

14 Tips for Stopping Elder Financial Abuse in its Tracks

Every year, millions of seniors fall victim to financial fraud. [Studies](#) show elder financial abuse costs seniors approximately \$2.9 billion each year. In recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15, American Bank is urging older customers and their trusted caregivers to safeguard all personal information and stay alert to the common signs of financial abuse.

Fraudsters often prey on seniors experiencing cognitive decline, limited mobility and other disabilities that require them to rely more heavily on others for help. Appointing someone you know and trust to handle your financial matters aids tremendously in the fight against these crimes.

American Bank is offering the following tips:

- **Plan ahead** to protect your assets and to ensure your wishes are followed. Talk to someone at your financial institution, an attorney, or financial advisor about the best options for you.
- **Carefully choose a trustworthy person** to act as your agent in all estate-planning matters.
- **Lock up your checkbook**, account statements and other sensitive information when others will be in your home.
- **Never give personal information**, including Social Security Number, account number or other financial information to anyone over the phone unless you initiated the call and the other party is trusted.
- **Never pay a fee or taxes to collect sweepstakes** or lottery “winnings.”
- **Never rush into a financial decision.** Ask for details in writing and get a second opinion.
- **Consult with a financial advisor or attorney before signing** any document you don’t understand.
- **Get to know your banker** and build a relationship with the people who handle your finances. They can look out for any suspicious activity related to your account.
- **Check references and credentials before hiring anyone.** Don’t allow workers to have access to information about your finances.
- **Pay with checks and credit cards** instead of cash to keep a paper trail.
- **You have the right not to be threatened or intimidated.** If you think someone close to you is trying to take control of your finances, call your local Adult Protective Services or tell someone at your bank.

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If you believe you are a victim of financial abuse, be sure to:

- **Talk to a trusted family member** who has your best interests at heart, or to your clergy.
- **Talk to your attorney**, doctor or an officer at your bank.
- **Contact Adult Protective Services** in your state or your local police for help.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day was launched on June 15, 2006 by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and the World Health Organization at the United Nations.

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