Senior Scams – Frenchtown Community Center, Monroe

Event Date: May 21, 2024

Topic: Senior Scams

Attendees: Local residents, seniors

NOTE: This event is only 45 mins, and folks may have questions

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- Michigan Department of Attorney General does lots of things, sees over 40,000+ cases each year.
- One of the most important things we do is Consumer Protection.
  - **Frank Kelley starts CP Team** to make sure DAG represents not just the state of Michigan, but also the people of the state of Michigan.
  - Reviews over 11,000 complaints each year + responds to every one of them.
  - We can investigate your case, if the evidence is there we can prosecute and try to get you indemnified. But **the best thing we can do is teach you to recognize the signs of a scam** so you never fall victim in the first place.
- Why do scammers **target seniors?**
  - Trusting, taught to answer calls and open doors.
  - Isolated, may not have someone to contact to verify things.
  - May not be as tech savvy.
  - $$$, life savings/nest egg + regular social security checks.

- Scams change with the season, but **bad actors will always be looking for: personal OR financial information.**
    - Manufactured urgency or secrecy
    - Believable stories
    - Unusual payment methods
- **Spoofing:** scammers can make it look like they're calling from any number. Don't trust your caller ID.
    - With new AI tools, they can make it sound like anyone too.
    - Hang up and call back at the number you know is correct, or have a code word with family members so you can check when they're actually having an emergency.
    - Robocall Task Force
- **Smishing:** like spoofing, but for emails (texts are "smishing").
    - Don't click on unsolicited links. It may download **malware**. It may give scammers access to your device.
    - Hover over an email address or URL, and it will show where it actually intends to direct you.
- **Online shopping scam:** the algorithm knows what you want and will feed it to you. That does not mean those incredible offers are real.
    - You may have to wait forever for shipping.
    - You may get a subpart product
    - They may just steal your information and run.

- If you see an ad on social media for a product you'd like to purchase, look up the vendor independently (read the reviews) and order directly from their site.

- Neither the **IRS nor the Social Security Agency** will ever call, email, or text you to get into contact with you. If they need to reach you, they will send a letter by snail mail. They know where you live.
- **Check fraud** is becoming such a prolific issue post-pandemic that banks are recommending that you do your banking online if possible.
  - Seen multiple communities with significant issues; my check was stolen, as was one of my parents'.
  - Not sophisticated criminals – selfie stick and gum.
  - If you need to mail a check, drop it off inside the mail office.
  - Set up positive pay (especially for business owners).
- If you need work done on your house, make sure that you **find someone who is licensed that your insurance agency will cover.**
  - Michigan.gov/LARA
  - Get everything in writing.
  - Don't pay cash.
  - Pay 1/3 up front for materials, 2/3 when they've made significant progress, and that final 1/3 only when you are satisfied and inspected – because once you complete payment, you may never see that construction crew again.

- For people looking for love in all the wrong places, stay safe when using **online dating apps.**
    - There is no guarantee that someone is who they say they are.
    - If someone asks you for money/gifts at the outset of a relationship, it's not going to be a healthy relationship.
    - Don't go over to someone's house the first time you meet them. Don't go out at night alone. Meet somewhere public, preferably mid-day.
- You will never win a **sweepstakes** you haven't entered, and entering sweepstakes only leads to more sweepstakes offers.
- **Data breaches** are becoming more prolific. You can't live without these services (cell phone carrier, hospitals, etc). It's not a matter of if your information will be compromised, but when.
    - 34 other states have reporting requirements so businesses have to let their customers and the state AG know if there's been a breach. Michigan doesn't.
    - Take advantage of free credit monitoring services offered in the wake of a breach.
        - Good habit to get into to check your credit report at **AnnualCreditReport.com every week for free**.
    - Use different passwords for different accounts. Use a tool to create a strong password. Change them regularly (like a smoke detector). Use two-factor-authentication for added protection.

- If you are the victim of identity theft, contact the **Michigan Identity Theft Support System** to help restore your good name.
- God-willing we'll all be seniors someday. When that time comes, we all deserve to be treated with dignity and respect – no more, no less.

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