



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**November 26, 2018**

## **Five Tips to Avoid the ‘Grandparent Scam’**

*How to Protect Yourself from Scams during the Holiday Shopping Season*

**Harrisburg, PA** – The holidays are a time for reconnecting with family members, near and far. Unfortunately, it can also be a time when scam artists prey on your family’s emotions to make a quick buck.

As you begin reaching out to your family members to make travel arrangements and plans to gather, Secretary of Banking and Securities Robin L. Wiessmann and Secretary of Aging Teresa Osborne want to remind Pennsylvanians of all ages to be aware of the latest twists in the “Grandparent Scam” and offers tips on how to avoid being a victim.

“With the holiday season upon us, scam artists will undoubtedly increase their efforts to take advantage of individuals – particularly senior citizens – preying on emotional connections to commit fraud,” said Wiessmann. “We urge all citizens across the commonwealth, regardless of age, to exercise serious caution before sending any money across state or international borders.”

The typical version of the scam involves a senior citizen receiving a call from someone claiming to be their grandchild who is in serious trouble and needs their grandparent to send money very quickly without conferring with any other family members or authorities. The success of the scam hinges on the recipient’s sense of familial obligation and willingness to help, along with the pressure of the request requiring immediate action.

“Every year older Pennsylvanians are targeted by scammers and con artists who attempt to steal money by exploiting grandparents’ love for their grandchildren,” said Osborne. “The Wolf administration urges all Pennsylvanians to be on the alert for this scam and encourages seniors, in particular, to follow our tips and never hesitate to simply hang up the phone if you receive a call demanding money be sent right away.”

Osborne also notes that older adults often do not realize they have been scammed or do not know who to report it to. In other cases, they may be too ashamed or embarrassed to report it, in part because they worry that their relatives or friends will think that they no longer have the mental capacity to take care of their own financial affairs.

Some new twists on this scam have arisen over the last year, including:

- [Targeting parents](#) rather than grandparents
- Requesting money be sent to a [bonding company](#)

- Personalizing the scam through information about the victim and their family members available online and through social media, such as this grandparent who needed her grandson to serve as a [pallbearer at a family funeral](#)
- Requesting [cash be mailed](#) rather than wire transferred

Wiessmann and Osborne point to steps you can take to protect yourself from being the victim of the “Grandparent Scam”:

- **Don’t send money right away.** A hallmark of financial scams is the pressure to act quickly, but the truth is there are few, if any, “emergencies” that require thousands of dollars and would require your immediate action.
- **Contact your family member using a known phone number.** End the call with the scammer and contact your family member with a known telephone number, not a number given to you by the person calling.
- **Communicate with your family.** Share your travel plans with your family members and ask that they share theirs with you. If you have a grandchild traveling abroad, be sure to have a legitimate phone number where they can be reached.
- **Ask a question only your family member would know.** Talk to the caller and ask them about details only your family member would know. A name of a childhood pet, a birthday present, or a detail about the last time you saw them in person can all be good ways to determine if this person is actually known to you. Be careful not to use something a scammer could find out about you or your family member online.
- **Don’t share too much information.** Scam artists are notorious for researching their victims online. Be cautious when posting personal information on social media like Facebook and advise your family members to do the same.

The Department of Aging encourages any person who believes that an older adult is being financially exploited to file a confidential report with any [Area Agency on Aging](#). You can also call the statewide abuse hotline at 800-490-8505.

Anyone can contact the Department of Banking and Securities at 1-800-PA-BANKS or 1-800-600-0007 to ask questions or file complaints about financial transactions, companies, or products. Members of the public are also invited to connect to the department through [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), or [subscribing](#) to the department’s newsletter.

**Tomorrow:** “Three Steps to Protect Your Smartphone from Fake Banking Apps”

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