## Scams-Continued

### The grandparent scam

Scammers will place a call to an older person and when the phone call is answered they will say something along the lines of: "Hi Grandma, do you know who this is?" When the unsuspecting grandparent guesses the name of the grandchild the scammer most sounds like, the scammer has established a fake identity.

The fake grandchild will usually ask for money to solve some financial problem. The money must be paid quickly and with certified funds.

***Don't give them anything. Call a parent if you are concerned.***

### Social Security Scams

A popular scam now with someone telling you that your social security number either needs to be verified (to steal S.S. #) or a payment must be made to prevent canceling of your Social Security Card without payment.

**You will never be contacted this way. Hang up.**

## Prevention of Scams

- Place yourself on the do not call list.
- Shred all receipts with your credit card number.
- Use direct deposit for benefit checks to prevent checks from being stolen from the mailbox.
- Never give your credit card, banking, Social Security, Medicare, or other personal information over the phone unless you initiated the call.
- Be skeptical of all unsolicited offers and thoroughly do your research.
- Don't buy from an unfamiliar company.
- Always ask for and wait until you receive written material about any offer or charity.
- Don't pay in advance for services; pay only after they are delivered.
- Be wary of companies that want to send a messenger to your home to pick up money, claiming it is part of their service to you.
- Always take your time making a decision.
- Never respond to an offer you don't understand thoroughly.
- Don't let anyone into your home without prior notification.

## Steps to take if you're a victim of a scam

If you think you've been scammed, don't be afraid or embarrassed to talk about it—waiting could only make it worse. Immediately:

- Call your bank and/or credit card companies.
- Cancel any debit or credit cards linked to the stolen account.
- Reset your personal identification number(s).
- If you have information about a fraud, report it to state, local, or federal law enforcement agencies.

**To report a scam or crime call: 619-531-2000**

### Resources

1. **AARP.com**
2. **National Council on Aging**
3. **FBI.gov**
4. **Federal Trade Commission**
5. **ELA (Elder Law Advocacy)**

**January 7, 2019**

The City *of* SAN DIEGO

**SAN DIEGO POLICE DEPARTMENT**

# Elder Scams and Prevention

This brochure contains information regarding the scamming of elders.

- **Elder Scams**
- **Scams and Prevention**
- **Steps to Take if You Are a Victim**
- **Reporting Elder Scams**

## ELDER SCAMS

**Seniors** today are more susceptible to scams than the general population.

- Senior citizens are most likely to have a "nest egg," to own their home, and/or to have excellent credit—which make them attractive to con artists.
- People who grew up in the 1950s were generally raised to be polite and trusting. Con artists exploit these traits.
- Older Americans are less likely to report a fraud because they don't know who to report it to, and are too ashamed.
- Senior citizens are more interested in and susceptible to products promising increased cognitive function, virility, physical conditioning, etc.

### Top Senior Scams

1. Medicare/health insurance
2. Counterfeit prescription drugs
3. Funeral & cemetery scams
4. Fraudulent anti-aging products
5. Telemarketing/phone scams
6. Internet fraud
7. Investment schemes
8. Solar Systems and Roofing
9. Homeowner/reverse mortgage
10. Sweepstakes & lottery scams
11. The grandparent scam

### Telemarketing Fraud

The most common scheme is when scammers use fake telemarketing calls to prey on older people, who as a group make twice as many purchases over the phone than the average.

Examples of telemarketing fraud include:

#### The pigeon drop

The con artist tells the individual that he/she has found a large sum of money and is willing to split it if the person will make a "good faith" payment by withdrawing funds from his/her bank account.

***Hang UP, what appears to be too good to be true it generally is.***

#### The fake accident ploy

The con artist gets the victim to wire or send money on the pretext that the person's child or another relative is in the hospital and needs the money.

***Hang up and call relative you know to verify. They won't.***

#### Charity scams

Money is solicited for fake charities. This often occurs after natural disasters.

***Before you give money to a charity, find out what percentage of the money actually goes to the charity. Do your research.***

### Internet fraud

While using the Internet is a great skill at any age, the slower speed of adoption among some older people makes them easier targets.

#### Pop-up browser windows

Simulating virus-scanning software will fool victims into either downloading a fake anti-virus program (at a substantial cost) or an actual virus that will open up whatever information is on the user's computer to scammers.

***Do not call phone number on the screen of the pop-up. In Windows, Press Control Alt Delete and Select Task Manager and Close Browser.***

#### Email/phishing scams

A senior receives email messages that appear to be from a legitimate company or institution, asking them to "update" or "verify" their personal information. A senior receives emails that appear to be from the IRS about a tax refund.

***Do not respond to requests to verify information. Call the company, bank or institution.***

#### Investment schemes

Because many seniors find themselves planning for retirement and managing their savings once they finish working, a number of investment schemes have been targeted at seniors looking to safeguard their cash for their later years.

#### Homeowner/Reverse Mortgage scams

Scammers like to take advantage of the fact that many people above a certain age own their homes, a valuable asset that increases the potential dollar value of a certain scam.

Closely related, there is the potential for a reverse mortgage borrower to be scammed. Scammers can take advantage of older adults who have recently unlocked equity in their homes. Those considering reverse mortgages should be cognizant of people in their lives pressuring