

Protect the Elderly from Scams, Old and New – COVID-19

Updated 5/4/2021

AVOID CORONAVIRUS AND OTHER SCAMS – FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION CONSUMER INFORMATION

- Beware of government imposters targeting loved ones of COVID-19 victims offering help paying for funeral expenses. The Federal Emergency Management System (FEMA) has started a program to pay up to \$9,000 for funeral expenses for loved ones who died of COVID-19 but FEMA will not contact you until you have contacted them first.
- Don't respond to texts, emails or calls about checks from the government.
- Ignore online offers for vaccinations and home test kits.
- Hang up on robocalls.
- Watch for emails claiming to be from Centers for Disease Control (CDC) or World Health Organization (WHO).
- Do your homework when it comes to donations.

TIPS FROM THE BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU TO AVOID BECOMING VICTIMS OF CORONAVIRUS VACCINE SCAMS

- Don't share your COVID-19 vaccine card on social media.
- Know your region's plan for rolling out the vaccine.
- Guard your government-issued numbers such as your Medicare ID, Social Security Number and health plan information.
- Don't click on an unsolicited text or email.

CONSUMER TIPS FROM THE NEBRASKA ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE

- Seniors may be targeted more because they are perceived by scam artists to have more free time, a willingness to talk, or may be more trusting.
- Be direct, rude if you have to. Don't be afraid to hang up the phone or shut the door on unwanted solicitations.
- If someone calls claiming to be affiliated with Medicare/Medicaid in order to provide you with Coronavirus-related benefits, it's a scam. Hang up and report the imposter at 1-800-Medicare and [ftc.gov/complaint](https://www.ftc.gov/complaint).
- Never pay money upfront to collect a prize.
- Beware that wiring money is just like sending cash. Once you send it, it is gone for good. The same applies to sending money using prepaid cards.
- On landline phones, strengthen Caller ID with the addition of at least two calling features Anonymous Call Rejection (*77) and Selective Call Rejection (*60). Virtually all telephone carriers offer these services free or for a nominal additional fee. On mobile phones, use built-in features, carrier-provided features, and third-party call-blocking apps to stop unwanted calls.
- Order your free credit report at least once a year through www.annualcreditreport.com. During the COVID-19 pandemic, accessing your credit report is important. That is why Equifax, Experian and TransUnion are continuing to offer free weekly credit reports.
- Call law enforcement immediately if you think you have been victimized.

NEBRASKA LONG TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

If you are concerned about the safety and well-being of a spouse, parent, or other loved one who lives in a nursing home, contact the Nebraska Long Term Care Ombudsman.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, State Unit on Aging	402-471-2307
Area Agencies on Aging:	
- Aging Partners (Lincoln)	800-247-0938
- Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging (Omaha)	888-554-2711
- Northeast Nebraska Area Agency on Aging (Norfolk)	800-672-8368
- Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging (Beatrice)	888-989-9417
- Midland Area Agency on Aging (Hastings)	800-955-9714
- South Central Nebraska Area Agency on Aging (Kearney)	800-658-4320
- West Central Nebraska Area Agency on Aging (North Platte)	800-662-2961
- Aging Office of Western Nebraska (Scottsbluff)	800-682-2961
Adult Protective Services	800-652-1999
Nebraska Long Term Care Ombudsman Program	800-942-7830
Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) (Medicare & Medicaid Fraud)	877-808-2468
Nebraska Attorney General's Consumer Division	800-727-6432
Better Business Bureau	800-649-6814
National Do Not Call Registry	888-225-5322
Federal Trade Commission	877-382-4357
Free Credit Report	877-322-8228
Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC)	844-843-6364
Opt-Out (Protect your credit by opting out of prescreened credit & Insurance offers)	888-567-8688

USEFUL WEBSITES

DHHS, State Unit on Aging	https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Aging-Legal-Services.aspx
Nebraska Association of Area Agencies on Aging	www.nebaaaa.org
Nebraska Attorney General's Consumer Website	www.ProtectTheGoodLife.nebraska.gov
Nebraska Long Term Care Ombudsman Program	https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Aging-Ombudsman.aspx
National Do Not Call Registry	www.donotcall.gov
Better Business Bureau	www.bbbnebraska.com
Federal Trade Commission	www.ftc.gov
Free Annual Credit Report	www.annualcreditreport.com
Mail and Email Preference Service	www.DMAchoice.org
Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC)	https://nebraska.arounja.org
Opt-Out (Protect your credit by opting out of prescreened credit and insurance offers)	www.optoutprescreen.com
DHHS COVID-19 INFORMATION LINE 402-552-6645	www.dhhs.ne.gov/coronavirus