

California Department of Business Oversight



# Path To Homeownership



## About the DBO

The Department of Business Oversight (DBO) regulates state-licensed financial institutions, products and professionals in order to provide public accessibility to a fair and secure financial services marketplace.

The DBO serves the state by enforcing the state's financial service laws and providing resources to Californians to help them make informed financial decisions.

As part of its mission, the DBO strives to help consumers protect their personal finances from fraud.

For a list of licensees and industries regulated by the DBO visit [www.dbo.ca.gov](http://www.dbo.ca.gov).



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### Consumer Services Office

The DBO's Consumer Services Office provides information and assistance to consumers. If you need help verifying the licensing status of a financial institution, service or professional, call the DBO's toll free number **1-866-275-2677** or visit [www.dbo.ca.gov/consumers](http://www.dbo.ca.gov/consumers).

### Office of Education and Outreach

The DBO's Office of Education and Outreach is committed to providing consumers with helpful information and materials on a variety of financial topics. The outreach programs empower Californians to make smart decisions about their finances.

This booklet's purpose is to help California consumers understand the process of buying a home and some of the major responsibilities they will have as homeowners.

Informed and educated consumers are less likely to fall victim to financial fraud and scams.

### The Mortgage Education Outreach Program

This program provides information and resources regarding homeownership and the home buying process, loan modifications, preventing foreclosure, and mortgage fraud and scams.

### Seniors Against Investment Fraud (SAIF)

This program alerts and educates California seniors about financial fraud and scams.

### California Troops Against Predatory Scams (TAP\$)

This program alerts and educates California military service members and their families about financial fraud, predatory lending, and how to avoid being scammed.



## Thinking About Buying a Home?

### Important Questions

- Are you ready to buy a home?
- How much mortgage can you afford?
- What are your loan options?
- Which mortgage option is best for you?
- What resources are available to help you prepare?

### Affordability

To help you better determine how your income, debts, and expenses affect what you can afford, see the DBO Home Buyer Worksheet on **Page 11**.

### Pre-Approval

When shopping for a mortgage loan, pre-approval helps you know how much you can borrow. When meeting with a loan officer you will most likely need the following:

- Pay stubs
- W-2 forms
- Tax returns (2–3 years)

- Assets and long-term debts
- Recent bank statements
- Proof of any additional income

### About Borrowing

Mortgage payments may include:

- Principal, interest, taxes, and insurance (PITI)
- Homeowner's association (HOA) dues
- Monthly mortgage insurance (fire, flood and earthquake coverage, etc.)

### Always Request Copies of Important Documents:

- Credit report
- Appraisal report
- Termite/home inspection
- Loan documents
- Purchase agreement
- Estimated closing statement
- Never sign blank documents!



## Understanding Financing

### Types of Mortgages

There are advantages and disadvantages associated with mortgage loans; therefore, it is important to understand the different types of loans, how they work, and what is offered BEFORE you make a decision. See "Glossary of Terms" on **Page 9**.

Mortgages may range from 10-30 year terms.

Do your homework and research current interest rates to help in negotiating the best affordable rate for you. See "Mortgage Shopping Worksheet" on **Pages 12 and 13**.

### Mortgage Rates

The most common type of mortgage loans are:

- Fixed-rate mortgage interest rates remain the same for the term of the loan.
- Adjustable-rate mortgage interest rates can increase or decrease during the term of your loan, which can cause a significant change in your monthly payments.

### Resources:

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides support through a nationwide network of Housing Counseling Agencies (HCA) and counselors. They are trained and approved to provide tools to current and prospective homeowners and renters, so that they can make responsible choices to address their housing needs in light of their financial situations.

- HUD Housing Counselors  
**1-800-569-4287 / [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov)**
- California Housing Finance Agency (CalHFA)  
**[www.calhfa.ca.gov](http://www.calhfa.ca.gov)**  
**Toll Free 1-877-9CalHFA (877-922-5432)**



### **Verify Your Financial Service Provider’s License**

DBO licenses and regulates a variety of mortgage-related financial services such as: California residential mortgage loan originators, residential mortgage lenders, escrow agents and mortgage loan servicers.

Always verify the license of any financial service provider **before** you conduct business with them.

**See pages 15 and 16, “Check Before You Sign.”**

- To verify the license of these services, contact the DBO at **1-866-275-2677** or **[www.dbo.ca.gov](http://www.dbo.ca.gov)**.

### **Mortgage Servicers**

A mortgage servicer manages your mortgage loan account, including collecting and crediting your monthly loan payments, and handling your escrow/impound account. If you have questions about your mortgage loan account, contact your account servicer.

### **Have a Complaint?**

If you have a complaint about any financial service provider licensed by the DBO, contact the DBO at **1-866-275-2677** or **[www.dbo.ca.gov](http://www.dbo.ca.gov)**.

Also see “File a Complaint” on **page 19**.





## Refinancing Your Home

### Refinancing

When you refinance, you pay off your existing mortgage and create a new one. Your home is usually your most valuable financial asset, so be careful when choosing a lender or broker and specific mortgage terms.

Remember that, along with the potential benefits, refinancing also has costs. See “Mortgage Shopping Worksheet” on **Pages 12 and 13**.

### Why consider refinancing?

- Lowering your interest rate
- Adjusting the length of your mortgage
- Changing from an adjustable-rate mortgage to a fixed-rate mortgage.

### Resource:

See “Putting your Home on the Loan Line is a Risky Business” [www.fdic.gov](http://www.fdic.gov).

### Reverse Mortgages

Before you decide to pursue a reverse mortgage, you should carefully consider your individual circumstances so you can make a wise decision about the most valuable asset you may own — your home. Factors to consider include: whether the proposed reverse mortgage is a recourse or nonrecourse loan; whether the loan would have a fixed or adjustable interest rate; possible taxes or fees; and/or the current and projected market value of your home.

For more information on reverse mortgages, see the booklet “Reverse Mortgages — is One Right for You?” on the CalBRE website [www.bre.ca.gov](http://www.bre.ca.gov).



## Mortgage Difficulties

If you are having trouble paying your mortgage or have received a foreclosure notice, contact your servicer immediately. You may be able to negotiate a new repayment schedule.

### How to Recover from Foreclosure

Rebuild your credit and pay off your debts, especially credit cards since the interest can accumulate. Also, maintain a good credit history for 5 to 7 years. It is important to speak with a financial advisor who can help determine a budget and adjust your spending habits.

### Foreclosure Prevention Resources:

#### The Home Affordable Modification Program

**(HAMP)** was created to provide loan modifications to eligible struggling homeowners.

**888-995-HOPE (4673)**

[www.makinghomeaffordable.gov](http://www.makinghomeaffordable.gov)

**Keep Your Home California** offers free assistance to California homeowners who have suffered a financial hardship, helping them stay in their homes, maintain an affordable mortgage payment, and avoid foreclosure.

**888-954-KEEP (5337)**

<http://keepyourhomecalifornia.org>



## Mortgage Relief Scams

### Mortgage Modification

Get all the facts before you hire someone to help you with your mortgage problems.

- Before hiring anyone to help modify your loan, contact the Bureau of Real Estate at **1-877-373-4LIC** or **www.bre.ca.gov**.
- To file a complaint against a mortgage loan modification consultant, contact the Office of the Attorney General at **1-800-952-5225** or **www.oag.ca.gov**.

### Mortgage Rescue/Relief Scams

- Call themselves a “mortgage consultant,” “foreclosure service,” “mortgage rescue service,” or similar name
- Collects a fee before it provides services to you
- Tells you to transfer your property deed or title to the individual or company

### Other Scams:

- The Forensic Audit
- Rent-to-Buy Schemes
- Bait-and-Switch
- Phony Counseling or Phantom Help

### Resources:

#### Government Mortgage Modification Program:

Keep Your Home California

<http://keepyourhomecalifornia.org>

#### Foreclosure Prevention Resources:

Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation

[www.FDIC.gov/foreclosureprevention](http://www.FDIC.gov/foreclosureprevention)

### Real Help is Free!

Foreclosure rescue and mortgage modification scams are a growing problem that could cost you thousands of dollars – or even your home. Scammers often make promises that they can't keep, such as guaranteeing to "save" your home or lower your mortgage, usually for a fee, often pretending that they have direct contact with your mortgage servicer.

***If you think you've been scammed, file a complaint today. See How to File a Complaint on page 19.***

### Tips to Avoid Scams:

Homeowners struggling with their mortgage payments should keep the following tips in mind:

- You can apply to the federal Making Home Affordable (MHA) program on your own or with free help from a HUD-approved housing counseling agency. For more information and help with your application or to report a suspected scam, contact the Homeowner's HOPE Hotline at 888-995-HOPE (4673.) To find a HUD-approved housing counseling agency near you, access HUD's database for Foreclosure Avoidance Counseling at [www.hud.gov/counseling](http://www.hud.gov/counseling).
- Only your mortgage servicer has the discretion to grant a loan modification. No third party can guarantee or pre-approve your mortgage modification application.
- Beware of anyone seeking to charge you in advance for mortgage modification services. In most cases, charging fees in advance is illegal.
- Paying a third party to assist with your application does not improve your likelihood of receiving a mortgage modification. Beware of individuals or

companies that ask you for payment and boast success rates or claim to be experts in MHA's Home Affordable Modification Program (HAMP).

- If an individual or company claims to be affiliated with HAMP or displays a seal or logo representing the U.S. government in correspondence or on the Web, you can verify the claim by calling the Homeowner's HOPE Hotline at 888-995-HOPE (4673.)
- Beware of individuals or companies that offer money-back guarantees.
- Beware of individuals or companies that advise you, as a homeowner, to stop making your mortgage payments or to discontinue contact with your mortgage servicer.
- Do not sign over the deed to your property to any individual or organization unless you are working directly with your mortgage company to forgive your debt.

### Additional Resources:

- The **Federal Trade Commission (FTC)** is the nation's consumer protection agency. If a business doesn't make good on its promises or cheats you out of money, the FTC wants to know. File a FTC complaint today at [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov).
- The **Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB)** protects consumers by enforcing federal consumer finance laws. Submit a complaint online [www.consumerfinance.gov](http://www.consumerfinance.gov).



## Know Your Rights

### **Consumer Protection Laws:**

**The California Residential Mortgage Lending Act (CMRLA)** ensures that DBO licensees are ethically, financially and professionally qualified to serve consumers. For more information visit:  
California Department of Business Oversight (DBO)  
[www.dbo.ca.gov](http://www.dbo.ca.gov).

**The California Homeowner Bill of Rights (HBOR)** ensures mortgage lenders and servicers treat consumers fairly, especially those facing foreclosure. For more information visit the Office of the Attorney General's website at [www.oag.ca.gov/hbor](http://www.oag.ca.gov/hbor).

**The Truth in Lending Act (TILA)** protects consumers against inaccurate and unfair credit billing and credit card practices, and requires lenders to provide consumers with loan cost information so that you can comparison shop for various loans.

For more information visit:

Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC)  
[www.occ.gov](http://www.occ.gov).

### **The Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA)**

provides consumers with loan data which can be used to help determine whether financial institutions are serving the housing needs of their communities and to help identify possible discriminatory lending patterns. For more information visit:  
Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB)  
[www.consumerfinance.gov](http://www.consumerfinance.gov).

**Annual Percentage Rate (APR):** Cost of the credit, which includes the interest and all other loan finance charges. If APR is more than .75 to 1 percentage point higher than the interest rate you were quoted, there are significant fees being added to the loan.

**Adjustable Rate Mortgage (ARM):** Interest rate can increase or decrease during the term of the loan.

**Appraisal:** A determination of the value of a home by a third party.

**Balloon Payment:** Large payment due at a pre set term. This happens when a borrower has a low monthly payment covering only interest and a small portion of the principal, leaving almost the whole loan amount due in one payment at the end. If you cannot make this payment, you could lose your home.

**Debt-to-Income Ratio:** The amount of debt you have compared to income.

**Escrow:** The holding of money or documents by a neutral third party prior to loan closing. It can also be an account held by the lender (or servicer) into which a homeowner pays money for taxes and insurance.

**Fixed Rate:** Interest rate stays the same for the term of the loan.

**FHA Loans:** Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loans allow buyers who may not qualify for a home loan to obtain one with government assistance.

**Home Equity Line of Credit (HELOC):** Revolving line of credit using your house as collateral.

**Interest Rate:** The cost of borrowing money expressed as a percentage rate.

**Loan Origination Fees:** Fees paid to the lender or broker for handling the paperwork in arranging the loan. These are prepaid finance charges paid at the loan closing and are included in your APR calculation.

**Lock-In:** A written agreement guaranteeing a home buyer a specific interest rate on a home loan provided that the loan is closed within a certain period of time, such as 60 or 90 days.

**Points:** Fees paid to the lender to obtain the loan. One point is equal to 1% of the loan amount. Points should be paid at the time of the loan.

**Prepayment Penalty:** Fees required to be paid by you if the loan is paid off early. Try to avoid any prepayment penalty that lasts more than 3 years or is for more than 1 to 2% of the loan amount.

**Private Mortgage Insurance (PMI):** Insurance that protects the lender against a loss if a borrower defaults on the loan. It is usually required for loans in which the down payment is less than 20 percent of the sales price or, in a refinancing, when the amount financed is greater than 80 percent of the appraised value.

**VA Loans:** Veterans Administration (VA) loans are guaranteed by the government for eligible veterans, active duty personnel and surviving spouses.

**Yield Spread Premium (YSP):** Payment to the broker for selling a higher interest rate loan than would otherwise be charged for that borrower. It must be disclosed to the borrower at the time of the loan and is generally acceptable if there are no other broker fees, and this is how the broker is getting paid for his or her services.

## Your Credit Score is Important

Credit scoring is a system creditors use to help determine whether to give you credit. It is also used to help decide the credit terms you are offered or the rate you will pay for the loan. Scoring models usually consider the following types of information in your credit report to help compute your credit score:

- Have you paid your bills on time?
- How many credit accounts do you have?
- Are you maxed out?
- How long have you had credit?
- Have you applied for new credit lately?

To improve your credit score, focus on paying your bills in a timely manner, paying down any outstanding balances and staying away from new debt.

To learn more, read *How Credit Scores Affect the Price of Credit* and *Building a Better Credit Score* at [www.consumer.ftc.gov](http://www.consumer.ftc.gov).

Federal law requires each of the three national consumer credit reporting companies—Equifax, Experian and TransUnion—to provide you with a free credit report every 12 months if you request it.

- Review credit reports carefully.
- Look for accounts you do not recognize (especially new accounts), suspicious charges or any addresses where you have never lived.
- Report any discrepancies immediately. Call the three credit bureaus toll-free:

Equifax	1-800-525-6285
Experian	1-888-397-3742
TransUnion	1-800-680-7289

Or, go to [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) or call toll-free 1-877-322-8228 to make one request per year and get all three reports at the same time, free of charge.



## A Warning About “Imposter” Websites

Only one website is authorized to fill orders for the free annual credit report you are entitled to under law—[annualcreditreport.com](http://annualcreditreport.com). Other websites that claim to offer “free credit reports,” “free credit scores,” or “free credit monitoring” are not part of the legally mandated free annual credit report program. In some cases, the “free” product comes with strings attached. For example, some sites sign you up for a supposedly “free” service that converts to one you have to pay for after a trial period. If you don’t cancel during the trial period, you may be unwittingly agreeing to let the company start charging fees to your credit card.

Some “imposter” sites use terms like “free report” in their names; others have URLs that purposely misspell [annualcreditreport.com](http://annualcreditreport.com) in the hope that you will mistype the name of the official site. Some of these “imposter” sites direct you to other sites that try to sell you something or collect your personal information.

**Note:** Identity thieves steal personal information of minors as well. Parents and those entrusted with financial Power of Attorney should request and review credit reports annually for all vulnerable individuals in their care.

With the information below, you can calculate your monthly income and expenses.

For a more detailed budget worksheet see [www.dbo.ca.gov/consumers/brochures](http://www.dbo.ca.gov/consumers/brochures).

You can compare your monthly income to your expenses and determine how much you can afford to spend on home buying expenses such as your loan, property taxes, insurance and maintenance.

<b>Income</b> (what you take home after taxes and other deductions)	Monthly Amount
Borrower's Salary	\$
Co-borrower's Salary	\$
Other Income	\$
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	\$
<b>Expenses</b>	
Food & household (meals, groceries, household misc.)	\$
Credit & Banking (fees, loans, credit cards)	\$
Car Payment	\$
Car Insurance	\$
Other Transportation Expenses (gas, maintenance, parking, public transit)	\$
Savings and Retirement	\$
Medical Expenses	\$
Health Insurance	\$
Education Expenses (tuition, fees, books, supplies, loans)	\$
Dependents Expenses (day care, child support, other)	\$
Utilities	\$
Clothing	\$
Personal (salon/barber, dry cleaning, gym membership)	\$
Entertainment	\$
Miscellaneous (gifts, vacation, donations)	\$
Other Expenses	\$
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES +</b>	\$
<b>TOTAL MONTHLY INCOME +</b>	\$
<b>SUBTRACT MONTHLY INCOME -</b>	\$
<b>NEW TOTAL =</b>	\$

# Mortgage Shopping Worksheet

- ✓ Contact several lenders
- ✓ Comparison shop

Name of Lender  
 Name of Contact  
 Date of Contact  
 Mortgage Amount

Lender 1	Lender 2

BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE LOAN	Mortgage 1	Mortgage 2	Mortgage 1	Mortgage 2
What type of loan is it?				
Fixed Rate				
Variable (Adjustable) Rate /Adjustable Rate Mortgage (ARM)				
Interest Only Loans (non conventional loan)				
Conventional				
FHA, VA				
Other? _____				
Minimum Down Payment				
Loan Term (Length of Loan - 15yr, 30yr, other)				
Contract Interest Rate				
Annual Percentage Rate (APR)				
Points (Sometimes called discount points)				
Estimated Monthly Payment				
Does this include escrow for taxes and insurance?				
If YES, how much is for escrow?				
Does the loan have PMI (Property Mortgage Insurance)?				
How much a month and for how long?				
<b>FEES - Different lenders have different terms, this is a list of typical fees</b>				
Origination or Underwriting Fee				
Broker Fees (Maybe quoted as points origination fees, or interest rate add on)				
Application or Loan Processing Fee				
Lender Fee or Funding Fee				
Appraisal Fee				
Credit Report				
Attorney Fees				
Recording Fees				
Document Preparation				
Yield Spread Premium (YSP) - Paid to Broker				
Other Fees:				
1)				
2)				
<b>OTHER CLOSING OR SETTLEMENT COSTS</b>				
Title Search				
Title Exam/Binder				
Title Insurance				
Estimated prepaids for interest, taxes, hazard insurance and escrow payments				
State and local taxes, stamp taxes and transfer taxes				

Flood Determination				
Prepaid PMI				
Surveys				
Home inspections/Pest inspection				
<b>TOTAL FEES AND CLOSING COST ESTIMATES</b>				

	Lender 1		Lender 2	
<b>OTHER QUESTIONS &amp; CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT LOAN</b>	Mortgage 1	Mortgage 2	Mortgage 1	Mortgage 2
Can any of these fees or costs be waived?				
<b>Prepayment Penalties</b>				
Is there a prepayment penalty?				
If YES, how much is it?				
How long does it last?				
Are extra principal payments allowed?				
<b>Balloon Loans</b>				
Is it a Balloon Loan?				
If YES, how much is the payment?				
When is it due?				
<b>Lock-Ins (Rate Locks)</b>				
Is there a lock-in agreement in writing?				
Is there a fee to lock the rate?				
When does the lock-in occur, at application, approval or another time?				
How long does it last?				
When the rate drops before closing, can you lock-in at a lower rate?				
<b>Variable or Adjustable Rate Loans</b>				
What is the initial rate?				
What is the maximum the rate could be next year?				
What are the rate and payment caps each year and over the life of the loan?				
What is the frequency of the rate change and any changes to monthly payment?				
What is the index the lender will use?				
What margin will the lender add to the index?				
<b>Credit Life/Disability Insurance</b>				
Does the monthly amount quoted to you include a charge for credit insurance?				
If so, does the lender require it as a condition of the loan?				
How much does it cost?				
How much lower would your monthly payment be without the insurance?				
If the lender does not require it and you still want it, what rates can you get from other insurance companies?				
<b>Arbitration Clause</b>				
Is there an arbitration clause?				
If YES, is there a cost to you?				

### What You Should Know Before Buying a Home

1. Before you start looking for a home, get pre-qualified for a loan. A lender can give you an idea of the mortgage amount for which you qualify.
2. If you have marginal or poor credit, you may be able to qualify for a loan depending on how long ago and what reason(s) caused the bad credit.
3. You will need a down payment. Down payment requirements vary depending on the type of loan. Many down payment assistance programs exist. Consult with a lender about programs available in your area.
4. You may need funds for closing costs. Closing costs are charges for services related to the closing of your mortgage. They include:
  - Escrow or Title policy issuance fees
  - Mortgage insurance fees
  - Fire and homeowners insurance
  - County recorder fees
  - Loan origination feesConsult your lender for an estimate of these costs as well as information about loan programs which can assist in financing your closing costs.
5. Some loans have “points” which is a loan origination fee equivalent to 1% of the loan amount. Together with the interest rate they determine how much your lender earns on your loan. Some lenders charge a higher interest rate to compensate for charging no points. It is important to comparison shop lenders to make sure your loan points are at a competitive level.
6. Should you select a mortgage with a fixed rate or an adjustable rate? The answer to this question depends on whether mortgage rates are at a high or a low point when you purchase, and on how long you plan to live in the home. If rates are high, an adjustable rate might be attractive since subsequent rate drops could reduce your monthly payments. Additionally, lenders may offer a low rate during the first few years of an adjustable mortgage to make

it appealing to you. If interest rates are low you might want to take a fixed rate to protect yourself against the possibility of rising interest rates.

7. Be aware of the two main types of loan categories:
  - Conventional Loans. These are available with fixed or adjustable interest rates. Some loans may require mortgage insurance.
  - Government Loans. These include Federal Housing Administration (FHA) fixed and adjustable-rate mortgage loans, and Veterans Administration (VA) fixed-rate mortgage loans.
8. If you are a low or moderate income home buyer, there are special programs designed to help you. These loans are available through private lenders, as well as local and state housing agencies, such as the California Housing Finance Agency (CalHFA). Most lenders specializing in real estate mortgage loans are aware of these types of loan programs.
9. Why might you have to pay mortgage insurance? Mortgage insurance protects the lender from potential loss if you should default on your mortgage loan payment. Generally, conventional loans that require larger down payments do not require mortgage insurance. Mortgage insurance is always required on FHA mortgage loans.
10. Many organizations offer home loan counseling to prospective homebuyers. These organizations provide classes for homebuyers to cover the steps to homeownership. They will cover home selection, realtor services, lenders, loan programs, homeownership responsibilities, saving for a down payment, and other important pieces of information. Many programs require home buyers to attend this type of class to be eligible. Contact the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for more information [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov).



# Check Before You Sign



## Before Signing or Seeking Advice

have the person offering products/services complete this form, sign it, and return it to you.



## Verify

both the salesperson/advisor and their company are licensed and authorized to sell/offer the specific type of product. Remember to keep this completed form for your records.



## Contact

the appropriate California licensing agency below (or call the California Department of Business Oversight for referral to other agencies).

Agency	Responsibilities	Contact Information	
CA Department of Business Oversight (DBO)	Licenses and regulates individuals and companies conducting various financial activities, including investment advisors, brokers, escrow/titles, mortgage lenders, mortgage servicers and payday lenders.	Toll-Free TTY <b>www.dbo.ca.gov</b>	1-866-275-2677 1-800-735-2922
CA Bureau of Real Estate (CalBRE)	Licenses and regulates real estate brokers and salespeople, and mortgage lender/broker activities.	Toll-Free <b>www.bre.ca.gov</b>	1-877-373-4542
CA Bureau of Real Estate Appraisers	Licenses and regulates real estate appraisal industry.	License verification & complaints <b>www.orea.ca.gov</b>	916-552-9000
CA Department of Insurance (CDI)	Licenses and regulates insurance agents, brokers and companies.	Toll-Free <b>www.insurance.ca.gov</b>	1-800-927-HELP 1-800-927-4357
State Bar of California	Provides information to help consumers find an attorney, take complaints and offers assistance with reimbursement for attorney misconduct.	License verification & complaints Toll-Free <b>www.calbar.ca.gov</b>	1-800-843-9053
CA Board of Accountancy	Licenses and regulates certified public accountants, and accounting firms.	Sacramento <b>www.dca.ca.gov/cba</b>	916-263-3680
CA Contractors State License Board (CSLB)	Licenses and regulates 43 classifications of contractors and home improvement services.	Toll-Free <b>www.cslb.ca.gov</b>	1-800-321-2752



Agency	Responsibilities	Contact Information
CA Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA)	Licenses and regulates over 100 professions including accountants, real estate professionals and contractors.	Toll-Free 1-800-952-5210 <b>www.dca.ca.gov</b>
CA Department of Justice –Attorney General’s Office	Protects Californians from fraudulent, unfair, and illegal activities that victimize consumers or threaten public safety. It prosecutes consumer complaints, related to fraud and identify theft.	Public Inquiry Unit Toll-Free 1-800-952-5225 TTY 1-800-735-2929 <b>www.oag.ca.gov</b>
CA Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet)	Provides benefits and services to California veterans, including dependents and survivors, from residency in state Veterans Homes to help purchase a home.	Toll-Free 1-800-952-5626 <b>www.calvet.ca.gov</b>
CA Consumer Home Mortgage Information	Provides consumers with helpful information if they are considering buying a home, already own a home, or have a mortgage and are having difficulty keeping their payments current.	<b>www.yourhome.ca.gov</b>
CA Franchise Tax Board (FTB)	Administers two of California’s major tax programs: Personal Income Tax and Corporation Tax.	General Assistance Toll-Free 1-800-852-5711 <b>www.ftb.ca.gov</b>
Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB)	Protects consumers by enforcing federal consumer financial laws. They take consumer complaints, promote financial education and have resources online to compare the costs of financial services, including a home buyer loan calculator.	Toll-Free 1-855-411-2372 <b>www.consumerfinance.gov</b>
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC)	Insures depositors for at least \$250,000. It addresses risks to the deposit insurance funds.	Toll-Free 1-877-275-3342 1-877-ASK-FDIC <b>www.fdic.gov</b>
Federal Reserve System	Investigates complaints related to federal consumer protection laws, such as the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, Fair Credit Reporting Act and the Truth in Lending Act.	Federal Reserve Consumer Help Toll-Free 1-888-851-1920 TTY 1-877-766-8533 <b>www.FederalReserveConsumerHelp.gov</b>

Agency	Responsibilities	Contact Information
Homeownership Preservation Foundation (HPF)	Operates the national 24/7 toll-free hotline with, bilingual, personalized assistance to help at-risk homeowners avoid foreclosure. HPF is a member of the HOPE NOW Alliance of mortgage servicers, mortgage market participants and counselors.	National 24/7 toll-free hotline 1-888-995-HOPE 1-888-995-4673 <a href="http://hopenow.com">http://hopenow.com</a>
Keep Your Home California Program (KYHCA)	Assists eligible distressed homeowners in California. They work to prevent foreclosures by providing help with unemployment mortgage assistance, mortgage reinstatement, principal reduction and transition assistance.	Toll-Free 1-888-954-KEEP 1-888-954-5337 <a href="http://keepyourhomecalifornia.org">http://keepyourhomecalifornia.org</a> Twitter @keepyourhomeca
Making Home Affordable (MHA) Program	A federal program to help homeowners with mortgage relief and avoiding foreclosure. Their Home Affordable Modification Program (HAMP) helps homeowners reduce their monthly mortgage payments, making them more affordable and sustainable.	Toll-Free 1-888-995-4673 <a href="http://www.makinghomeaffordable.gov">www.makinghomeaffordable.gov</a> Twitter @MHA4You
Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC)	The OCC's primary mission is to charter, regulate, and supervise all national banks and federal savings associations. They also supervise the federal branches and agencies of foreign banks.	Toll-Free 1-800-613-6743 or TDD Number 1-713-658-0340 <a href="http://www.occ.gov">www.occ.gov</a> <a href="http://www.HelpWithMyBank.gov">www.HelpWithMyBank.gov</a>
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)	HUD is the federal agency responsible for policy and programs that address America's housing needs, improve and develop the nation's communities and enforce fair housing laws. HUD offers assistance to the homeless, renters, homebuyers and homeowners.	Washington D.C. 202-708-1112 HUD Housing Conselors (interactive voice system) 1-800-569-4287 <a href="http://www.hud.gov">www.hud.gov</a> Twitter @HUDGov
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)	Provides benefits and services to U.S. veterans, including their dependents and survivors. Benefits include home loans.	VA Benefits Toll-Free 1-800-827-1000 <a href="http://www.va.gov">www.va.gov</a>
U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC)	The FTC protects consumers by preventing fraud, deception, and unfair business practices in the marketplace. They provide consumer protection on loans, credit cards, identity theft and telemarketing.	Toll-Free 1-877-FTC-HELP 1-877-382-4357 <a href="http://www.ftc.gov">www.ftc.gov</a> Twitter @FTC
U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS)	The IRS is responsible for collecting federal taxes. It provides information on tax-related fraud schemes, fraudulent federal tax returns.	Toll-Free 1-800-829-1040 Hotline for Tax Fraud Reporting Toll-Free 1-800-829-0433 <a href="http://www.irs.gov">www.irs.gov</a>



## File a Complaint

**Do you think you been a victim of financial fraud?  
Do you think you have been scammed?**

Help us protect Californians from unlicensed or fraudulent consumer transactions.

### **How to File a Complaint with the DBO:**

- Call us toll-free **1-866-275-2677** to have a complaint form mailed to you
- Download the complaint form from our website. For the fastest response, we recommend filing online at **[www.dbo.ca.gov](http://www.dbo.ca.gov)**

- Summarize your complaint and provide all relevant information that may help us understand and resolve your complaint
- Provide copies of all documents supporting your complaint (do not send originals or Social Security number or any other sensitive information.)

### **Mail the complete and signed complaint form to:**

California Department of Business Oversight  
Consumer Services Office  
1515 K Street, Suite 200  
Sacramento, CA 95814





## California Department of Business Oversight



### DEPARTMENT *of* BUSINESS OVERSIGHT

**Toll-Free** 1-866-275-2677

**TTY** 1-800-735-2922

**Online** [www.dbo.ca.gov](http://www.dbo.ca.gov)

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