Scams Targeting Older Adults

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Keven Chavez, Public Information Officer

County of Los Angeles
Department of Consumer and Business Affairs
Congratulations!

One lucky winner of $5,000*!

* - To claim $5,000 prize, pay $500 taxes and fees.
Why are older adults vulnerable to financial abuse and scams?

- Isolation and loneliness
- Disability/impairment
- Trusting
- Lack of awareness of their consumer protection rights
Interesting Facts

• Older adult citizens own more than half of all the financial assets in the United States.
• Consequently the primary target for fraudulent practices.
  (City of Los Angeles study, April 2013.)

• The number of Americans over the age of 65 is expected to grow 60% by 2025.
• In Los Angeles County, the senior population is estimated to double to more than 3 million by 2030.

 (County of Los Angeles District Attorney information)
Elder Financial Abuse
What is Elder Financial Abuse?

The mismanagement of money, property, or other assets belonging to a senior (65 or older.) The perpetrator is usually a family member, close friend, or caregiver, which makes the abuse difficult to discover and hard to accept.

(County of Los Angeles District Attorney)
Why does it happen?

**Need or Greed**
- Abuser has financial problems
- Acts out of greed

**Opportunity**
- Abusers obtain elder’s money or property

**Sense of Entitlement**
- Abusers believe they “deserve” the money as the future heir
- Abuser believes the elder doesn’t need all their money.
Elder Financial Abuse: Mr. D

Real estate fraud victim, Mr. D., moves back into his once-stolen home.
Investigation leads to jail sentence in scam that took homes from elderly, infirm

Aguayo couple convicted on 26 felony counts, receive three years in jail for real estate scam

Updated Oct. 17, 2011

Jesus and Sofia Aguayo, a husband and wife team who ran a real estate scam, were recently convicted on 26 felony counts and sentenced to three years in county jail. The Aguayos were convicted on various charges such as conspiracy to file false tax returns with the Franchise Tax Board and false documents with various county recorder offices.

The Aguayos targeted senior citizens in a scam in which they gained title to over 100 homes in Southern California. After gaining illegal possession of the homes, the Aguayos rented out the homes to unsuspecting tenants, profiting thousands of dollars in rental income each month.

A civil case against the Aguayos is pending. The case was successfully prosecuted by the Attorney General's Office.

Original release from October 18, 2006

A year-long investigation by County of Los Angeles Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) investigators resulted in the arrests of a Monterey Park couple this morning by Agents from the California Department of Justice. The couple is accused of unlawfully taking possession of roughly 100 homes, many of which are owned by senior citizens. The elderly victims were often ill or living in a nursing facility. Some of the homes were vacant because the owners were dresses. The tenants rented at the properties and
Avoiding Elder Financial Abuse

L.A. County Treasurer and Tax Collector

ttc.lacounty.gov
(213) 974-2111

Third Party Reminder Notification
How to report elder abuse?

✓ Call the Los Angeles County Elder Abuse Hotline at (877) 477-3646.

✓ File a complaint with DCBA.
  • dcba.lacounty.gov
  • (800) 593-8222
to report financial abuse.
Telemarketing Fraud
Beware of the "Grandparent" Scam

➢ Calls late at night
➢ Claiming to be your grandchild
➢ Wire them money because they’ve been involved in accident or emergency.
➢ They sound convincing, perhaps using actual names of other relatives.
Beware of the International Lottery Scams

➢ Never agree to wire money to pay for the taxes.
➢ Keep your credit card and bank account numbers to yourself.
Beware of the IRS Phone Scam

IRS Warns of Pervasive Telephone Scam

WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service today warned consumers about a sophisticated phone scam targeting taxpayers, including recent immigrants, throughout the country.

Victims are told they owe money to the IRS and it must be paid promptly through a pre-loaded debit card or wire transfer. If the victim refuses to cooperate, they are then threatened with arrest, deportation or suspension of a business or driver’s license. In many cases, the caller becomes hostile and insulating.

“Tl was a hoax, about your debt and if you don’t make a payment, you will be arrested.” says IRS Acting Commissioner Danny Werfel. “Tl was a hoax, about your debt and if you don’t make a payment, you will be arrested.”

The scam is known as the IRS scam. It’s a scam that scammers use to dupe people into sending them money. Scammers often make phone calls saying they are from the IRS and that they have a warrant for your arrest if you don’t pay up. They then try to get your money by threatening you with a criminal investigation or court proceedings.

Other characteristics of this scam include:

- Scammers use fake names and IRS badge numbers. They generally use common names and surnames to identify themselves.
- Scammers may be able to recite the last four digits of a victim’s Social Security Number.
- Scammers spoof the IRS toll-free number on caller ID to make it appear that it’s the IRS calling.
- Scammers sometimes send bugs IRS emails to some victims to support their bogus calls.
- Victims hear background noise of other calls being conducted in a call center.
Beware of the One-Ring Scam

The area codes include:

- Antigua (268)
- British Virgin Islands (284)
- Dominican Republic (809)
- Grenada (473)
- Jamaica (876)
New Medicare Cards Without SSN

➢ Replacement card by April 2019.
➢ No longer shows your Social Security number.
➢ Instead, your card will have a new Medicare Beneficiary Identifier (MBI) that will be used for billing, eligibility, and claim status.
New Medicare Card Scams

Is Medicare calling?
- Medicare will not call to confirm payment information
- Never provide account information over the phone

Do not pay for a new Medicare card
- New Medicare cards will be provided automatically at no charge
- Anyone trying to collect payment for a new Medicare card is lying

Don’t pay the fee
- Benefits will not be changed due to the new Medicare card, do not pay a “fee” even if you are being threatened for not paying a “fee”
Reduce Unwanted Calls

Register with the Do Not Call Registry:
www.donotcall.gov
(888) 382-1222

Stops* telemarketers from calling you
(Exempts charities, political organizations, business you have a previous relationship)

Enforced by Federal Trade Commission
Tips to Avoid Scams

✓ Don’t have to make a decision immediately

✓ Be leery of anyone that asks for personal information over the phone

✓ Research the charity before you give. (OAG.CA.GOV)

✓ Just say “no thanks” and hang up the phone
Preventing ID Theft Online

Practice Safety Online

- Use strong passwords
- Use anti-virus software
- Don’t download risky software
- Pay with one credit card only
- Use secure websites: https://
- Be leery of wi-fi hotspots
Preventing ID Theft Online

Don’t use these common passwords

1. A notable date, such as a wedding anniversary
2. A family member’s birthday
3. Your child’s name
4. A family member’s name
5. Your birthplace
6. A favorite holiday
7. Something related to your favorite sport’s team
8. Pet’s name
9. 123456
10. The word “Password”

Source: time.com
Beware of email “phishing”

➤ Think before you click
➤ Don’t respond
➤ Call company directly
➤ Report problems immediately
➤ spam@uce.gov
Beware of Computer Repair Scams

Be leery of anyone who asks for remote access to your computer.
Preventing ID Theft at Home

Practice Safe Mail
✓ Remove your mail often
✓ Lock your mailbox
✓ Pay bills online
Stop Credit Card Offers

➢ (888) 567-8688
➢ OptOutPrescreen.com
➢ Reduces pre-approved offers
Preventing ID Theft at Home

Be Shredder Happy!

➢ Shred documents that have personal information
➢ Use a crosscut shredder
Preventing ID Theft Away from Home

Travel Light!

▪ Carry only what you need

▪ Keep a copy of your wallet’s contents

▪ Report problems immediately
Preventing ID Theft - Recap

Safeguard Your Information

- Your home, car, office
- Strangers
- People you know
- Relatives
- Be smart on your smartphone
Preventing ID Theft – Credit Reports

Review your credit report

- Free copy from each agency each year
- Free copies anytime if victim of ID theft
- Make sure information is accurate
- (877) 322-8228
- AnnualCreditReport.com
Resolving ID Theft

If you are a victim:

Close the problem accounts
- “Red-flag” your accounts
- Follow-up with a letter

File an “Identity Theft” incident report
- File a police report
- Keep a copy for your records

Put a “fraud alert” on your credit report
- Equifax.com (800) 685-1111
- Experian.com (888) 397-3742
- TransUnion.com (800) 680-7289
Freeze Your Credit Report

- Best protection if you won’t need credit soon
- Can remove temporarily, permanently
- Stops access to your credit history
- Free for those 65 years or older
- $10 for people younger than 65
- Free, if a victim of ID theft
Our Mission

“To promote a fair and vibrant marketplace, we serve consumers, businesses, and communities through education, advocacy, and complaint resolution.”

Serving Los Angeles County consumers and businesses since 1976
What We Offer

- Free Services
- Experienced staff
- One-on-one assistance
- Strong working relationships with other government and non-profit agencies
- Complaint Resolution Services
- Open to all Los Angeles County Residents
Our Services

Consumer Counseling
Small Claims Advisors
Mediation
Foreclosure Prevention
Complaint Investigations

Minimum Wage Enforcement
Center for Financial Empowerment
Office of Small Business
Office of Immigrant Affairs
Counseling and Information

- Interview consumers and assess complaint
- Identify applicable laws, resources
- Counsel consumers on rights, responsibilities
- Review “Best Options” with consumers
- Refer consumers to right agency if appropriate
- Take consumer complaint for mediation or investigation
Complaint Investigation

- Investigate allegations of fraudulent acts
- When necessary, work with law enforcement and prosecuting agencies
- Assist consumers in getting their money back
# CONTACT US

## IN PERSON

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Headquarters</th>
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<tr>
<td>500 W. Temple St. B-96</td>
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<td>Los Angeles, CA 90012</td>
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Branch Offices throughout the County, full list on our website: dcba.lacounty.gov

*No appointment needed*

## By Phone

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<th>Consumer Services</th>
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<tr>
<td>(800) 593-8222</td>
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<td>Small Business Services</td>
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<td>(323) 881-3964</td>
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*Multilingual Staff Available*