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## Department of Insurance and Financial Services (DIFS) Offers Tips for Choosing the Right Insurance Agent

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** April 29, 2016

(LANSING) Keeping some options available is a good strategy when it comes to buying insurance. All consumers are looking for something different when it comes to an insurance agent, so what should consumers focus on when selecting an agent? The Department of Insurance and Financial Services (DIFS) offers these tips to consider before selecting an insurance agent.

“Before choosing an insurance agent, Michigan consumers are encouraged to do their homework and use every available resource so they can pick the right person for their insurance needs,” said DIFS Director Patrick McPharlin.

### Types of Agents

An independent agent may have contracts with several different insurance companies. A captive or direct agent writes exclusively with one company. Independent and captive agents represent the insurance company and receive a commission from the company.

### Finding an Agent

- Referrals: Ask your family, friends, neighbors and colleagues why they like an agent. Is it the customer service? Is the agent friendly and knowledgeable? Did the company they represent do a particularly good job handling a claim? Have their rates for a particular coverage increased or decreased over the past three years? Does the agent review their policy annually to make sure they're getting the best coverage at the best price?
- DIFS Website: [Consumers can search online for licensed insurance agents by name, location and other criteria.](#) There, consumers can find detailed insurance agent information, including licensing history, types of licenses and the companies the agent works with.
- Other Resources: Agents may also be found on the Internet, in the phonebook or in other directories.

### Selecting an Agent

- Have conversations or meet with prospective agents to determine if they are a good fit and are able to meet your insurance needs. Explain your situation and ask for a quote. Simply asking does not mean you have to work with them. This is a chance for you to get a feel for how they work and if you're comfortable with them.

- **Licensing:** To protect yourself from insurance fraud during the purchasing process, it is important to ensure the agent and the company they are writing your policy with are licensed in Michigan. You can find [insurance agent licensing information](#) and [company licensing information](#) on DIFS' website. Consumers can also call DIFS' toll-free consumer hotline **877-999-6442**. Do not give out personal information to an agent until you have verified the company and agent are licensed and credible.
- **Complaints:** While you're checking whether the agent and the company are licensed, also check to see if they've had complaints filed against them. Consumers can call DIFS for complaint information and whether a regulatory action has been taken against an agent.
- **References:** When you're applying for a job, you provide references, so don't be afraid to ask a prospective agent for the same.
- **Financial Strength of the Company:** When evaluating a company, you also want to check its financial information. Insurance company financial information can be found at the [National Association of Insurance Commissioner's website](#).

If consumers have further question about selecting an insurance agent they can call **877-999-6442**.

For more information about DIFS or the services provided, please visit the website at [www.michigan.gov/difs](http://www.michigan.gov/difs), follow them on [Twitter](#) or "Like" them on [Facebook](#).

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