

Be Aware of Summer Scams Before You Become a Victim

Summertime for many means relaxing, taking in the sun, and going on vacations. However, for unsuspecting elderly, it is also a time when scammers take action.

Every year, news organizations write about so-called summer scams. These include driveway paving ploys, re-roofing rip-offs, mock meter-readers, counterfeit care providers, fake sweepstakes, and many more. What people need to know, according to Amanda LeGars, Protective Services Supervisor at the Clearfield County Area Agency on Aging, Inc. (CCAAA), is how to protect themselves and their assets.

LeGars said the heartbreaking truth is “If it happens once, it tends to happen again.” So how can people – both young and old – keep on the lookout for swindlers? LeGars said people should ask questions and not disclose personal or banking information. If a member of the CCAAA is visiting an elderly county resident, they generally notify the person of the impending visit. If a representative visits without an appointment, the person should call the CCAAA to verify the person’s identity and employment with the Agency. “If they’re suspicious or if you’re apprehensive, all you need to do is call,” LeGars added.

The same would apply for utility workers or salesmen, such as water, electric or television, visiting the home of anyone – elderly or not. Their employer should be able to verify their identity and the purpose of their visit. If you still don’t feel right, don’t let them in your home and call 911. CCAAA staff have seen many scams in which a scammer falsely identifies themselves as being from a certain company or organization just to engage the person in a conversation. Another person will then enter the home undetected and take money, belongings, or prescription medication.

LeGars also advises people to be cautious when picking up their prescription at the pharmacy or visiting your local bank. They should pay special attention to who knows what is in their bag or in their

wallet. Everyone, she says, can help to make sure that elderly people do not fall victim to these and similar crimes.

“The best thing you can do is check on your older neighbor or family member. You can always call CCAAA if you feel there is a problem,” LeGars said, noting that in the warmer months, people tend to be outside more often.

Just last year, LeGars said the Older Adult Protective Services division of CCAAA received close to 300 reports. Many of those involved financial exploitation of the elderly by relatives. One of the most recent scams involves an elderly person receiving a phone call from a grandchild or relative indicating that they have been arrested and need bail money. Another scammer, acting as a law enforcement official, will get on the phone to “verify” that the relative is being detained and to instruct the person on where to send the money. The scammer’s intent is to obtain money and personal information from the victim. Even if the caller sounds legitimate, confirm information by having the supposed family member provide information only that person would know.

Remember to never provide personal information, banking information, or even your Medicare numbers to anyone requesting this information via the phone, email, etc. without verifying if the person is legitimate.

“Our goal at the Area Agency on Aging is to assist people to remain safely at home for as long as they can,” LeGars added. “If you or someone you know believes he or she is being exploited or the victim of a scam, please call the Agency at (800) 233-0249. This line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.”

For additional information on the Clearfield County Area Agency on Aging, Inc. please visit their website at www.ccaaa.net or call the Agency at 765-2696.