



News For Older Americans

Protecting Your Finances

(NAPSA)—You may be able to protect yourself, your friends and family from a serious, growing crime in America: elder financial abuse. It's estimated to have cost victims at least \$2.9 billion last year alone.

What To Look For

Spotting it can be difficult. Important signs to look out for include withdrawals from bank accounts or transfers between accounts the person can't explain, uncharacteristic attempts to wire large sums of money, altered will and trusts, suspicious signatures on checks or checks written as "loans" or "gifts."

What To Do

The American Bankers Association offers the following tips to avoid becoming a victim of financial abuse:

- Never give your Social Security number, account numbers or other personal financial information over the phone unless you initiated the call.

- Don't open e-mails from unknown sources and beware of any notice claiming you have won a lottery.

- Shred receipts, bank statements and unused credit card offers before throwing them away.

- Review your monthly accounts regularly for any unauthorized charges, even small ones. Some thieves hope small transactions will go unnoticed. Report these discrepancies immediately.

- Lock up your checkbook, account statements and other sensitive information when others will be in your home.

- Do business with companies



Carefully choose trustworthy people to act as your agents in all estate-planning matters.

you know are reputable. Check their references and credentials.

- If a stranger needs to send you payment for something, insist on a check for the exact amount. Never accept a check for more and wire the difference back.

- Never let someone pressure you into agreeing to loan terms before you've had a chance to review that person in writing with a trusted adviser.

- Report any unusual account inquiries you receive—whether by phone or e-mail—to your banker, who can take measures to protect your account and notify authorities.

Where To Get Help

If you have responded to a fraudulent e-mail, contact your bank immediately so it can protect your account and your identity. For information on identity theft, visit the American Bankers Association's Consumer Connection at www.aba.com.

You can also report suspicious activity to the Internet Crime Complaint Center, a partnership between the FBI and the National White Collar Crime Center, at www.ic3.gov/.