

How to Protect Yourself from Fraud*

Why are older adults targets of fraud?

- Many older adults have good credit and have retirement money “stashed away”
- Individuals born in the 1930’s – 1950’s are trusting, courteous, and polite and often find it difficult to hang up on someone.
- Many victims of fraud are ashamed to tell anyone; part of the reason is because they also fear that relatives will consider them to be mentally incompetent
- Older adults often don’t know who to report to if they have become a victim of fraud.
- Older adults tend to make poorer witnesses and often do not realize that they have been victimized until weeks and months have passed
- Many of the products that con artists promise deal with issues that are important to the older adult – examples include anti-aging, anti-cancer cures.

Tips on how to avoid Health Insurance Fraud

- Never sign a blank claim form or give blanket authority to a medical provider.
- Only give medical insurance identification to those that provide medical services.
- Ask questions of your health care provider.
- Review all your medical statements as well as benefit information.

Tips on how to avoid Counterfeit Prescriptions

- Always examine the packaging and appearance of drugs and consult health care provider or pharmacist if you are suspicious.
- Let your health provider know immediately if you have adverse effects from any medications.
- Use caution when purchasing drugs over the internet. Licensed online distributors will have a seal of approval called the Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Site (VIPPS).

Tips on how to avoid Cemetery and Funeral Fraud

- Be informed and shop around. (In some states funeral homes have been bought up by corporations which price fix.)
- Embalming is not legally required, nor is a casket needed for cremation.
- It is a myth that funeral providers can determine how long a casket will preserve a body.
- Do not be pressured into buying high-priced options.
- Get everything in writing before you make a purchase and read all contracts carefully.
- If you preplan for yourself, share your wishes with those close to you.

Tips on how to avoid fraudulent Anti-Aging Products

- If it sounds too good to be true, it is!
- Contact the Better Business Bureau (BBB) to find out if there have been complaints about the product.
- Testimonials are often misleading.
- Be leery of products that “cure” things. Remember the old snake oil salesman!
- Always consult your health care provider before taking supplements.

Tips on how to avoid Telemarketing Fraud

- Watch for these warning sign phrases -
“free items...”, “low cost vacations...”, “you must act now...”,
“you must send credit card or bank account information..”, “you don’t need
written information...”
- Don’t buy from a comp any unfamiliar to you. If they want your business they will send you information including their address, phone numbers etc. Always check company with the BBB.
- Always ask for and wait until you receive written information before you send money to a charity. Check them out with the BBB.
- Don’t pay for “free prizes.”
- Never send out birthdays, social security numbers, bank numbers, or credit card numbers to anyone unfamiliar to you.
- Always think about what guarantee do I have that they are legitimate? How do I really know that they will do what they say they will do?
- Take time to make a decision, don’t be pressured.
- If you have been a victim, be wary of people who offer to help you recover your funds by paying in advance.
- REPORT ALL FRAUD!

Tips on how to avoid Internet Fraud

- Follow the same tips that you would use with telemarketing fraud prevention.
- Never give out personal information to any site unless you have checked them out with the Consumer Protection Agency, BBB, and State Attorney General’s Office etc.
- **Be leery of anyone whom you have met over the internet – many of them are not who they say they are!!!!!!**



*Information compiled from Federal Bureau of Investigation – *Fraud Target: Senior Citizens* at:
<http://www.fbi.gov/majcases/fraud/seniorsfam.htm>.

