UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN MILWAUKEE DIVISION

JUDITH SIEVERT, Individually and on Behalf of)	Case No.: 17-cv-59
All Others Similarly Situated,	CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT
Plaintiff,	
vs.	
)	Jury Trial Demanded
ADVANTAGE COLLECTION	
PROFESSIONALS, LLC,	
Defendant.)

INTRODUCTION

1. This class action seeks redress for collection practices that violate the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1692 *et seq.* (the "FDCPA").

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

2. The court has jurisdiction to grant the relief sought by the Plaintiff pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k and 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1337. Venue in this District is proper in that Defendant directed its collection efforts into the District.

PARTIES

- 3. Plaintiff Judith Sievert is an individual who resides in the Eastern District of Wisconsin (Milwaukee County).
- 4. Plaintiff is a "consumer" as defined in the FDCPA, 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(3), in that Defendant sought to collect from her a debt allegedly incurred for personal, family or household purposes, namely a credit card debt.
- 5. Defendant Advantage Collection Professionals, LLC ("Advantage") is a foreign limited liability company with its principal place of business located at 495 2nd Ave. SE, Cambridge, MN 55008.

- 6. Advantage is engaged in the business of a collection agency, using the telephone to collect consumer debts originally owed to others.
- 7. Advantage is engaged in the business of collecting debts owed to others and incurred for personal, family or household purposes. Advantage is a debt collector as defined in 15 U.S.C. § 1692a.

FACTS

- 8. On or about December 6, 2016, at 10:58 AM, Advantage called Plaintiff's cellular telephone regarding an alleged debt, allegedly owed to Franklin Rehab at 76th St ("Franklin Rehab"), a medical services provider.
- 9. The alleged debt that was the subject of Advantage's telephone call on December 6, 2016, was an alleged medical bill.
- 10. The alleged debt was incurred for personal, family or household purposes, specifically medical treatment. Plaintiff did not open the account for business purposes.
- 11. Plaintiff answered the phone call from Advantage and spoke with a female collector who insisted she pay the debt and provided a mailing address.
- 12. As of January 11, 2017, Plaintiff has not received any written communications from Advantage.
- 13. The FDCPA requires debt collectors to provide a written notice containing certain specified information to consumers within five days of the initial contact with the consumer:

(a) Notice of debt; contents

Within five days after the initial communication with a consumer in connection with the collection of any debt, a debt collector shall, unless the following information is contained in the initial communication or the consumer has paid the debt, send the consumer a written notice containing—

(1) the amount of the debt;

- (2) the name of the creditor to whom the debt is owed;
- (3) a statement that unless the consumer, within thirty days after receipt of the notice, disputes the validity of the debt, or any portion thereof, the debt will be assumed to be valid by the debt collector;
- (4) a statement that if the consumer notifies the debt collector in writing within the thirty-day period that the debt, or any portion thereof, is disputed, the debt collector will obtain verification of the debt or a copy of a judgment against the consumer and a copy of such verification or judgment will be mailed to the consumer by the debt collector; and
- (5) a statement that, upon the consumer's written request within the thirty-day period, the debt collector will provide the consumer with the name and address of the original creditor, if different from the current creditor.

15 U.S.C. § 1692g(a).

- 14. Upon information and belief, Advantage did not send a written communication containing a debt validation notice to Plaintiff within five days of the December 6, 2016 phone call.
- 15. Plaintiff reviews her mail personally every day. She does not dispose of collection letters, but brings them to her attorneys.
- 16. Moreover, Plaintiff has been involved in several other billing and collection disputes. As a result, she is careful not to dispose of any mail that could be relevant to those disputes.
- 17. If Advantage had mailed a collection letter to Plaintiff, she would have received it and brought it to her attorneys.
 - 18. Plaintiff has not moved or changed residences in the last two years.
 - 19. Plaintiff does not have an alternate address, such as a PO Box or business address.
- 20. There is no requirement that a consumer make a showing of materiality for a debt collector's failure to comply with 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(a). *Janetos v. Fulton Friedman & Gullace*,

- *LLP*, 825 F.3d 317, 324 (7th Cir. 2016) ("we have not extended the implicit materiality requirement of § 1692e to reach claims under § 1692g(a).").
- 21. For the purposes of Plaintiff's claims under 15 U.S.C. § 1692e, Advantage's misrepresentation is a material false statement.
- 22. The debt validation notice informs consumers of their rights under 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(b), which states:

(b) Disputed debts

If the consumer notifies the debt collector in writing within the thirty-day period described in subsection (a) that the debt, or any portion thereof, is disputed, or that the consumer requests the name and address of the original creditor, the debt collector shall cease collection of the debt, or any disputed portion thereof, until the debt collector obtains verification of the debt or a copy of a judgment, or the name and address of the original creditor, and a copy of such verification or judgment, or name and address of the original creditor, is mailed to the consumer by the debt collector. Collection activities and communications that do not otherwise violate this subchapter may continue during the 30-day period referred to in subsection (a) unless the consumer has notified the debt collector in writing that the debt, or any portion of the debt, is disputed or that the consumer requests the name and address of the original creditor. Any collection activities and communication during the 30-day period may not overshadow or be inconsistent with the disclosure of the consumer's right to dispute the debt or request the name and address of the original creditor.

- 23. Failing to provide the validation notice interferes with the 30-day period in which the consumer has the right to temporarily stop collection activities. *See* 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(b).
- 24. Plaintiff had to spend time and money investigating Advantage's phone call, and the consequences of any potential responses to Advantage's phone call.
- 25. Plaintiff had to take time to obtain and meet with counsel, including traveling to counsel's office by car and its related expenses, including but not limited to the cost of gasoline and mileage, to advise Plaintiff on the consequences of Advantage's phone call.

- 26. The FDCPA creates substantive rights for consumers; violations cause injury to consumers, and such injuries are concrete and particularized. Quinn v. Specialized Loan Servicing, LLC, No. 16 C 2021, 2016 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 107299 *8-13 (N.D. Ill. Aug. 11, 2016) (rejecting challenge to Plaintiff's standing based upon alleged FDCPA statutory violation); Lane v. Bayview Loan Servicing, LLC, No. 15 C 10446, 2016 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 89258 *9-10 (N.D. Ill. July 11, 2016) ("When a federal statute is violated, and especially when Congress has created a cause of action for its violation, by definition Congress has created a legally protected interest that it deems important enough for a lawsuit."); Church v. Accretive Health, Inc., No. 15-15708, 2016 U.S. App. LEXIS 12414 *7-11 (11th Cir. July 6, 2016) (same); see also Mogg v. Jacobs, No. 15-CV-1142-JPG-DGW, 2016 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 33229, 2016 WL 1029396, at *5 (S.D. III. Mar. 15, 2016) ("Congress does have the power to enact statutes creating legal rights, the invasion of which creates standing, even though no injury would exist without the statute," (quoting Sterk v. Redbox Automated Retail, LLC, 770 F.3d 618, 623 (7th Cir. 2014)). For this reason, and to encourage consumers to bring FDCPA actions, Congress authorized an award of statutory damages for violations. 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a).
- 27. Moreover, Congress has explicitly described the FDCPA as regulating "abusive practices" in debt collection. 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692(a) 1692(e). Any person who receives a debt collection letter containing a violation of the FDCPA is a victim of abusive practices. *See* 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692(e) ("It is the purpose of this subchapter to eliminate abusive debt collection practices by debt collectors, to insure that those debt collectors who refrain from using abusive debt collection practices are not competitively disadvantaged, and to promote consistent State action to protect consumers against debt collection abuses").

- 28. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e generally prohibits "any false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means in connection with the collection of any debt."
- 29. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(10) specifically prohibits the "use of any false representation or deceptive means to collect or attempt to collect any debt."

COUNT I – FDCPA

- 30. Plaintiff incorporates by reference as if fully set forth herein the allegations contained in the preceding paragraphs of this Complaint.
 - 31. Advantage first contacted Plaintiff by telephone on December 6, 2016.
 - 32. Advantage never provided a written debt validation notice to Plaintiff.
- 33. Advantage's conduct is misleading and confusing to the unsophisticated consumer, in that the notice of Plaintiff's debt validation rights was never provided. 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(a).
- 34. The Defendant has therefore violated 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, 1692e(10), 1692g(a) and 1692g(b).

CLASS ALLEGATIONS

- 35. Plaintiff brings this action on behalf of a Class, consisting of (a) all natural persons in the State of Wisconsin (b) who received a telephone call from Advantage Capital Group, LLC, (c) seeking to collect a debt for personal, family or household purposes, (d) between January 16, 2016 and January 16, 2017, inclusive, (e) and to whom Advantage did not send a written communication (f) containing the 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(a) debt validation notice, (g) within five days of the initial telephone communication.
- 36. The Class is so numerous that joinder is impracticable. Upon information and belief, there are more than 50 members of the Class.

- 37. There are questions of law and fact common to the members of the class, which common questions predominate over any questions that affect only individual class members. The predominant common question is whether the Defendant complied with 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, 1692e(10), 1692g, and 1692g(a)(2).
- 38. Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the Class members. All are based on the same factual and legal theories.
- 39. Plaintiff will fairly and adequately represent the interests of the Class members. Plaintiff has retained counsel experienced in consumer credit and debt collection abuse cases.
- 40. A class action is superior to other alternative methods of adjudicating this dispute. Individual cases are not economically feasible.

JURY DEMAND

41. Plaintiff hereby demands a trial by jury.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff requests that the Court enter judgment in favor of Plaintiff and the Class and against Defendant for:

- (a) actual damages;
- (b) statutory damages;
- (c) attorneys' fees, litigation expenses and costs of suit; and
- (d) such other or further relief as the Court deems proper.

Dated: January 16, 2017

ADEMI & O'REILLY, LLP

By: s/ John D. Blythin
Shpetim Ademi (SBN 1026973)
John D. Blythin (SBN 1046105)
Mark A. Eldridge (SBN 1089944)
Denise L. Morris (SBN 1097911)

3620 East Layton Avenue Cudahy, WI 53110 (414) 482-8000 (414) 482-8001 (fax) sademi@ademilaw.com jblythin@ademilaw.com meldridge@ademilaw.com dmorris@ademilaw.com

CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE REVERSE OF THE FORM.)

Place an X in the appropriate Box:	: Green	Bay Division	<u> </u>	Milwaukee Division			
I. (a) PLAINTIFFS			DEFENDANTS	DEFENDANTS			
Judith Sievert		Advantage Co	Advantage Collection Professionals, LLC				
(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff Milwaukee (EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)		County of Residence of	County of Residence of First Listed Defendant (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)				
				NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE LAND INVOLVED.			
(c) Attorney's (Firm Name, Add	dress, and Telephone Numbe	r)	Attorneys (If Known)				
Ademi & O'Reilly, LLP, 3620 (414) 482-8000-Telephone (41		53110					
II. BASIS OF JURISDIC	TION (Place an "X" in	n One Box Only)		RINCIPAL PARTIES	(Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff and One Box for Defendant)		
1 U.S. Government Plaintiff	3 Federal Question (U.S. Government N	Jot a Party)	(For Diversity Cases Only) P Citizen of This State	TF DEF 1 Incorporated or Pr of Business In This	PTF DEF		
2 U.S. Government Defendant	4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship	o of Parties in Item III)	Citizen of Another State	2 Incorporated and I of Business In A			
			Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country	3 Greign Nation	6 6 6		
IV. NATURE OF SUIT (Place an "X" in One Box On		FORFEITURE/PENALTY	BANKRUPTCY	OTHER STATUTES		
□ 110 Insurance □ 120 Marine □ 130 Miller Act □ 140 Negotiable Instrument □ 150 Recovery of Overpayment □ Execute Student Loans □ Execute Student Execute Stu	PERSONAL INJURY 310 Airplane 315 Airplane Product Liability 320 Assault, Libel & Slander 330 Federal Employers' Liability 340 Marine 345 Marine Product Liability 350 Motor Vehicle 355 Motor Vehicle Product Liability 360 Other Personal Injury CIVIL RIGHTS 441 Voting 442 Employment 443 Housing/ Accommodations 444 Welfare	PERSONAL INJURY 362 Personal Injury - Med. Malpractice 365 Personal Injury - Product Liability 368 Asbestos Personal Injury Product Liability PERSONAL PROPERTY 370 Other Fraud 371 Truth in Lending 380 Other Personal Property Damage 385 Property Damage Product Liability PRISONER PETITIONS 510 Motions to Vacate Sentence Habeas Corpus: 530 General 535 Death Penalty 540 Mandamus & Other 550 Civil Rights 555 Prison Condition	□ 610 Agriculture □ 620 Other Food & Drug □ 625 Drug Related Seizure of Property 21 USC 881 □ 630 Liquor Laws □ 640 R.R. & Truck □ 650 Airline Regs. □ 660 Occupational Safety/Health □ 690 Other ■ LABOR □ 710 Fair Labor Standards Act □ 720 Labor/Mgmt. Relations □ 730 Labor/Mgmt.Reporting & Disclosure Act □ 740 Railway Labor Act □ 790 Other Labor Litigation □ 791 Empl. Ret. Inc. Security Act ■ IMMIGRATION □ 462 Naturalization Application □ 463 Habeas Corpus - Alien Detainee □ 465 Other Immigration Actions	422 Appeal 28 USC 158 423 Withdrawal 28 USC 157 PROPERTY RIGHTS 820 Copyrights 830 Patent 840 Trademark 840 Trademark 861 HIA (1395ff) 862 Black Lung (923) 863 DIWC/DIWW (405(g)) 864 SSID Title XVI 865 RSI (405(g)) FEDERAL TAX SUITS 870 Taxes (U.S. Plaintiff or Defendant) 871 IRS—Third Party 26 USC 7609	□ 400 State Reapportionment □ 410 Antitrust □ 430 Banks and Banking □ 450 Commerce □ 460 Deportation □ 470 Racketeer Influenced and □ Corrupt Organizations □ 480 Consumer Credit □ 490 Cable/Sat TV □ 810 Selective Service □ 850 Securities/Commodities/ □ Exchange □ 875 Customer Challenge □ 12 USC 3410 □ 890 Other Statutory Actions □ 891 Agricultural Acts □ 892 Economic Stabilization Act □ 893 Environmental Matters □ 894 Energy Allocation Act □ 895 Freedom of Information □ Act □ 900Appeal of Fee Determination Under Equal Access to Justice □ 950 Constitutionality of State Statutes		
V. ORIGIN (Place an "X" in One Box Only) 1 Original Proceeding 2 Removed from State Court 3 Remanded from Appellate Court 4 Reinstated or Reopened 5 Transferred from another district (specify) 6 Multidistrict Litigation 7 Appeal to District Judge from Magistrate Judgment VI. CAUSE OF ACTION Cite the U.S. Civil Statute under which you are filing (Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity): Fig. 1 Original Proceeding 1 State Court 1 Statute under which you are filing (Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity): VI. CAUSE OF ACTION Original Proceeding 2 Removed from Appellate Court 4 Reinstated or Reopened 5 Transferred from another district (specify) One Box Only 4 Reinstated or Reopened 5 Transferred from another district (specify) One Box Only 4 Reinstated or Reopened 5 Transferred from another district (specify) One Box Only 4 Reinstated or Reopened 5 Transferred from another district (specify) One Box Only 4 Reinstated or Reopened 5 Transferred from another district (specify) One Box Only 4 Reinstated or Reopened 5 Transferred from another district (specify) One Box Only 4 Reinstated or Reopened 5 Transferred from another district (specify) One Box Only 4 Reinstated or Reopened 5 Transferred from another district (specify) One Box Only 4 Reinstated or Reopened 5 Transferred from another district 6 Reopened 7 Reopened							
VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:	CHECK IF THIS UNDER F.R.C.P.	IS A CLASS ACTION 23	DEMAND \$	CHECK YES only JURY DEMAND:	if demanded in complaint: : ☑ Yes ☐ No		
VIII. RELATED CASE(S IF ANY	(See instructions):	JUDGE		DOCKET NUMBER			
DATE		SIGNATURE OF ATTOR	NEY OF RECORD				
January 16, 2017 FOR OFFICE USE ONLY		s/ John D. Bl	ythin				

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR ATTORNEYS COMPLETING CIVIL COVER SHEET FORM JS 44

Authority For Civil Cover Sheet

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replaces nor supplements the filings and service of pleading or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. Consequently, a civil cover sheet is submitted to the Clerk of Court for each civil complaint filed. The attorney filing a case should complete the form as follows:

- I. (a) Plaintiffs-Defendants. Enter names (last, first, middle initial) of plaintiff and defendant. If the plaintiff or defendant is a government agency, use only the full name or standard abbreviations. If the plaintiff or defendant is an official within a government agency, identify first the agency and then the official, giving both name and title.
- (b) County of Residence. For each civil case filed, except U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county where the first listed plaintiff resides at the time of filing. In U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county in which the first listed defendant resides at the time of filing. (NOTE: In land condemnation cases, the county of residence of the "defendant" is the location of the tract of land involved.)
- (c) Attorneys. Enter the firm name, address, telephone number, and attorney of record. If there are several attorneys, list them on an attachment, noting in this section "(see attachment)".
- **II. Jurisdiction**. The basis of jurisdiction is set forth under Rule 8(a), F.R.C.P., which requires that jurisdictions be shown in pleadings. Place an "X" in one of the boxes. If there is more than one basis of jurisdiction, precedence is given in the order shown below.

United States plaintiff. (1) Jurisdiction based on 28 U.S.C. 1345 and 1348. Suits by agencies and officers of the United States are included here.

United States defendant. (2) When the plaintiff is suing the United States, its officers or agencies, place an "X" in this box.

Federal question. (3) This refers to suits under 28 U.S.C. 1331, where jurisdiction arises under the Constitution of the United States, an amendment to the Constitution, an act of Congress or a treaty of the United States. In cases where the U.S. is a party, the U.S. plaintiff or defendant code takes precedence, and box 1 or 2 should be marked.

Diversity of citizenship. (4) This refers to suits under 28 U.S.C. 1332, where parties are citizens of different states. When Box 4 is checked, the citizenship of the different parties must be checked. (See Section III below; federal question actions take precedence over diversity cases.)

- III. Residence (citizenship) of Principal Parties. This section of the JS 44 is to be completed if diversity of citizenship was indicated above. Mark this section for each principal party.
- **IV. Nature of Suit.** Place an "X" in the appropriate box. If the nature of suit cannot be determined, be sure the cause of action, in Section VI below, is sufficient to enable the deputy clerk or the statistical clerks in the Administrative Office to determine the nature of suit. If the cause fits more than one nature of suit, select the most definitive.
- V. Origin. Place an "X" in one of the seven boxes.

Original Proceedings. (1) Cases which originate in the United States district courts.

Removed from State Court. (2) Proceedings initiated in state courts may be removed to the district courts under Title 28 U.S.C., Section 1441. When the petition for removal is granted, check this box.

Remanded from Appellate Court. (3) Check this box for cases remanded to the district court for further action. Use the date of remand as the filing date.

Reinstated or Reopened. (4) Check this box for cases reinstated or reopened in the district court. Use the reopening date as the filing date.

Transferred from Another District. (5) For cases transferred under Title 28 U.S.C. Section 1404(a). Do not use this for within district transfers or multidistrict litigation transfers.

Multidistrict Litigation. (6) Check this box when a multidistrict case is transferred into the district under authority of Title 28 U.S.C. Section 1407. When this box is checked, do not check (5) above.

Appeal to District Judge from Magistrate Judgment. (7) Check this box for an appeal from a magistrate judge's decision.

VI. Cause of Action. Report the civil statute directly related to the cause of action and give a brief description of the cause. Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity. Example:

U.S. Civil Statute: 47 USC 553

Brief Description: Unauthorized reception of cable service

VII. Requested in Complaint. Class Action. Place an "X" in this box if you are filing a class action under Rule 23, F.R.Cv.P.

Demand. In this space enter the dollar amount (in thousands of dollars) being demanded or indicate other demand such as a preliminary injunction.

Jury Demand. Check the appropriate box to indicate whether or not a jury is being demanded.

VIII. Related Cases. This section of the JS 44 is used to reference related pending cases if any. If there are related pending cases, insert the docket numbers and the corresponding judge names for such cases.

Date and Attorney Signature. Date and sign the civil cover sheet.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Eastern District of Wisconsin

JUDITH SIEV Plaintiff v. ADVANTAGE COLLECTION I)) Civil Action No. 17-cv-59)		
Defendant				
	SUMMONS IN	A CIVIL ACTION		
To: (Defendant's name and address)	Advantage Collection Profess 495 2nd Ave. SE Cambridge, MN 55008	sionals, LLC		
A lawsuit has been filed against you. Within 21 days after service of this summons on you (not counting the day you received it) — or 60 days if you are the United States or a United States agency, or an officer or employee of the United States described in Fed. R. Civ. P. 12 (a)(2) or (3) — you must serve on the plaintiff an answer to the attached complaint or a motion under Rule 12 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. The answer or motion must be served on the plaintiff or plaintiff's attorney, whose name and address are: John D. Blythin Ademi & O'Reilly, LLP 3620 East Layton Avenue Cudahy, WI 53110 (414) 482-8000-Telephone				
If you fail to respond, j You also must file your answer	•	entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint.		
Data		CLERK OF COURT		
Date:		Signature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk		

Civil Action No. 17-cv-59

PROOF OF SERVICE

(This section should not be filed with the court unless required by Fed. R. Civ. P. 4 (l))

	This summons for (nan	ne of individual and title, if any)			
was re	ceived by me on (date)	·			
	☐ I personally served	the summons on the individual at	t (place)		
			on (date)	; or	
	☐ I left the summons	at the individual's residence or us	sual place of abode with (name)		
		, a person of	f suitable age and discretion who resid	des there,	
	on (date)	, and mailed a copy to th	ne individual's last known address; or		
	☐ I served the summo	ons on (name of individual)		, wh	o is
	designated by law to a	accept service of process on behal	f of (name of organization)		
			on (date)	; or	
	☐ I returned the summ	nons unexecuted because			; or
	☐ Other (specify):				
	My fees are \$	for travel and \$	for services, for a total of \$	0.00	
	I declare under penalty	y of perjury that this information i	s true.		
Date:					
			Server's signature		
			Printed name and title		
			Server's address		

Additional information regarding attempted service, etc:

Save As...

ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: <u>Advantage Collection Professionals Named in FDCPA Lawsuit</u>