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## SENIOR TEXANS

# Fraud Videos: Protecting Seniors from Financial Exploitation

Financial exploitation comes in many forms, ranging from employees, caregivers and even family members who take money and property from the elderly without permission, to con artists who wheedle and trick financial information, checks and cold cash from trusting seniors. Employees who deal directly with seniors in banks are uniquely positioned to detect and prevent financial abuse of this kind.

Attorney General Ken Paxton recognizes the excellent work of bank employees who have gone the extra mile to protect senior Texans. He is also urging all bank employees to look out for senior customers who may be vulnerable to financial exploitation. You can help! On this page we provide information about situations where an alert teller, or other bank employee could intervene to protect a senior customer.

## Four Common Scenarios

In each of the four situations described below, a senior customer is in danger of falling victim to financial exploitation. For each scenario, we have provided a short video clip to illustrate how the situation may appear to the bank employee, and how the bank employee could intervene to help.

*The Texas Attorney General's Office is grateful to the Oregon Department of Human Services, the Oregon Attorney General's Office and the Oregon Bankers Association for making these excellent video clips available.*

**Scenario 1:** A senior may be swindled or defrauded into making large cash payments for bogus investments or to claim non-existent prizes or "winnings" from sweepstakes or lotteries.

## Scenario 1



### Video clip for scenario 1

In scenario 1, the teller does not intervene. While you must honor the customer's wish to withdraw his or her money, you may wish to print out and have available our [Senior Alert](#) (PDF) on phony lotteries, cashier's checks and sweepstakes.

**Beware: The lottery scam has evolved.** Scammers are now sending the victim a phony cashier's check to cover the "taxes and fees." The counterfeits are authentic looking and some bank tellers have been tricked into telling the victim that the check is good. The victim then lets down his or her guard, believing that the whole thing is real. After all, they reason, they have the money in hand. So the victim deposits the fake check and immediately sends the "taxes and fees" by wire transfer. When the bank discovers the check is worthless, the victim's money is gone and the victim may even be liable to the bank for a balance of money sent to the crook.

If a senior customer is being swindled by a foreign lottery and you cannot persuade him or her that the lottery is a scam, call our office immediately at (800) 252-8011.

*Scenario 2: Someone may gain access to a senior's financial information, credit or debit card, or checkbook, and may withdraw or spend money without the senior's knowledge or permission.*

## Scenario 2



Video clip for scenario 2

*Scenario 3: A senior may be intimidated or bullied into withdrawing money for another person, or allowing that person to use credit cards or checks.*

### Scenario 3



Video clip for scenario 3

*Scenario 4: A companion, caregiver or other person may take advantage of a senior's confusion to gain control of the senior's financial affairs and to gain access to the senior's cash and other assets.*

## Scenario 4



[Video clip for scenario 4](#)

## How Tellers Can Help

Front-line employees in banks can help. We urge you to:

**Get to know your older customers.** Get acquainted with their banking habits and make note of their family members and caregivers or companions who often accompany them to the bank.

**Be aware of some of the scams targeting the elderly.** A list is provided below.

**Be observant when helping older customers** or processing transactions on their accounts. Look for some of the red flags that signal possible financial exploitation of a senior.

## Red Flags

Be alert for signs that may indicate financial exploitation. These include:

- A transaction performed by someone other than the account holder, especially by a caregiver or relative, when you do not have confirmation that the senior is aware or has given permission.
- A senior may seem afraid of his or her companion. Be alert for signs of intimidation or hesitancy to speak up or answer questions.
- A senior may seem confused, or may show little understanding of a transaction. A companion may speak for the

senior or prompt the senior's responses.

- A senior may wish to withdraw an unusually large amount of cash, or may even try to borrow money. Or a senior who has been financially secure and prudent may suddenly be spending what seems to be an excessive amount of money.

## Report Possible Exploitation

When you suspect financial exploitation, report it to Adult Protective Services at (800) 252-5400. If you think a senior could be in immediate danger from another person, alert your bank's security and call the police.

Know your bank's protocol for possible interventions that could save an elderly customer from robbery or worse.

Possible interventions include:

- Call the senior at home to make sure he or she is aware of a transaction that another person is attempting to make. Or, if the person claims to have a power of attorney, ask to see the relevant legal documents.
- Be sure to speak to the senior customer directly. If the senior appears to be intimidated or hesitant to speak up, arrange to speak to the senior alone, if possible.
- Ask a few questions of the senior directly if you think it is possible he or she does not understand a proposed transaction. Make sure the customer has a basic idea of the consequences involved in any decision involving a large amount of money or control of financial assets.
- Ask a few questions to try and ascertain why a senior customer would be withdrawing uncommon amounts of money. Be ready with information about common scams such as foreign lotteries, bogus sweepstakes and cons.

## Scams That Target Seniors

Scams against seniors come with every imaginable kind of made-up stories and details. For many, the bottom line is: If you have to give someone money (or confidential financial information) to get money, you should beware! Some common scams:

**Foreign lotteries** are notorious for sending seniors announcements and also calling them on the phone to say that they have won fabulous sums of money. The catch is, the "winner" is asked to wire money for fees and taxes. No legitimate lottery or sweepstakes collects money up front from winners. The request for cash, in any form, is a dead giveaway. Remember, the scammers are now sending counterfeit cashier's checks to make the scam more believable!

**Identity crime** is not just a problem for the elderly. But seniors are especially vulnerable because they may be dependent on caregivers for help with banking, shopping and paying bills. Using another person's credit card, check or financial information to steal money out of that person's account is a felony offense.

We frequently hear of **home repair** scams that target seniors. Unscrupulous door-to-door salesmen will sometimes start work without permission or out-right lie about the need for work and/or the cost of materials and labor. Bill collection tactics used to collect on some of these jobs (which sometimes have not even been actually performed) can sometimes border on strong-arm robbery.

The "**Pigeon Drop**" is one of the oldest cons in the book, but it still works. A con artist tells the victim that he or she has found a large sum of money. On some pretext (again, details vary), the con asks the elderly person to withdraw money from his or her own account. A hallmark of the classic pigeon drop is the appearance of a second con, pretending to be a trustworthy stranger who may also be posing as a lawyer or banker.

# The Bottom Line

As a banking professional, you can make a difference! Help us to protect senior Texans from fraud and financial exploitation.