

MODELING & TALENT

Beauty and talent contests are generally operated in one of two ways. One type involves corporate sponsorship and the entrants must meet eligibility requirements to participate. The other type of beauty pageant passes the cost onto participants, making them responsible for entry fees, food, lodging, special costumes, travel, even the cost of the award or crown. Often the contestants are required to get sponsors or sell tickets and advertising to defray the costs of the contest.

Generally there is nothing more flattering than receiving an invitation for yourself or your child to enter a beauty or baby pageant. However, it is for that same reason that people cannot be careful enough in protecting themselves from possible wrongdoing. There is no law that prescribes how a pageant must be managed or how much a pageant can charge prospective contestants. The rules are set by each contest promoter.

Before getting involved in a beauty contest, get some answers.

- Who is the promoter or sponsor of the pageant? Are they reputable?
- What individual is the main coordinator of the event? How can you contact them?
- Do you need sponsors or will you have to sell advertising to participate?
- Who pays for the cost of travel, meals and lodging?
- If you win and advance to another level, who pays?
- Is there a new entry fee at every level of the competition?
- Will photos or specific clothing be required?
- Is there a refund policy?

Other things you should find out are: is there a possibility of more than one actual winner of the pageant, and how did the promoter get your child's name. Some pageants claim the names were submitted, while others simply pull names out from newspapers or magazine subscription lists. Others let you participate by making applications available.

A legitimate contest promoter will be able to respond to questions with ease. Others may have difficulty in answering, or may vary their answers. Often "shady" businesses will make the inquirer feel dumb for having asked questions. Do not be intimidated. Once you receive answers to all of your questions, then use your own judgment to decide whether you want to enter yourself, or your son or daughter in a pageant. **Before getting involved in a beauty contest, get some answers. Costs of the contests are often passed on to the participant.**

SOUTH DAKOTA OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL

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Signs you might be dealing with a scam:

- You have to use a specific photographer.
- You need professional photos, but should be able to choose your own photographer.
- You have to pay a fee to them to serve as your agent before they'll do any work on your behalf.
- Modeling and talent agencies get work for experienced models and actors. Some agents require that you sign up exclusively with them, while others allow you to also register with other agencies in town. Either way, legitimate agencies don't charge you an up-front fee to serve as your agent. They get paid when you get paid.
- Modeling agencies aren't the same as modeling and acting schools. These schools claim to provide instruction — for a fee — in poise, posture, diction, skin care, make-up application, the proper walk, and more. But after you take their classes, you may be on your own, despite their promises that attending modeling school will ensure you make it as a model.
- You're told the opportunity could disappear if you don't act now.
- You need time to check out a company before you give them any money or personal information. If an offer is good today, it should be good tomorrow.
- They guarantee a refund.
- They may say your deposit is totally refundable. It's more likely that your deposit would be refundable only if you meet very strict refund conditions. Or, you might be told that talent experts will evaluate your chances at success in the field, accept only a few people into the program, and give refunds to anyone not selected. What they don't tell you is that the program takes virtually everyone.
- They talk about big salaries.
- Even for successful models, work can be irregular.
- They guarantee you'll get work.
- No modeling or acting job is ever guaranteed. And depending on where you live, the market for those types of jobs may be very small.

How to avoid being scammed:

- Check its reputation
- Ask if the company or school is licensed or bonded, if that's required by your state.
- Get references.
- Get everything in writing.
- Keep copies of all important papers.