

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE GRANDPARENT SCAM

According to the Federal Trade Commission, the agency received more than 400,000 complaints in 2016 from consumers reporting they were victims of impersonation scams. One of the most common is called the “Grandparent Scam,” which uses impersonation tactics to deliberately target and exploit older Americans.

To commit this crime, fraudsters call claiming to be a family member in serious trouble and in need of money immediately. The scammer might say he is stranded or has been mugged and call in the middle of the night to add to the urgency and confusion. Once the money is sent, the victim later finds out that it wasn't their grandchild they were helping, it was a criminal.

Before you make a move that might cost you thousands, it's extremely important that you confirm who you're actually speaking with before you act, because chances are it's not your grandson Johnny you're on the phone with, it's a scammer.

Here are four tips to help seniors avoid being victims of the grandparent scam:

- **Confirm the caller.** Fraudsters are using social networking sites to gain the personal information of friends and relatives to carry out their crimes. Verify the caller by calling them back on a known number or consult a trusted family member before acting on any request, even though they asked you not to tell their parents.
- **Don't be afraid to ask questions.** Fraudsters want to execute their crimes quickly. In this type of scam, they count on fear and your concern for your loved one to make you act before you think. The more questions you ask the more inclined they will be to ditch the scam if they suspect you're on to them.
- **Never give personal information to anyone over the phone** unless you initiated the call and the other party is trusted.
- **Never rush into a financial decision and trust your instincts.** Don't be fooled—if something doesn't feel right, it may not be right. Feel free to say no and get more information before you send money to someone.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau reports that elder financial exploitation is the most popular form of abuse perpetuated against older Americans, with annual losses ranging from \$2.9 billion to \$36.48 billion.