

# Fraud and scams against seniors

Begin the new year vigilant against fraud crimes



## 1. What are the different types of senior citizen fraud that are commonly occurring?

Scam categories that directly target the senior community are virtual kidnap (family emergency), IRS impersonation scam, charity/philanthropic scams, lottery scams and medical/prescription Rx scams. Fraud and scams are a growing global and societal problem with billions of dollars a year in losses incurred by seniors.

**Fraudsters and scam artists target the elderly to steal money, identities, and anything they can profit from.**

The [FBI's 2020 Elder Fraud Report](#) cites "common frauds affecting age 60+ victims".

These are listed as:

<b>Non-payment/ non-delivery, fraudulent products</b> <b>1.</b>	<b>Lottery/ sweepstakes/ Inheritance</b> <b>2.</b>	<b>Government impersonation</b> <b>3.</b>	
<b>Tech support fraud</b> <b>4.</b>	<b>Extortion</b> <b>5.</b>	<b>Confidence fraud/ romance scams</b> <b>6.</b>	<b>Investment</b> <b>7.</b>

Study these useful sources for additional insights and guidance to identify and disrupt any fraud attempts targeting you or your loved ones:

- [FBI: Common Scams and Crimes](#)
- [NCOA: Top 10 Financial Scams Targeting Seniors](#)
- [Senior Citizens Identify Theft Online Fraud Protection](#)

**2. What are five mitigation strategies senior citizens should use to prevent fraud from occurring?**

- a. “Just hang up!” Seniors should disengage from any suspicious calls or other unknown contacts promptly. The scammers are often skilled at interpersonal communication. They may successfully trick and defraud seniors if allowed to gain the victim’s attention and interest.
- b. Never assume that callers claiming to represent government authorities are legitimate. Anyone asserting that they represent the Social Security Administration, the IRS, Medicare or other such entity should be cautiously vetted.
- c. Avoid developing emotional attachments to unknown persons on the Internet.
- d. Regularly change your financial account passwords and PIN #s and use strong credentials to protect these. Never share this information.
- e. Be especially cautious of unsolicited phone calls, mailings, emails and door-to-door services.

**3. Do we see an increase in fraud and scams during the holidays? If so, can you provide examples of what types of scams that are becoming a national problem.**

Yes, the end-of-year holiday season brings with it an increase in seniors scamming activity. Criminals know that seniors are potentially vulnerable and more likely than others to be charitable, too. Package delivery text scams are becoming prevalent during gift-giving holidays. It is a phishing scam in which someone sends the target a malicious link by text message in which they claim to be a driver for a carrier company and are attempting to deliver a package. These fraudulent text messages contain a link which takes users to further false information and attempts to obtain personal information.

**4. What are some unique considerations for the senior living industry related to fraud and scams?**

Seniors may be caught up as victims in ongoing financial scams which have the potential to drain the resident’s finances. The industry must be cognizant of potential targeting as this tragic phenomenon is negatively impacting the elderly. Not only is educating residents the right thing to do but, by raising their awareness about scams and financial fraud, the Industry is sustaining its business and protecting its bottom line.

**5. How can senior living operators assist in preventing fraud and scams that affect seniors?**

Stay current on all guidance and resources provided by the U.S. Administration on Aging. Their Eldercare Locator can be found at [eldercare.acl.gov](http://eldercare.acl.gov); tel: 800 677-1116. Consider contacting your local office of

the FBI to request liaison and possible awareness presentations. Your insurance brokerage risk advisory partners may also have expertise and capabilities to assist you in educating and protecting residents.

**6. What is a confidence scheme?**

The FBI provides a useful definition of this sort of particularly meanspirited scam: “An individual believes they are in a relationship (family, friendly or romantic) and are tricked into sending money, personal or financial information, or items of value to the perpetrator or to launder money or items to assist the perpetrator.” These sorts of scams tug at the victim’s emotions and preys upon their kindness and perceived emotional needs.

**Scammers prefer telephone interaction with seniors as they can use their social engineering skills to glean information which helps them further their scam.**

**7. Can you give an example of a medical/prescription scheme?**

Scammers know that the elderly likely participate in Medicare. Therefore, the perpetrators may pose as a Medicare representative and make false claims about care, COVID-19 vaccinations, genetic testing and benefits to attempt to ascertain the victim’s personally identifiable information.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, issued a [December 2020 Fraud Alert](#) pertaining to COVID-19 scams. Seniors may raise their awareness to counter such threats by reading and becoming familiar with the bulletin’s guidance.

**8. How are scams conducted? By phone? Mail or Internet?**

Historically, seniors were predominantly targeted by phone calls. As older individuals now more often use technologies than in the past, many targeting attempts are coming forth over information systems. Keep in mind, that per the National Council on Aging, most cases of elderly scam victimization are carried out by perpetrators known to the victim. Scammers prefer telephone interaction with seniors as they can use their social engineering skills to glean information which

helps them further their scam. An example of this would be the hurtful Grandparent scam, in which the caller impersonates a grandchild and seeks money.

#### 9. How and to whom should a senior living provider report a scam when it involves a resident loss?

Contact the FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center, the Federal Trade Commission (does not resolve individual complaints but can provide guidance and reporting) and the respective Adult Protective Services Departments of State Attorneys General.

#### 10. What are the best educational resources for senior living operators to provide to their residents regarding scam mitigation?

Seniors are keen for awareness information which will assist them and their families in avoiding victimization. We found the [FBI's IC3 2020 Elder Fraud Report](#) to be user-friendly, easy to reference and very informational.

There are also numerous related videos available on YouTube which share case studies and helpful tips intended to assist seniors in better protecting themselves from fraudsters and tricksters.

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