



## Who We Are

Attorney General  
Tom Miller  
Office Directory

## What We Do

Protecting Consumers  
Fighting Crime  
Helping Victims of  
Crime  
Working for Farmers  
Protecting the  
Environment  
Raising Child Support  
Awareness  
Representing State  
Government  
Issuing Attorney  
General Opinions  
Enforcing Tobacco Laws  
Protecting Utility  
Customers

## Resources

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## Consumer Advisory Bulletin

**Surprising Revelations from "Psychic Hotlines"- Unexpected High Charges!**

Iowans who call "psychic hotlines" looking for harmless fun or serious advice may be in for a surprise: unexpected high charges. Even advertised "free calls" to psychics or other entertainment lines may end up costing you a bundle.

Psychic hotlines and other entertainment calls are heavily advertised on TV and in newspapers, magazines and mailings. But they very often use deceptive tactics to cheat people. Despite the advertising, there often seems to be no such thing as a free call!

**Here are some examples of how people are deceived and cheated:**

- Ads for "five free minutes" -- but you don't get the free minutes until after you've paid for 15 minutes at almost \$5 per minute! People also have been put on "hold" and billed.
- Ads for free 800-number calls -- but which sign you up for a monthly "service" at \$10 per month, or which connect you to a costly international call or collect call back to you. The hotlines also convince some people to call a 900-number, which can be very costly.
- Some people may see psychic hotlines as cheap entertainment, but complaints to the Attorney General suggest that many callers end up with charges they don't understand or agree with. Exercise caution!

**Tips to avoid being cheated:**

- Avoid calling psychic hotlines. Odds are high you may be charged more than you expect.
- Don't rely on ads offering "free calls" or "free minutes." The so-called free time often has hidden charges or hidden "catches" that end up costing you a pretty penny.
- Be wary of 800-number or other supposedly "free" calls. Unscrupulous businesses use various devices to dodge the fact that 800- and 888-number calls are supposed to be free.
- Study your phone bill every single month and look out for unauthorized charges of any kind. Dispute any deceptive or unauthorized charges, and don't pay disputed items.
- Finally, if you have a complaint about questionable telephone charges, contact the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division, Hoover Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319. Call 515-281-5926. E-mail to [consumer@max.state.ia.us](mailto:consumer@max.state.ia.us)

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