

“Phishing” for Your Money

Phishing is an attempt to get you to provide your personal and financial information to unauthorized people and organizations.

Unsolicited usually means unwanted:

- If you do not recognize an email address, do not open the email.
- Never provide your account password in response to an email request.

Don't get hooked by Phishers:

- Do not be intimidated by suggestions that a failure to respond will end in dire consequences or missed opportunities.
- If you do fall victim to a phishing attack, protect yourself! Contact your financial institutions and place fraud alerts on your credit report.
- Report suspicious emails to your Internet service provider.

Insurance Rights for Mississippi Seniors

An insurance policy is a contract between the seller, an insurance company, and the buyer. A very important rule of thumb is, “If it isn't in writing, it doesn't exist.”

Some of the consumer rights to look for in a policy are:

- Free look period
- Guaranteed renewable
- Premium waiver
- Restoration of benefits

Health Insurance Fraud

How to avoid becoming the next victim:

- Read all materials and websites carefully.
- Carefully investigate any plan that advertises unusually low premiums and/or unusually generous benefits.
- Make sure that your insurance agent is selling you a state-licensed insurance product.
- Be suspicious if your agent or the marketing material says that the plan is covered only by "stop loss insurance" or that the plan is an "ERISA" plan or "union" plan.

Medicare:

Medicare is the federal government program that gives you health care coverage if you are 65 or older, or have a disability, no matter what your income.

Eligibility:

- Must be a U.S. citizen or have been a permanent legal resident for 5 continuous years
- Must be sixty-five (65) years old
- Are under 65 years old receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) for at least 24 months
- Get continuing dialysis for permanent kidney failure or need a kidney transplant; or you have Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS – Lou Gehrig's Disease).



For more information call the
Attorney General's Office at
601-359.6766

For a more extensive
**Resource Guide to Combating
Senior Financial Abuse in Mississippi**
visit our website at:
www.agjimhood.com

Printing Courtesy of:



Jackson Metro Office

Phone: 601-926-1181 or 1- 866-507-8484

Gulf Coast Office

Phone: 228-818-6110 or 1-800-311-0855

Hattiesburg Office

Phone: 601-261-2114

Southaven Office

Phone: 662.536.0911



Resource Guide for Combating Senior Financial Abuse in Mississippi



Examples of Elderly Abuse and Financial Exploitation

- *Eva, age 84, paid \$500.00 for each trip the caregiver drove her 19 miles to town for grocery shopping.*
- *Lyle, age 73, put his grandson's name on his bank account to pay Lyle's bill. The grandson withdrew all of Lyle's savings, \$55,000, without Lyle's permission and lost it in a business deal.*
- *Charles, age 91, never knew he had an ATM card until he did not have enough money to pay his bills. His daughter used a Power of Attorney to take out an ATM card on his account, which she used to shop for herself.*

Warnings Signs of Financial Abuse

- Frequent, expensive gifts from an elder to a caregiver.
- Personal belongings, papers, credit cards are missing.
- Bills start to stack up and are not paid, often leading to shut off notices.
- A recent will is made when the person doesn't seem capable of writing a will.
- A caregiver's name is added to the bank account or credit cards.
- The elderly person is unaware of his or her monthly income.
- There is an increase in the number of checks made out to "cash".
- There are irregularities on tax returns.
- Someone sells assets and properties.
- There is unusual or erratic activity in the bank account that is uncharacteristic of the account holder.
- The elder is unaware of the reason for an appointment with their banker or attorney.
- Caregiver refuses to spend money on the older person including grooming items and food.

Protecting Yourself from a Scam

You've probably heard it said many times, "If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is." Not bad advice, but how can you tell the difference between a genuine offer that would be good for you and a trap set by a con artist?

Telemarketing Scams

Your telephone is one of the easiest ways for a con artist to get your money. These scams may start with a postcard promising cash and prizes if you call a toll-free number. When you do, a friendly voice asks for your credit card number to "verify" your identity. Then the high-pressure tactics begin to convince you to buy merchandise.

Some tips to avoid being taken by telemarketing scams:

- Do not give out personal information over the phone.
- Never pay for a prize over the phone.
- Never allow a caller to pressure you into acting immediately.
- Tell telemarketers to stop calling you every time they call.
- Never agree to any offer until you have seen it in writing.

Door to Door Solicitors

If a stranger rings your doorbell, be prepared to do the following:

- Ask the salesperson for his/her license to solicit.
- Compare the offer with other similar products.
- Watch out if you are told that you have been selected to use a product free of charge.
- Get everything in writing.
- Read and make sure you understand anything you sign before you sign it.
- Keep good records for your protection.

Mail Fraud **You're a WINNER!**

Your mailbox is a perfect means for con artists to trick you. Mail may arrive in the form of postcards, fancy color brochures, envelopes with official-looking seals, letters of endorsement, even government seals copied to look real.

If you receive requests for any of the following, be suspicious and check it out!

- DON'T RESPOND if a company asks for money or for credit card numbers
- Give yourself time to check out whether the offer is legitimate.
- Check the name carefully to make sure the organization is legitimate.
- When you are notified that you have won a prize or will receive something of value, you cannot be required to pay any money. This includes fees, postage, handling charges or taxes.

Working From Home

To avoid work-at-home rip-offs:

- Be suspicious of companies that promise a regular market or steady income.
- Don't pay for information about work-at-home offers.

Identity Theft Protecting Your Good Name

- Guard your social security number.
- If your social security number is requested, ask what law requires you to give your number and what will happen if you do not give the social security number.
- Watch your credit card activity by examining your statements for fraudulent charges before paying them.
- Shred old bank statements and other important documents you may have.
- Don't keep your social security card, extra credit cards, or other important identity documents in your wallet or purse unless they are specifically needed.
- Deliver your bill payments instead of mailing them.

Ways to protect your home from predatory lenders

There are ways you can protect yourself against losing your home to unscrupulous lending practices. They are:

DON'T

- Agree to a home equity loan if you don't have enough income to make the monthly payments.
- Sign any document you haven't read or any document that has blank spaces to be filled in after you sign.
- Let anyone pressure you into signing any document.
- Agree to a loan that includes credit insurance or extra products you don't want.
- Let the promise of extra cash or lower monthly payments get in the way of your good judgment about whether the cost you will pay for the loan is really worth it.
- Deed your property to anyone. First consult an attorney, a knowledgeable family member, or someone else you trust.

HELPFUL RESOURCES AND CONTACTS

AARP Mississippi State Office
6360 I-55 North, Suite 160
1-800-554-5382
www.aarp.org/states/ms

**Mississippi Office of the Attorney General
Consumer Protection Division**
P. O. Box 22947
Jackson, MS 39225-2947
(601) 359-4231
1-800-281-4418
www.agjimhood.com

Federal Trade Commission
Identity Theft Hotline
1-877-438-3448
www.consumer.gov/idtheft

**Mississippi Department of Human Services
Division of Aging and Adult Services**
750 North State Street
Jackson, MS 39202
(601) 359-4929
1-800-948-3090
www.mdhs.state.ms.us