



Spring Break Checklist: Swimsuit. Sunscreen. “Grandparent Scam” Plan.

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MADISON – Spring break sends students all over the globe looking for adventure, creating an ideal opportunity for scammers to target these travelers’ families through “grandparent scams” (also known as “family emergency scams”). In these operations, a scammer calls potential victims impersonating a desperate grandchild in need of money due to an emergency and asks for the money to be sent immediately, typically by wire transfer.

Before leaving for vacation, students and their families should have a pre-trip chat about the threat of these scams and have a plan in place.

“When a doting relative falls for the ploy, they often fall hard – thousands of dollars can be lost before the victim grows wise to the operation or a financial institution cuts off the transactions,” said Frank Frassetto, Division Administrator for Trade and Consumer Protection. “Having a family plan in place before a spring break trip can help mitigate this risk, saving loved ones from being targeted in their absence.”

A family plan should consist of:

- A detailed travel itinerary that includes contact information for any booked accommodations or transportation services
- A plan for regular, quick check-ins from the traveling student
- A code word or phrase that would be expected in any true emergency call (and an expectation that any emergency call is fake unless that word or phrase is used)
- Open family communication to verify the safety of the student.

“When DATCP hears from consumers who received a similar threatening call but avoided being ripped off, the consumers almost always note that they reached out to another contact or called the student directly to verify their safety, despite the scammer’s demand that they keep the call secret. One follow-up call is all it usually takes for the entire scam story to unravel,” said Frassetto.

DATCP offers these additional tips for recipients of these fraudulent calls:

- Resist the pressure to act immediately.
- Do not wire money or provide your bank or credit card account numbers.
- Do not give out any personal information or confirm anything that is told to you.
- If you cannot reach a family member and still are not sure what to do, call the Bureau of Consumer Protection or your local police on their non-emergency line.
- Remember that this scam is not exclusively dependent upon the grandparent/grandchild relationship – scammers could also claim to be a niece or nephew or a family friend.

For additional information, visit the Consumer Protection Bureau at <http://datcp.wi.gov>, send an e-mail to datcp hotline@wisconsin.gov or call the Consumer Protection Hotline at 1-800-422-7128.

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