



**A quick reference  
guide for families and  
friends of older adults**

PROTECTING ★ THE ★ UNPROTECTED

# **Financial Fraud and Exploitation**

Affecting  
Older  
Adults



Protect your loved ones by  
learning how to recognize  
the warning signs



**DAVE YOST**

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL



## **Warning signs of fraud or financial exploitation**

- » Unexplained withdrawals from your loved one's bank account, unexplained charges to his or her credit card, or missing cash
- » Changes to official documents, such as powers of attorney or wills
- » Unwillingness to disclose information
- » Sudden withdrawal from family and friends
- » Unpaid bills when the older adult previously paid bills on time and had the resources to pay those bills
- » A new "best friend" who has taken a special interest in your loved one
- » Frequent visits to the bank or store to wire money or send gift cards
- » Missing belongings

## **People who are at risk**

- » Older adults who are socially isolated
- » Older adults who rely on family members or friends to handle their finances
- » Older adults who have recently lost a spouse or loved one, especially if that person handled the household finances
- » Older adults who have a cognitive impairment, memory issues or other disabilities



**With our aging population, it's important for family members and friends of older adults to provide guidance, education and support to older adults who may be vulnerable to financial fraud and exploitation.**

Financial fraud and exploitation involve the illegal or improper taking, misuse or concealment of funds, property or assets. They are serious problems affecting many older adults throughout Ohio and can be committed by a loved one, caregiver or complete stranger. The Ohio Attorney General's Elder Justice Unit provides support, education and outreach services to combat elder fraud and financial exploitation.

## Common types of scams targeting older adults

- **Impostor scams** — Someone pretending to be from the IRS or another government agency may call, demanding payment and threatening arrest if payment is not made.
- **Romance scams** — Someone may “meet” the victim online or over the phone; after developing a relationship, the scammer will ask the victim to send money.
- **Grandparent scams** — Someone pretending to be a grandchild will say he or she is in trouble and needs money immediately; the scammer will ask the victim to keep the request a secret.
- **Sweepstakes/lottery scams** — Someone falsely claims the victim has won a sweepstakes or lottery but, before collecting the winnings, must pay taxes or a fee.



## Other common types of financial fraud and exploitation

- Unauthorized sale of personal property
- Changes in official documents (powers of attorney, wills, etc.)
- Theft of money
- Unauthorized charges or withdrawals
- Identity theft



## To help protect older adults in your life:

- **Get educated** — Understand what elder fraud and financial exploitation look like and how to prevent them.
- **Stay involved** — Encourage older adults to stay connected to family and friends. Involvement decreases isolation, which is often linked to elder fraud and financial exploitation.
- **Encourage loved ones to talk with you** — When loved ones feel they can disclose information to you and you won't judge them, they may be more likely to tell you things that could indicate they are the victim of financial fraud or exploitation.
- **Speak up** — If something seems wrong, say something to your loved one, other family members, those in the community who interact with your loved one or those within the residential living facility. Ask those close to your loved one if they've noticed differences in his or her habits, demeanor or financial situation.
- **Reinforce** with your loved one that if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is!





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## To report fraud or financial exploitation:

- **Contact your local police department.**
- **Contact your local Adult Protective Services office.**
- **Contact the Ohio Attorney General's Office.**

## Services and resources

- Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost is committed to protecting older adults. To learn more about the Elder Justice Unit or to file a complaint, call **1-800-282-0515** or visit **[www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov](http://www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov)**.
- Adult protective services help vulnerable adults age 60 and older who are in danger of harm, are unable to protect themselves and who may have no one to assist them. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services supervises the state's Adult Protective Services program. To find the phone number and location of your county's agency, call **1-855-OHIO-APS** (1-855-6446-277) or visit **[http://jfs.ohio.gov/county/County\\_Directory.pdf](http://jfs.ohio.gov/county/County_Directory.pdf)**.
- The Ohio Department of Aging offers the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program to advocate for receiving home care, assisted living care and nursing home care. For more information, contact an ombudsman at **1-800-282-1206** or visit **[www.aging.ohio.gov](http://www.aging.ohio.gov)**.
- ProSeniors is a nonprofit organization that provides free legal and long-term care assistance to older adults. Its Legal Hotline provides free legal information, advice and referrals for Ohio residents age 60 and older. For more information, call the hotline at **1-800-488-6070** or visit **[www.proseniors.org](http://www.proseniors.org)**.