

## **Credit Repair**

Despite companies' promises to "clean up" or "fix" your credit record, negative information in your record that is accurate cannot be erased. Federal law allows such information to be reported in your file for seven years, or ten years in the case of bankruptcy.

Credit repair firms often challenge all negative items in a credit report, and if the credit reporting agency cannot verify the information within a reasonable period of time, the information is removed, but only temporarily. If the information is later verified it will be placed back in your file.

To verify information on your credit reports, you can simply request a copy of each report directly from the three major reporting agencies. Contrary to popular belief, you do not have to use a third party to obtain a copy of your credit report.

If you need to dispute discrepancies in your credit report(s), you must do so in writing. Inform each credit reporting agency what information is inaccurate and clearly identify the item(s) you are disputing. Send your letter by certified mail so you have proof of mailing. Keep a copy of your dispute letter and any enclosures.

As a California resident, you are entitled to one free credit report per year. To obtain your annual credit report from each of the national credit reporting agencies (Transunion, Experian, Equifax), visit [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) or call (877) 322-8228.