



Everyone Plays a Part in Protecting Seniors from Scams

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Contact: Caleb Kulich, Public Information Officer, (608) 621-1290

caleb.kulich@wisconsin.gov

MADISON, Wis. – Ahead of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) calls on consumers of all ages to be aware of how scammers try to take advantage of older adults, and take action to protect their friends, families, neighbors, and community members from senior-targeting scams. Learning and talking with others about scam awareness keeps everyone safer.

Scammers try to steal from all consumers, but seniors lose the largest sums of money to scams. According to the Federal Trade Commission, of those who lost money to fraud in 2024, the median amount for consumers over age 70 was more than \$1,000, while the median amount lost for consumers younger than 60 was less than \$500. Although scammers will steal as much money and information as they can from anyone, they specifically target older consumers who often have more money in savings, may be less familiar with the latest technologies, could be isolated from family and friends, or could experience confusion resulting from medications and ailments – making them more vulnerable.

In addition, scams can be sophisticated and convincing. Some consumers have reported losing hundreds of thousands of dollars to different scams, including investment, romance, and government imposter scams. DATCP is always at the ready to help victims, but prevention is the best way to deal with scams and fraud. Consumers of all ages can do their part to protect seniors against devastating scams by following these five tips:

1. **Be Informed.** Members of the public, community groups and organizations, and businesses can request a free presentation about common scams targeting seniors and other topics on DATCP's website. Consumers can also sign up for the Wisconsin Consumer News quarterly newsletter and Consumer Alerts, and access various factsheets on different consumer topics – including the Wisconsin Consumer Guide.
2. **Plan Ahead.** Consumers should have proactive conversations with their friends, family members, and other older adults in their life about scams. Talk about scam strategies, how they would respond to scam attempts, and what to do if they think they have been scammed. Use strategies like setting up a family passphrase so family members can tell they aren't being impersonated, or limiting social media and video posts to just friends and family so a scammer cannot use voice cloning software to trick a family member.
3. **Stop and Think.** If asked for personal or financial information, or if threatened with severe consequences unless the scammer's directions are followed, stop to consider the scenario. Do not be pressured to take actions without pausing to think it through.
4. **Talk to Others.** Sometimes, we are too close to a situation to understand it clearly. Before acting, consumers should have a conversation with someone they trust or the Consumer Protection Hotline to get another perspective.
5. **Report It.** Consumers should not be shamed into hiding a scam; they should report it and share their experience. Sharing helps prevent others from being victimized and makes DATCP's Consumer Protection team aware of the latest scams and techniques being used in Wisconsin.

Visit ConsumerProtection.wi.gov to request a consumer protection presentation, access factsheets, or file a complaint. Contact the Consumer Protection Hotline at (800) 422-7128 or DATCPHotline@wisconsin.gov.

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