repairs cannot exceed 15% of the estimated price if the estimate is less than \$100, or 10% of the estimated price if the estimate is more than \$100.

All work done by the repair dealer, including warranty work, must be noted on an invoice or repair work order, including any parts supplied for the repairs. If crash, used, rebuilt or reconditioned parts are used, this must be stated on the invoice. You will receive a copy of the invoice or work order. The repair dealer will keep a record of all work orders for at least two (2) years.

If you want replaced parts to be returned to you by the repair dealer or mechanic, you must make the request AT THE TIME THE WORK ORDER IS TAKEN. Certain parts may be exempt from this requirement due to size, weight, or other similar factors, and may include such parts as the repair dealer, mechanic, or apprentice is required to return to the manufacturer or distributor under a warranty agreement.

Auto body shops, auto painting shops, auto glass shops, auto machine shops, radiator shops or other specialty shops perform work which is NOT considered an automobile repair. However, if any of these shops perform work on a motor vehicle involving the removal, replacement, and repairing or modification, or both, of any component of the car's engine, automatic transmission, brakes, electrical systems, front and rear suspensions, air conditioner, and standard transmission and rear axle, they must obtain a motor vehicle repair dealer license.

A motor vehicle repair dealer may have a mobile repair facility, but it must be registered with the Motor Vehicle Repair Industry Board. At least 50% of the mechanics employed by a dealer on a full-time basis must be registered-certified mechanics. This may mean that the person who does the actual work on your car may not be required to be licensed. The work this person performs must be supervised by the licensed mechanic(s) on the premises.

The license number of the repair dealer must be included in any advertising by the repair dealer. An advertisement includes, but is not limited to, any card, sign, device, marking on or in any building or structure, newspaper or magazine, or directory under the listing of motor vehicle repair dealer, or broadcasting by airwave transmission which relates to the motor vehicle repair business.

If you have a complaint about the repair of your car, you may file a written complaint with the Consumer Resource Center, 235 S. Beretania Street, 9th Floor, Honolulu, HI 96813. For more information, call (808) 587-4272. When filing your complaint, enclose COPIES of the work order for the repair(s), proof of payment, or any other documentation pertinent to your complaint.



HAWAII LEMON LAW

The Lemon Law helps consumers resolve car warranty complaints with manufacturers. Under certain conditions, a consumer may be entitled to receive a refund or replacement for a car that has a defect or condition that does not conform to the car's warranty and that substantially impairs the use, market value, or safety of the car. This does not include a defect or condition that results from an accident, abuse, neglect, or modification of the car by persons other than the manufacturer or its authorized dealer.

The phrase "substantially impairs" means to make the car unfit, unreliable, or unsafe for warranted or normal use, or to greatly diminish the value of the car. An annoying rattle or vibration may not be serious enough to make your car a lemon.

If you believe your car is a lemon, make sure you do the following:

- Get a repair order every time you take your car in for repair even if the manufacturer's authorized repair dealership can't diagnose or fix the problem. The repair order should show the problem you reported, the odometer reading, the date when the car was brought in for repair, and the date when the car was ready for pickup.
- Keep your purchase contract, warranties, repair orders, letters, and notes from conversations with service personnel.
- Read over the Lemon Law Statement of Rights form that should have been given to you when you bought the car. Use the address given for the manufacturer's representative when you write to the manufacturer.
- Write to the manufacturer to describe the defect, the name and address of the repair dealership, the number of times the car was brought in, the odometer reading, your name, address and phone number. Ask for a refund or replacement. Send the letter by certified mail, with a return receipt requested. Save the return receipt when it comes back.
- It is reasonable to allow the manufacturer 10-14 days from the date it receives your notification to cure the problem.
- Continue to make your monthly payments on your financed or leased car.
- File a demand for arbitration with the State Certified Arbitration Program (SCAP) within one year after the Lemon Law Rights Period has expired. You do not need a lawyer, but this is a self-help program and you must prepare and present your evidence to the neutral arbitrator to prove your case. The arbitrator will decide if the manufacturer must repurchase or replace the car.



LEMON LAW

YOUR CAR MAY BE A LEMON IF ALL THE FOLLOWING ARE TRUE:

- ✓ The car was purchased, leased or initially registered in Hawaii;
- ✓ The car was purchased, leased or transferred to you while the warranty was still in effect;
- ✓ You use your car for personal, family, or household purposes;
- ✓ Your car has a warranty-related nonconformity that substantially impairs the use, value, or safety;
- ✓ You notified the manufacturer in writing about the nonconformity during the period of the warranty and within two years after original delivery of the car to a consumer or within the first 24,000 miles of operation, whichever occurs first (this is called the Lemon Law Rights Period);
- ✓ At least one of the following happened within the Lemon Law Rights Period:
 1. The same nonconformity was subject to exam or repair at least three times and the problem continued; or
 2. The nonconformity was subject to exam or repair at least once but continued to be a nonconformity likely to cause death or serious bodily injury if the car is driven; or
 3. The car was subject to examination or repair for one or more nonconformities for a total of 30 or more business days.

THINGS THAT DON'T QUALIFY FOR LEMON LAW ARBITRATION:

- Mopeds or motor scooters
- Cars over 10,000 lbs., gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR)
- A car owned or leased by a company which has purchased or leased more than one car per year even though the car is used for household use in addition to business use
- Sales disputes between consumers and dealers
- Service contract or extended warranty issues
- After-market parts
- Personal injury or loss of income claims
- Cases in litigation



For more information, visit <https://cca.hawaii.gov/lemonlaw> or contact the Consumer Resource Center at (808) 587-4272.



3. LIFE INSURANCE

Life insurance is purchased for a number of reasons, but the most important is that life insurance provides financial protection to the person receiving your insurance proceeds, following your death. The amount of life insurance you buy will depend upon your financial resources and situation.

When buying life insurance, it is important that you understand what your life insurance needs are in order to provide your family with the amount of funds necessary to adjust to the change in the family's financial circumstances.

TYPES OF LIFE INSURANCE

- **Term insurance** - which provides coverage for a specified period of time and pays your beneficiary only if you should die during the term of the policy.
- **Whole life insurance** - which provides insurance coverage for your entire life. Whole life policies also may have a savings element in the cash value account. If you find that there is no longer a critical need for the insurance, the policy may be surrendered or canceled and the amount in the cash value account may be returned to you to use for other purposes.
- **Endowment insurance** - which pays you, the insured, a designated amount of money if you are still living after a specified number of years. If you should die before that time, your beneficiary will receive the proceeds of the endowment policy.
- **Universal life insurance** - which provides coverages for your lifetime. Premiums and death benefits are flexible according to the terms of the policy. There is also a provision for cash value accumulation on the policy.
- **Variable life insurance** - which also provides lifetime coverage. Premiums may be fixed or flexible according to the terms of the policy. There is an element of investment in the cash value account of the policy and separate accounts under stocks, bonds, money markets or other funds may be established. Death benefits and cash value accounts may differ according to the performance of the invested funds.

TIPS ON BUYING LIFE INSURANCE

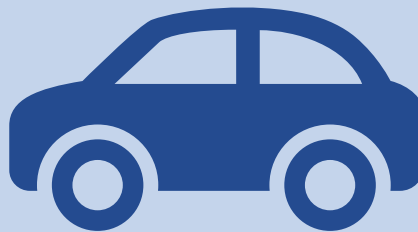
- ✓ Buy your life insurance from a company that is licensed in Hawaii. Shop around and compare different policies and their costs.
- ✓ Don't be talked into buying more insurance than you need or can realistically afford.
- ✓ Read your policy carefully after you receive it. If there are any points you do not understand, ask the insurance agent to explain. If you change your mind after purchasing a life insurance policy, you may return the policy within ten days of receiving it, for a full refund of the premium paid.
- ✓ Let your beneficiaries know what kinds of insurance you own and the amount in the policies, as well as where the policies are kept.
- ✓ Re-evaluate your insurance needs from time to time to determine whether your life insurance coverage is adequate.

PREMIUM COMPARISONS

Premium comparison guides are available to help you compare the different rates for the same coverage from various insurance carriers.



HOME



AUTO



HEALTH

To find comparison guides for home, auto, and health insurance visit <http://cca.hawaii.gov/ins/resources>.



4. INVESTMENTS

Before you invest, check that your securities broker-dealer and their agents, and/or investment adviser and their representatives are registered by calling the DCCA Business Registration Division (BREG) Securities Compliance Branch at (808) 586-2722 or visiting <https://brokercheck.finra.org>.

Always get everything in writing and keep copies of what you sign. If you think you are a victim of investment fraud or other securities violations, call the Securities Enforcement Branch at (808) 586-2740 to file a complaint, or access the complaint form online at <https://cca.hawaii.gov/sec/complaints>.

If you'd like to learn more about investing, BREG's Investor Education Program provides the public with general information on:

- How to make wise choices when investing;
- How to detect and protect against investment fraud, such as Ponzi schemes and Affinity fraud;
- Investment products, such as mutual funds and variable annuities;
- Financial literacy topics, and much more!

Visit www.investing.hawaii.gov for more information or call (808) 587-7400 to request free investor education materials, or to schedule a presentation and/or an informational display.

Top threats to be aware of when investing:

- Ponzi Schemes
- Unregistered Individuals Selling Securities
- Variable Annuities
- Affinity Fraud
- Unregistered Investment Products



5. DEBT COLLECTION

COLLECTION AGENCIES

All collection agencies that collect debts from any person who resides or does business in this state must be registered with DCCA and must comply with the state's laws and rules. Collection agencies are those which collect debts for others for compensation, as well as those which collect their own debts but create the impression that a third-party collector is involved, those which regularly repossess merchandise for others, and those which regularly accept assignments of claims.

There are some companies that are exempt from registering in Hawaii:

- Collection agencies licensed in other states are exempt from registration, although they must apply to DCCA for the exemption and are subject to portions of the state's collection agency law.
- Licensed real estate brokers and salespersons residing in this state.
- Licensed attorneys, when acting within the scope of their profession.
- Certain financial institutions and escrow companies.
- Individuals employed as credit persons for a single employer which is not a collection agency.
- Any public officer or any person acting under an order of the court.

Please note that even if a person or company is exempt from state registration, other laws, such as the federal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (FDCPA) or the state's Collection Practices Act ([HRS 480D](#)) may apply.

The first time a collection agency contacts you, it must clearly indicate that it is attempting to collect a debt and that any information obtained will be used for purposes of collection. It must also clearly disclose the name and full business address of the business or person that you owe money to, and the amount of the debt. You must also be informed of your rights to dispute the information.

Never ignore a letter from a collection agency.

If you don't owe the debt or are unsure if the debt is valid, send a letter by certified mail within 30 days to dispute the debt or to request more information about the debt. Upon receipt of your letter, the collection agency must stop collection attempts until it provides you with verification of the debt.

A collection agency should not call you between 9:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. If you send a written statement requesting a collection agency to stop, it cannot continue to call or write to you to demand payment.

If you have an attorney, a collection agency cannot contact anyone other than your attorney. If you do not have an attorney, the agency can contact other people only to find out where you live or work. The agency cannot tell these people that you owe money.



Registered collection agencies must follow the federal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act or the state's Collection Practices Act and cannot:

- Collect any debt through threats or coercion, including threats of arrest.
- Oppress, harass, or abuse any person, including the use of profane or obscene language.
- Unreasonably disclose information about a debt, such as disclosing the debt to any employer or family member.
- Use any fraudulent, deceptive, or misleading information or means to collect a debt or obtain information about you.
- Use unfair or unconscionable means to collect a debt such as collecting or attempting to collect any of the collection agency's fees or charges for services rendered.
- Threaten to add charges that aren't legal, for example, an interest rate higher than the rate in the original contract.

SOME HELPFUL TIPS ON HOW TO HANDLE YOUR DEBT

- Keep copies of all letters and notices you send to a collection agency. Send important communications by certified mail or other method to verify that the agency received the letter. Keep a record of the dates and times of all telephone discussions with the agency.
- Get all payment agreements in writing signed by you and the collection agency. Pay as agreed. Get a receipt for all payments.
- The laws on collection of student loans, child support, bad check enforcement, and taxes may limit some of the rights in this brochure.
- The debt collection laws do not protect you from paying the debts that you owe. You are legally responsible for the payment of these debts.

Please note that a violation of the state's collection agency law is also a violation of the state's consumer protection law. As such, you may be able to take legal action on your own behalf for a violation of the collection agency law. Contact a private attorney for more information.

Information about the FDCPA and other debt-related issues is available online through the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) at <https://consumer.ftc.gov>.



6. PROTECTIONS

As a servicemember certain protections have been established. Learn more about the Military Lending Act and Servicemembers Civil Relief Act.

MILITARY LENDING ACT

The Military Lending Act (MLA) is a federal law that protects active-duty service members, their spouses, and certain dependents from predatory lenders. The coverage includes active Guard or active Reserve duty members. The MLA was enacted in 2006 by the Department of Defense (DoD) and includes automatic protections. Visit www.consumerfinance.gov for more information.

SERVICEMEMBERS CIVIL RELIEF ACT

The Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) was created to provide extra protections for servicemembers in the event that legal or financial transactions adversely affect their rights during military or uniformed service. These protections enable servicemembers to devote their entire energy to the defense needs of the Nation. Visit www.consumerfinance.gov for more information.





7. IDENTITY THEFT

Identity theft is a serious crime. It's happening more and more frequently around the world, across the nation, and here in Hawaii. It's not a mere inconvenience.

People whose identities have been stolen can spend months or years – and their hard-earned money – cleaning up the mess thieves have made of their good name and credit record. In the meantime, victims may lose job opportunities, refused loans, education, housing or cars, or even get arrested for crimes they didn't commit.

Identity theft occurs when someone uses your personal information such as your name, Social Security number, credit card number or other identifying information, without your permission, to commit fraud or other crimes.

Your personal information can be stolen or obtained from businesses or government entities you have patronized, if a business or government entity suffers a security breach. Security breaches can occur for a variety of reasons:

- Hackers, or unauthorized access to personal information
- Accidental release or display of information
- Theft of personal information by a business's employee or contractor
- Stolen laptops, computers, or other equipment
- In the event of a security breach, if your personal information has been lost or stolen, you may be notified directly by the breached business or government entity, or, in the case of large security breaches, the notification may be via press releases and news media.

WARNING SIGNS



- Unauthorized charges on your credit card
- Receiving credit cards that you did not seek or apply for
- Missing credit card bills
- Calls or letters from debt collectors or businesses about merchandise you did not buy or services you did not authorize
- Being denied credit or offered credit at less favorable terms for no apparent reason
- Unauthorized credit cards or charges on your credit report



TIPS ON PROTECTING YOURSELF FOLLOWING A SECURITY BREACH

- ✓ Contact your creditors to determine whether there is any suspicious or unauthorized activity that has occurred on your accounts.
- ✓ Contact any of the three credit reporting agencies to place a Fraud Alert on your credit report. A Fraud Alert does not block potential new credit, but places a notice for creditors to contact you prior to opening a new account. (See credit reporting agency contact information below.)
- ✓ Once you have placed a Fraud Alert on your credit report, you will be entitled to a free copy of your credit report. The credit reporting agencies will send you a letter telling you how to order your free credit report. Review your credit reports carefully for suspicious activity or charges.
- ✓ Be alert! The first year following a security breach is when your stolen personal information is most likely to be used by ID thieves.

ACTIVE DUTY ALERTS



When you're called to active duty, you may want to place an active duty alert on your credit report. This will be in place for one year while you're deployed. You can designate a representative who can act on your behalf to verify your identity while you're away. You may remove or extend the active duty alert depending on your deployment. All you need to do to start the process is contact one of the credit reporting agencies. Be prepared to provide them with detailed information:

- Your Full Name
- Your Address
- Your Date of Birth
- Your Social Security Number
- Your Military ID Number

CREDIT REPORTING AGENCIES

- **Equifax:** 1-888-EQUIFAX (1-888-378-4329); <http://www.equifax.com>; P.O. Box 740241, Atlanta, GA 30374
- **Experian:** 1-888-EXPERIAN (397-3742); <http://www.experian.com>; P.O. Box 9532, Allen, TX 75013
- **TransUnion:** 1-800-916-8800; <http://www.transunion.com>; Fraud Victim Assistance Division, P.O. Box 6790, Fullerton, CA 92834

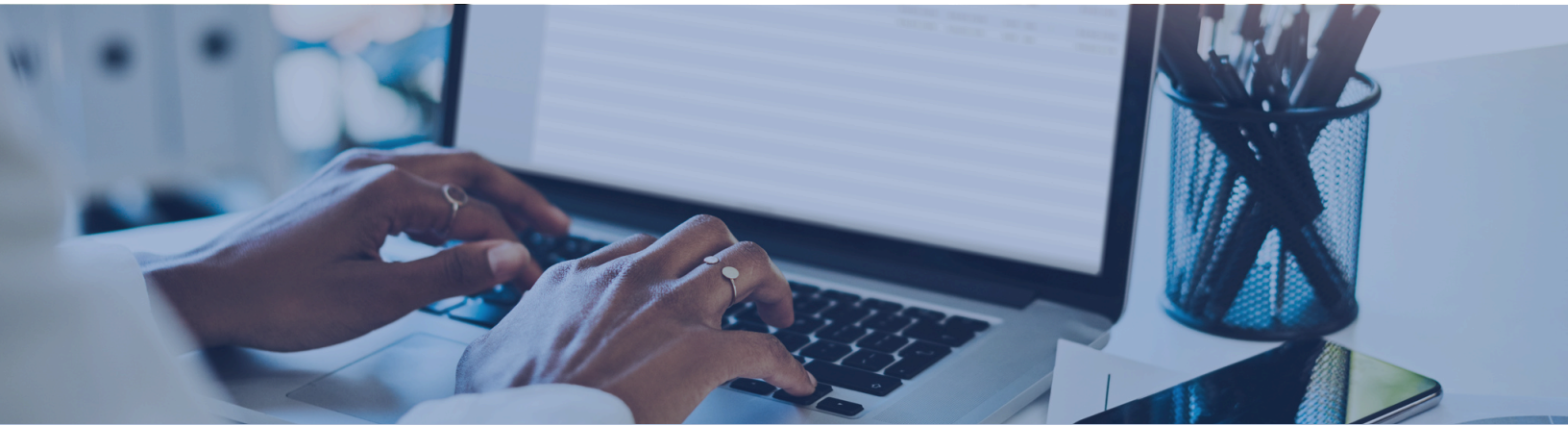
All consumers are entitled to a free annual credit report from each of the three credit reporting agencies. Call 1-877-322-8228, or request one online at www.annualcreditreport.com.



8. CONSUMER COMPLAINTS

If you've purchased a product, service, or investment that you're not satisfied with, you can do something about it. Below are some suggestions to resolving a consumer problem.

- **Contact the company that sold you the product, service, or investment. Don't forget to keep a record of your conversations:**
 - Who did you speak with?
 - When did the conversation take place?
 - What action did they promise?
 - If this doesn't work, sometimes you can contact the manufacturer. Many companies have a toll-free number on their product label.
- **Write a letter to the company:**
 - Include all the facts. Make sure you are clear and concise.
 - Attach copies of documents (i.e., sales receipts, warranties, canceled checks, contracts). Don't send original documents.
 - You may want to send the letter by certified mail, return receipt requested as proof that the company received the letter.
- **If your letter doesn't help to resolve the problem, file a complaint with DCCA at <https://cca.hawaii.gov/consumer-complaints>:**
 - For complaints against certain licensed professionals, contact the Regulated Industries Complaints Office (RICO).
 - For cable service on non-military installations, contact the Cable Television (CATV) Division. (Cable service on military installations are provided under a separate contract between the cable provider and the U.S. Military, and are not regulated by CATV.)
 - For certain financial institutions, escrow depositories, money transmitters, mortgage servicers, mortgage loan originators, and mortgage loan originator companies, contact the Division of Financial Institutions.
 - For a regulated public utility, contact the Public Utilities Commission.
 - For an insurance entity, contact the Insurance Division.
 - For a securities entity, contact the Office of Securities Commissioner.
 - For other general commerce issue, contact the Office of Consumer Protection.



HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR BEING A SAVVY CONSUMER

Know who you're dealing with

Go to <https://businesscheck.hawaii.gov> to check if a business is registered, find professional license and general excise tax information, and to review complaint histories.

Read the fine print

Get all promises in writing. Read your contract before signing, and make sure you understand what you're signing. Make a copy of any document you sign and save it in your files.

Protect your personal information

Give your personal information only to companies you trust and do business with. If you think your identity has been compromised, check out <https://www.identitytheft.gov> for more information on what you can do.

Take your time

Be wary of companies that say you must "act now" if you don't want to lose out on the deal. Most legitimate deals will be here tomorrow.

STAY ALERT:

Guard Against Unlicensed Professionals

Avoid scams and fraud with BusinessCheck! Verify businesses, individuals, and licensed professionals before hiring or doing business. Use <https://businesscheck.hawaii.gov> to check licensee status, licensing complaints, tax registration, and more. Make informed decisions and protect yourself.





9. PROFESSIONAL LICENSES

The Professional and Vocational Licensing (PVL) division is responsible for implementing the licensing regulations for 52 different professions and vocations. Twenty-five (25) licensing regulatory boards and commissions are administratively attached to DCCA, as well as twenty-seven (27) licensing programs.

The division provides staff support to the licensing regulatory boards, handles applications, licenses, reviews and processes renewals, and maintains license records. The division also provides guidance for proper implementation of the licensing laws and administrative rules for the 52 licensing areas.

NEED HELP?

Individuals from PVL are available to assist the public in-person.

335 Merchant Street,
Room 301
Honolulu, HI 96813
or call (808) 586-3000



INTERESTED IN BECOMING A LICENSED PROFESSIONAL?

Submit your application to:
Professional and Vocational
Licensing Division
335 Merchant Street
Room 301
Honolulu, HI 96813
or call (808) 586-3000

Visit <https://mypvl.dcca.hawaii.gov/>
to access or create an account.

DCCA

LICENSED PROFESSIONS AND VOCATIONS

- Accountancy
- Acupuncture
- Barbering and Cosmetology
- Boxing
- Chiropractor
- Contractor
- Dentist and Dental Hygienist
- Electrician and Plumber
- Elevator Mechanic
- Engineer, Architect, Surveyor and Landscape Architect
- Massage Therapy
- Medical and Osteopathy (MD, DO, EMT-Basic, EMT-Paramedic, Physician Assistant, and Podiatrist)
- Motor Vehicle Industry
- Motor Vehicle Repair
- Naturopathic Medicine
- Nursing
- Optometry
- Pest Control
- Pharmacy and Pharmacist
- Physical Therapy
- Private Detective and Guard
- Psychology
- Real Estate
- Speech Pathology and Audiology
- Veterinary
- Activity Desk
- Appraisal Management Company
- Athletic Trainers
- Behavior Analysts
- Cemetery and Pre-Need Funeral Authority
- Collection Agency
- Condominium Property Regimes
- Dispensing Optician
- Electrologist
- Employment Agency
- Hearing Aid Dealer and Fitter
- Marriage and Family Therapist
- Mental Health Counselor
- Midwives
- Mixed Martial Arts Contests
- Nurse Aide
- Nursing Home Administrator
- Occupational Therapy
- Port Pilot
- Real Estate Appraiser
- Respiratory Therapist
- Social Worker
- Subdivision
- Time Share
- Travel Agency
- Uniform Athlete Agents
- Veterinary Technician

*List of boards and programs as of December 2024.



LICENSE RENEWALS

Any license held by a member of the armed forces, National Guard, or a reserve component that expires, is forfeited, or deemed delinquent while the member is on active duty and deployed during a state or national crisis shall be restored if certain restoration requirements are met by completing a Military Renewal and Restoration Information Sheet.

Hawaii state law allows for licensure by endorsement or reciprocity for military spouses who are present in the State for at least one year pursuant to military orders.

Licenses issued to a military spouse by endorsement of reciprocity shall be valid for the same time period as other similar licenses.

Licensing authorities within DCCA, every licensing authority, shall consider relevant and substantially equivalent education, training, or services completed by an individual as a member of the military when evaluating qualifications for licensure.

PORTABILITY QUALIFICATIONS

To qualify for professional license portability under the Service Members Civil Relief Act (SCRA), specifically in 50 USC section 4025a, you must:

1. Have moved to Hawaii due to orders for military service;
2. Provide the Licensing Authority (Board or DCCA Director) with a copy of the military orders;
3. Have actively used the license during the two years immediately preceding the move. Provide the Licensing Authority (Board or DCCA Director) with a licensing certification from the licensing authority that issued the license and, if applicable, all other licensing authorities. Please submit original Verification of Licensure;
4. Remain in good standing with:
 - a. The licensing authority that issued the license; and
 - b. Every other licensing authority that issued a license; and
5. Comply with the laws and rules and submit to the authority of the Licensing Authority (Board or DCCA Director) for the purposes of standards of practice, discipline, and fulfillment of any continuing education requirements.

If these five criteria are met, you or your spouse shall be considered eligible for a license that is valid at a similar scope of practice and in the discipline applied for in the State of Hawaii. The license is valid for the duration of the military orders. Applicants can contact PVL for more information.

 **(808) 586-3000**

 **pvl@dcca.hawaii.gov**

 **<https://cca.hawaii.gov/pvl/contact/>**

 **HRH King Kalakaua Building
335 Merchant Street, Rm. 301
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813**



ADVERTISING AS A LICENSED PROFESSIONAL

- Review the laws and rules for your profession, paying close attention to any references to the use of titles or advertising. Make sure you also review any recognized standards of ethics for the profession.
- Information and links to laws and rules can be found at: <http://cca.hawaii.gov/pvl/>.
- Under Hawaii law, some professions are required to include a current license number in advertisements.
- If you have multiple license numbers, make sure you use the appropriate license number in the ad. For example, if you are a massage therapist, don't use your individual massage therapist license to advertise a massage establishment. For contractors, the license number must be applicable, that is, relevant to the type of contracting services being advertised. A masonry contractor, for example, cannot advertise to perform general contracting services. A license number may also be required in directory listings.

Common professions that require a license number in advertisements include (but not limited to):

- Contracting
- Massage therapy (both therapists and establishments)
- Motor vehicle repair
- Pest control
- Real estate (both brokers and salespersons)



TITLES AND DESIGNATIONS

Representing or holding yourself out as being able to do work which you are not licensed to do violates Hawaii law, and the penalties may be severe. Advertising as a contractor when you are not licensed as a contractor is a misdemeanor. Sanctions also include fines and injunctive relief. A court may also issue an order disconnecting your phone number.

Many licensing laws address the use of designations. For example, certified public accountants (“C.P.A.”) and social workers (“S.W.,” “L.B.S.W.,” “L.S.W.,” “L.C.S.W.”).

All of the health care professions, including chiropractors (“D.C.”), dentists (“D.D.S.” or “D.M.D.”), physicians (“Dr.” or “M.D.”), and optometrists (“O.D.”), reference designations.

If you are not licensed in Hawaii, using a title, description, or referencing an academic degree may require additional information or disclosure to clarify that you are not licensed in this state.

If you are advertising as a contractor, a publisher or producer may ask you for a signed statement which states you:

1. Have read the text of the advertisement or listing
2. Have an applicable and current contractor’s license for the goods and services advertised
3. Have included all applicable and current license numbers in the advertisement or listing
4. Are aware of civil and criminal penalties for advertising as a contractor without a valid license

The laws may include business cards, signs, and postings on social media. Again, start by reviewing the laws and rules for your profession, paying close attention to any references to the use of titles or advertising, and make sure you also review any recognized standards of ethics.

Questions can be addressed to the board, commission, or program which regulates your profession.





10. STARTING A BUSINESS

The Business Action Center (BAC) is available to assist businesses applying for state business registrations & to provide other business resource information.

The BAC can provide the following:

- Assistance with the registration of a business, trade name, trademark, or submitting other filings with DCCA
- Information on where to apply:
 - for a General Excise Tax License with the Department of Taxation
 - as an employer with the Hawaii Department of Labor and Industrial Relations
 - for a federal employee identification number (EIN) via www.irs.gov.
- Information on business counseling, workshops, and other resources available to local business owners

BUSINESS ACTION CENTER



Oahu

335 Merchant Street, Room 201
Honolulu, HI 96813
(808) 586-2545

Maui

2145 Wells Street, Room 106
Wailuku, HI 96793
(808) 243-8679



STEPS TO STARTING YOUR OWN BUSINESS

Research the Market

Government websites on the federal, state, and county levels offer a range of information to help you learn more about doing business in Hawaii.

Create a Business Plan

Business plans are often required by banks when considering you for a loan. These plans set forth the business' goals, timelines, revenue projections, and other factors that can demonstrate the viability of your venture.

Choose a Legal Structure

When starting a business, make an informed decision on how you will own and operate your business. Your choice of entity (business structure) can affect personal liability, management of the business, tax filing responsibilities, as well as estate planning considerations.

We suggest you seek additional advice from a qualified attorney or accountant before making a selection. The most common types of business structures are:

- Sole Proprietorship
- General Partnership
- Limited Partnership
- Limited Liability Partnership
- Corporation
- S Corporation
- Limited Liability Company



LEARN MORE

<https://cca.hawaii.gov/bac/>

Choose a Business Name

After selecting a legal structure, you may register your business with the DCCA Business Registration Division. To check if the business name you want is available (not already registered by another business), go to Business Name Search via the business registration division website: <https://cca.hawaii.gov/breg/>.

Registrations can be done online via <https://cca.hawaii.gov/breg/>.

Business registration forms are available at <https://cca.hawaii.gov/breg/registration/>.

If you have any questions, you can call the Business Registration Division at (808) 586-2727 or email breg@dcca.hawaii.gov.

Apply for Other Permits and Licenses

The BAC provides information on the various licenses and permits associated with specific business activities in Hawaii.

Gather Tax Information for Your Business

Taxes are levied by federal, state, and local (county) governments. Learn about the different tax types and systems and how they might affect your business. The Internal Revenue Service is our federal tax authority, while state taxes are (with few exceptions) administered by the Hawaii Department of Taxation. County governments in Hawaii administer our Real Property Tax.

Find Out About Employer Responsibilities

If you plan to hire employees, you need to register with the Hawaii State Department of Labor and Industrial Relations.

Contact the BAC for more information and links to federal, state, and local agencies.



SMALL BUSINESS **INITIATIVE**

The small business initiative was established to ensure that small businesses, including businesses owned by veterans, native Hawaiians, and women, are able to effectively participate in contracting opportunities with State of Hawaii government agencies. Qualified businesses are required to self-register in order to be searchable by government agencies.

For more information visit <https://hands.ehawaii.gov/hands/smallbusiness/>.



11. EDUCATION & TRAINING

Through the Post-9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2010, often referred to as the GI Bill, the Department of Veterans Affairs provides, among other things, up to \$21,970 a year towards education at private schools or the actual net cost for in-state tuition and fees at public schools. It is a benefit service members should take advantage of, but only after carefully selecting an eligible school.

A couple of key points to review is the institution's accreditation, credit transfer policy, and if it is in good standing in the professional field you plan to pursue.

For a more complete guide on choosing a school and more information on GI Bill benefits visit <http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/>.

You can also contact the State Approving Agency (SAA) for Veterans Training for more help with identifying qualifying schools and job training establishments in Hawaii at www.hawaii.edu.

G.I. BILL 2010

Post-9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2010

G.I. Bill



Housing Stipend



Tuition



Book Stipend

12. CONTACT INFORMATION

Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA)

DCCA promotes a strong and healthy business environment while protecting the community from unfair and deceptive business practices.

w <http://cca.hawaii.gov>

p (808) 587-DCCA (808-587-3222)

or toll-free 1-800-394-1902

e dcca@dcca.hawaii.gov

Business Registration (BREG)

Registration for corporations, partnerships, limited liability partnerships, limited liability companies, trade names, trademarks and service marks.

a 335 Merchant Street, Room 201, Honolulu, HI 96813

w <http://businessregistrations.com>

p (808) 586-2727

e breg@dcca.hawaii.gov

BREG-Business Action Center (BAC)

Offers assistance with state business registration filings, and information on state general excise tax licenses, employer registration applications, Internal Revenue Service EIN numbers, and resources available to local businesses.

Oahu

a 335 Merchant Street, Room 201, Honolulu, HI 96813

p (808) 586-2545

Maui

a 2145 Wells Street, Room 106, Wailuku, HI 96793

p (808) 243-8679

w <http://www.getstartedhawaii.com>

e bac@dcca.hawaii.gov

BREG-Securities Branch

Regulates the registration of securities, broker dealers and their agents, investment advisers and their investment adviser representatives and franchises. Investigates and prosecutes securities fraud and other state securities and franchise law violations. Provides free investor education materials, presentations and informational displays.

a 335 Merchant Street, Room 205, Honolulu, HI 96813

w <http://investing.hawaii.gov>

p For questions or to report securities fraud call (808) 586-2740 or toll-free 1-877-447-2267.

e seb@dcca.hawaii.gov

Cable Television (CATV)

Issues franchises to Hawaii cable companies, monitors the quality of service, and handles consumer complaints regarding cable matters. In addition, CATV advocates for and supports activities for the establishment of affordable, accessible broadband services and its use throughout the state. (Note: Cable service on military installations are provided under a separate contract between the cable provider and the U.S. Military, and are not regulated by CATV.)

a 335 Merchant Street, Room 101, Honolulu, HI 96813

w <http://cca.hawaii.gov/catv>

p (808) 586-2620

e cabletv@dcca.hawaii.gov

Division of Consumer Advocacy (DCA)

Protects and advances the interests of Hawaii's consumers of regulated public utilities and transportation services.

a 335 Merchant Street, Room 326, Honolulu, HI 96813

w <http://cca.hawaii.gov/dca>

p (808) 586-2800

e dca@dcca.hawaii.gov

Division of Financial Institutions (DFI)

Protects. Regulates. Informs. DFI ensures the safety and soundness of state-chartered and state-licensed financial institutions, and ensures regulatory compliance by state-licensed financial institutions, escrow depositories, money transmitters, mortgage servicers, mortgage loan originators and mortgage loan originator companies, in order to protect the rights and funds of the public.

a 335 Merchant Street, Room 221, Honolulu, HI 96813

w <http://cca.hawaii.gov/dfi>

p (808) 586-2820

e General, consumer complaints, bank, non-depository financial institutions, escrow company, and money transmitter matters: dfi@dcca.hawaii.gov

Mortgage loan originator, mortgage loan originator company, and mortgage servicer matters: dfi-nmls@dcca.hawaii.gov

Hawaii Foreclosure Information Center (HFIC)

Provides Hawaii's homeowners in distress with information about mortgages, foreclosures and scams.

w <https://cca.hawaii.gov/hfic>
p (808) 586-2638

Hawaii Post-Secondary Education Authorization Program (HPEAP)

Authorization of accredited post-secondary degree-granting institutions.

w <http://cca.hawaii.gov/hpeap>
p (808) 586-7327

Insurance Division (INS)

Oversees the Hawaii insurance industry; issues licenses, examines the fiscal condition of Hawaii-based companies, reviews rate and policy filings, investigates insurance related complaints.

a 335 Merchant Street, Room 213, Honolulu, HI 96813
w <http://cca.hawaii.gov/ins>
p (808) 586-2790
e insurance@dcca.hawaii.gov

Landlord-Tenant Information

Call the Residential Landlord-Tenant Information Center with your questions from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm Monday through Friday, except State holidays or visit our website to view brochures.

w <http://cca.hawaii.gov/landlordtenant>
p (808) 586-2634

Medical Inquiry and Conciliation Panel

The program is responsible for conducting informal conciliation hearings on inquiries regarding health care providers before a lawsuit may be filed based on such inquiries. The advice of the panels is advisory in nature and is not binding on the parties in the event that any party still wishes to pursue the matter via the courts. Proceedings are intended to be conducted in a non-adversarial manner and structured to facilitate the conveying of information rather than assigning blame.

a 335 Merchant Street, Room 100, Honolulu, HI 96813
w http://cca.hawaii.gov/oah/medical_inquiries/
p (808) 586-2823
e micp@dcca.hawaii.gov

Office of Consumer Protection (OCP)

OCP is the consumer counsel for the State of Hawaii. Investigates consumer complaints alleging unfair or deceptive trade practices in a broad range of areas, including advertising, refunds, motor vehicle rentals, door-to-door sales and credit practices.

Oahu

a 235 S. Beretania Street, Room 801, Honolulu, HI 96813
p (808) 586-2630

Maui

a 2145 Wells Street, Suite 106, Wailuku, HI 96793
p (808) 243-4648

Hilo

a 120 Pauahi Street, Suite 212, Hilo, HI 96720
p (808) 933-0910

w <http://cca.hawaii.gov/ocp>
e ocp@dcca.hawaii.gov

To file a complaint, call the RICO Consumer Resource Center (808) 587-4272.

Professional and Vocational Licensing (PVL)

Oversees regulatory activities of 25 boards/commission and 27 programs.

a 335 Merchant Street, Room 301, Honolulu, HI 96813
w <http://cca.hawaii.gov/pvl/>
p (808) 586-3000
e pvl@dcca.hawaii.gov

PVL - Real Estate Branch

Provides guidance and educational materials on real estate issues and condominium governance.

a 335 Merchant Street, Room 333, Honolulu, HI 96813
w <http://cca.hawaii.gov/reb>
p (808) 586-2643
e hirec@dcca.hawaii.gov

Regulated Industries Complaints Office (RICO)

Investigates and prosecutes complaints relating to licensed professionals and unlicensed activity.

w <http://cca.hawaii.gov/rico>

p (808) 587-4272

e rico@dcca.hawaii.gov

To check complaints history, business registration, and license status: <http://businesscheck.hawaii.gov>

RICO Consumer Resource Center (CRC)

For questions about filing a complaint against a professional or vocational licensee, or to report unlicensed activity. Provides helpful information to consumers on a variety of topics, including hiring a licensed contractor and protecting yourself against unlicensed activity. CRC also accepts complaints for OCP.

Oahu

a 235 S. Beretania Street, 9th Floor, Honolulu, HI 96813

p (808) 587-4CRC (808-587-4272)

Kauai

a 3060 Eiwa Street, Room 204, Lihue, Kauai 96766

p (808) 241-3300

Maui

a 2145 Wells Street, #106, Wailuku, HI 96793

p (808) 243-5808

Hilo

a 120 Pauahi Street, Suite 212, Hilo, HI 96720

p (808) 933-8846

Kailua-Kona

a 75-170 Hualalai Road, Suite C-309, Kailua-Kona, HI 96740

p (808) 327-9590

w <https://cca.hawaii.gov/rico/crc/>

RICO State Certified Arbitration Program (SCAP)

Does your brand new vehicle seem defective? Do you keep having to go back to repair the same problem? Under Hawaii's Lemon Law, SCAP helps consumers resolve disputes with auto manufacturers and may be able to help you get a refund.

w <http://cca.hawaii.gov/lemonlaw>

p (808) 587-4272

Public Utilities Commission (PUC)*

Regulates all chartered, franchised, certificated and registered public utility companies that provide electricity, gas, telecommunications, private water and sewage, and motor and water carrier transportation services in the state. Oversees the administration of a One Call Center that provides advance warning to excavators of the location of subsurface installations in the area of an excavation in order to protect those installations from damage; the Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) fund which provides intrastate TRS for the deaf, persons with hearing disabilities, and persons with speech disabilities; and the Public Benefits Fee surcharge which is used to fund and support energy efficiency programs and services implemented by an independent third party administrator on the islands of Oahu, Maui, Molokai, Lanai and Hawaii.

Oahu

a 465 S. King Street, Room 103, Honolulu, HI 96813

p (808) 586-2020

Kauai

a 3060 Eiwa Street, Suite 302-C, Lihue, Kauai 96766

p (808) 274-3232

Maui

a 2145 Wells Street, Suite 106, Wailuku, Maui 96793

p (808) 264-3232

Hilo

a 688 Kinoole Street, #106-A, Hilo, HI 96720

p (808) 974-4533

w <http://puc.hawaii.gov>

e puc@hawaii.gov

* The PUC is an agency attached to DCCA for administratively purposes only.

Neighbor Island Toll-Free Numbers

To call DCCA offices on Oahu from the Neighbor Islands, dial the number listed for your island, then the last 5 digits of the office you want to call, followed by the # sign.

Kauai (808) 274-3141

Maui (808) 984-2400

Big Island (808) 974-4000

Molokai & Lanai 1-800-468-4644

ONLINE SERVICES

Many services are available online

Search business and license complaint history, business name, certificate of good standing, and much more!

File various business filings

Renew insurance and professional/vocational licenses

Conduct a license search

For additional resources, please visit:
<http://cca.hawaii.gov/resources>

ONE-STOP-SHOP BUSINESSCHECK



BusinessCheck is an online platform designed to serve as your comprehensive resource for researching licensed professionals. This tool empowers users to verify licenses, review complaint histories, and discover when a business was established, all in one place. Verifying a professional's license status can help you avoid scams or fraud by confirming their qualifications, compliance with regulations, and accountability to a governing body.

www.businesscheck.hawaii.gov