



Help Protect Grandma and Grandpa: Share Your Scam Knowledge

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Editor's Note: Grandparents Day is Sunday, September 9th.

MADISON – Checking in with Grandma and Grandpa this weekend to wish them a happy Grandparents Day? It might also be a good time to talk with them about some of the latest scams and ways to stay protected from fraudsters.

“While we are all targets for scammers, some con artists prey specifically on seniors,” said Michelle Reinen, Director of the Bureau of Consumer Protection within the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). “Education is the best way to prevent fraud, so the more information we can share with our older friends and relatives the more likely they will be able to protect themselves when faced with a scam or identity theft risk.”

An ideal way to start a conversation with older relatives is by sharing a copy of a new senior scams bookmark, available by contacting DATCP’s Consumer Protection Hotline (800-422-7128 or datcphotline@wi.gov). The bookmark provides a quick look at the main scam operations that target seniors and offers simple tips to spot fraud.

For a more thorough resource, consider sharing a copy of DATCP’s Senior Guide. This free booklet helps seniors navigate tricky consumer issues and provides a detailed look at a wide range of scams and identity theft risks. The Senior Guide is available on the [DATCP website](#) or can be ordered by contacting the Consumer Protection Hotline.

Finally, sign your relatives up to receive DATCP’s Consumer Alerts by email or text message. This will give them immediate notice of warnings from the agency regarding the latest scams circulating in Wisconsin.

Some of the common scams targeting seniors that are outlined in the guide include:

- Grandparent scams (or “family emergency” scams) – a scammer falsely claims that a family member is in trouble and requests money. The scammers often claim to be a grandchild in need of help.
- Tech support scams – a “computer technician” says you have a computer virus that they can repair in exchange for a payment and remote access to your computer.
- Timeshare resale fraud – someone claims that they have a buyer for your timeshare. After signing a phony “sales contract,” the victim is continuously asked for payments for document fees and other expenses.
- IRS/U.S. Treasury scams – a fake “federal agent” claims you owe back taxes and demands immediate payment.
- Medical alert/equipment fraud – scammers place robocalls to potential victims pitching “free” medical equipment and personal emergency alert systems. The items are often of questionable quality and are tied to recurring fees.

Many scams and identity theft traps are similar in what they are seeking but rely on different narratives to draw in their victims. By recognizing the warning signs, seniors can protect themselves from a wide range of rip-offs. Review these simple tips with your older relatives:

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- Never wire money or give the account number and PIN code from a prepaid gift or money card to someone you don't know. These payment methods are like handing over cash – the chance for recovery is slim to none.
- Don't trust your caller ID. Scammers "spoof" the information to appear as a local number.
- Never engage with an unsolicited sales robocall. Taking any action may cause you to get additional calls. Hang up.
- Never provide personal information like your Social Security number or bank/credit card account numbers on an unsolicited call.
- Always check with a friend or family member before you act on a high-pressure sales pitch.

"Since 2001, elder abuse has increased 160%, and Wisconsin's elderly population will increase 72% in the next two decades; we cannot wait to do better for our elderly loved ones," said Attorney General Brad Schimel, who in 2017 established the Task Force on Elder Abuse. "Often, elder abuse victims can feel embarrassed that they were scammed. By letting our elders know that these scams are common, we can lift the stigma about asking for help and resources. This Grandparents Day, talk to your family about protecting themselves from scammers."

For more information about fraudulent activities targeting older citizens, visit the Consumer Protection Bureau at <http://datcp.wi.gov> or contact the Consumer Protection Hotline.

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