



Does Grandma Know About DATCP?

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Editor's Note: Grandparents Day is Sunday, September 8th.

MADISON – Grandparents Day is coming soon, and it is the perfect time to sit down and catch up with those you love. It is also a chance to check in with your older relatives to see if they have been targeted by fraudsters or identity thieves and to share some information about the latest scams. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) can help.

“Many criminals key in on the senior population for their scams and identity theft ploys, and sharing your knowledge is the best way to protect your friends and family members,” said Lara Sutherlin, Administrator for the Division of Trade and Consumer Protection. “If your older relatives are not aware that DATCP is here to answer questions about scams and identity theft risks, let them know to reach out to us for free guidance and resources about these issues.”

An ideal way to start a conversation with older relatives is by sharing a copy of DATCP’s senior scams bookmark, available by contacting DATCP’s Consumer Protection Hotline (800-422-7128 or datcphotline@wi.gov). The bookmark provides a quick look at the main scams that target seniors and offers simple tips to spot fraud.

For a more thorough resource, consider sharing a copy of The Wisconsin Senior Guide. This free booklet helps seniors navigate tricky consumer issues and provides a detailed look at a wide range of scams and identity theft risks. The Wisconsin Senior Guide is available on the [DATCP website](#) or can be ordered by contacting the Consumer Protection Hotline.

Finally, sign your relatives up to receive DATCP’s consumer protection news releases by email or text message. This will give them notice of warnings from the agency regarding the latest scams circulating in Wisconsin.

Some of the common scams targeting seniors include:

- Grandparent scams (or “family emergency” scams) – a scammer falsely claims that a family member is in trouble and requests money. The scammers often claim to be a grandchild in need of help.
- Tech support scams – a “computer technician” says you have a computer virus that they can repair in exchange for a payment and remote access to your computer.
- Timeshare resale fraud – someone claims that they have a buyer for your timeshare. After signing a phony “sales contract,” the victim is continuously asked for payments for document fees and other expenses.
- Social Security Administration (SSA) scams – a fake SSA representative tells you that you are at risk for arrest or that your Social Security number may no longer be valid.
- IRS/U.S. Treasury scams – a fake “federal agent” claims you owe back taxes and demands immediate payment.
- Medical alert/equipment fraud – scammers place robocalls to potential victims pitching “free” medical equipment and personal emergency alert systems. The items are often of questionable quality and are tied to recurring fees.

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- Romance scams – a phony online love interest asks repeatedly for money.
- Prize/lottery fraud – a scammer claims that you have won a major prize but must pay them (repeatedly) for taxes or fees.

Many scams and identity theft traps are similar in what they are seeking but rely on different narratives to draw in their victims. By recognizing the warning signs, seniors can protect themselves from a wide range of rip-offs. Review these simple tips with your relatives:

- Never wire money or give the account number and PIN code from a prepaid gift or money card to someone you don't know. These payment methods are like handing over cash – the chance for recovery is slim to none.
- Don't trust your caller ID. Scammers "spoof" the information to appear as a local number.
- Never engage with an unsolicited sales robocall. Taking any action may cause you to get additional calls. Hang up.
- Never provide personal information like your Social Security number or bank/credit card account numbers on an unsolicited call.
- Always check with a friend or family member before you act on a high-pressure sales pitch.

For more information about fraudulent activities targeting older citizens, visit the Consumer Protection Bureau at <https://datcp.wi.gov> or contact the Consumer Protection Hotline.

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