

SAFEGUARDING YOUR FUTURE

TIPS TO HELP SENIORS
AVOID FINANCIAL FRAUD



BUREAU OF VICTIM SERVICES

1-800-380-3811

<http://da.lacounty.gov/victims>



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Con Artists Use Many Scams

Con artists use a variety of sneaky ways to get their hands on your hard-earned life savings or your personally identifiable information. They might claim you won a prize or that you forgot to pay your taxes and will be arrested.

They know that seniors possess an enormous concentration of wealth. They know that seniors, who were raised in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, were taught to be polite and trusting. Con artists exploit these traits. Often, seniors who live alone are targeted.

Scams take many forms and criminals use numerous ruses. Sometimes the criminal seems to be a friend – even a romantic interest. Unfortunately, in many cases, the people defrauding seniors are family members, hired caretakers or professionals like financial planners, bankers, attorneys or doctors.

Many con artists go door-to-door to find victims, running home-repair scams, investment schemes or soliciting donations for phony charities. Other criminals make their ill-gotten gains through the phone or Internet.

Some of these criminals may use friendly chatter or will drop the name of someone you know. They even pretend to be your family or friends who are in distress and need your financial help.

Others use high-pressure tactics to get you to divulge your Social Security or Medicare number, birthdate, bank or credit card accounts or your personal identification number or PIN.

Some phone scammers pretend to be police officers or government employees, and they concoct a variety of clever and convincing ploys. Others get to know their victims intimately, working over the course of months or years to earn their trust so that they could gain access to their assets.

In many cases, a family member takes control of seniors' finances for their own personal gain.

Look for Danger Signs

If you know or care for an older adult, here are some warning signs that may point to financial abuse:

- There is unusual activity – such as withdrawals or new names added – on the person's financial accounts.

- The senior suddenly appears confused, unkempt and afraid. Essential bills are going unpaid.
- A caregiver or family member will not allow others access to the senior.
- The residence contains many sweepstakes mailings, magazine subscriptions or free gifts. This may indicate that successful con artists previously have victimized the senior.

More resources to help combat elder abuse and consumer fraud are available on the District Attorney's website.

Please Visit

<http://da.lacounty.gov/seniors>

or call the

Los Angeles County
Elder Abuse Hotline

1-(877) 4-R-Seniors

1-(877) 477-3646

Prevention

It takes vigilance and preparation to avoid becoming a victim of fraud. You need to be aware that there are unscrupulous individuals who are trying to get rich by stealing from your life savings.

Simple steps can be taken to make sure you do not become a victim of fraud. Often, it is as easy as hanging up the phone or saying: "No, thank you." Here are a few tips:

- Don't wire money to strangers **EVER** even if they say they are a police officer or government official.
- Don't share your personally identifiable information, such as Social Security and bank account numbers, with any unsolicited callers. An actual bank or credit card company will not ask for that type of information over the phone or computer.
- Don't unlock or open the door to unknown, uninvited visitors. Don't let them in your home, even if they claim to be a police officer, utility worker or government employee.
- Use peepholes or intercoms to identify visitors before unlocking or opening a door. Make sure your back door is locked before answering the front door to avoid crooks sneaking inside while you are being distracted.
- Call the police if a stranger lingers or refuses to leave your property or doorway area.
- Screen your calls through an answering machine or caller ID system. Be sure to look up the number to call someone back yourself. Don't rely on the number that appears on your caller ID system or answering machine. Scammers could be trying to trick you into believing they are calling from a local number or a governmental agency.
- Hang up the phone if you don't know the caller.
- Never buy anything over the phone unless you initiated the call.
- Never open any email from an unknown sender, no matter what the subject line says. That email may allow the sender to hack into your personal information.
- Shred unwanted past credit card bills, investment records, insurance policies, medical and tax records with a crisscross shredder. Identity thieves dig through trash for these documents and may try to put the pieces back together.
- Verify the identities of strangers before starting a business transaction or making a donation.
- Don't be fooled by deals that sound too good to be true because they always are! Scammers often use this tactic to entice you to do or buy what they want.
- A legitimate governmental agency or company will never ask you to purchase gift cards to pay your debt or any expense you owe.
- If a person claims to be a family member in trouble, ask them a question that only that family member would know (color of your cat, name of your dog). When that same person doesn't know the answer, hang up. They don't know the answer because they are not who they say they are!

Helpful Resources

Adult Protective Services

To Report Elder Abuse

(213) 351-5401

Bet Tzedek

Legal Services for Seniors

(323) 939-0506

California Department of Aging

The California Department of Aging administers programs that serve older adults, adults with disabilities, family caregivers, and residents in long-term care facilities throughout the state.

(213) 482-7252

Wise and Healthy Aging

Community Resources and Programs for Seniors

(310)-394-9871



Helping Crime Victims

1-800-380-3811

Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office
Bureau of Victim Services

<http://da.lacounty.gov/victims>