

Three  
**STARTLING** Truths  
About  
**SENIOR FRAUD**



By Diana Beam



## Three Startling Truths About Senior Fraud

Eliminating the losses to seniors from frauds, scams and other abuses would be a wonderful development, wouldn't it? But with startling statistics like a recent study from U.S. True Link Financial stating that the overall cost of senior fraud is more than 12 times previous estimates, reaching more than \$35 billion, it doesn't sound like that is a wish that is going to come true any time soon.

In 2012, seniors aged 60 and older constituted a full 26% of all fraud complaints tracked by the Federal Trade Commission. That is the highest number in any age group.

### **Startling Truth No. 1**

#### **The Elderly are Prime Targets Because of Who They Are**

It is expected that by the time people have reach retirement age, they have some money set aside, a nest egg, for their golden years. That is the first reason the elderly are targeted. But the reasons they are easily separated from that money is important to know. Your aging loved ones are victimized because they have been socialized to be targets. There are three main traits seniors possess that make them *vulnerable*.

### **1. They are polite.**

Manners prevent them from taking actions that could save them. It's rude to hang up the phone or shut the door in the face of a solicitor. Polite people listen patiently to what others have to say without interrupting. And, then, as the caller continues to push, they don't know how to handle the fact that the caller will not take no for an answer. So they usually cave in and say yes – just to end the conversation.

### **2. They are caring.**

Seniors have lived a long time and know that life is full of struggles and sad situations. They know that a gift of money is sometimes the turning point turning a bad situation around. Likewise, mistreated animals, children and women are particularly alarming to seniors because they know how it feels to be vulnerable. They know these groups need help and they are generous and caring and want to help. They don't take the time or make the effort to determine whether the need being presented is true and real, or whether the organization is legitimate. So they make a donation.

### **3. They are lonely.**

Many seniors slow down and prefer to stay at home, especially the older they get. Spouses die and the isolation from people and activities means they become isolated, and perhaps become depressed.

When the phone rings or there is a knock on the door, there is someone to talk with and so they do. Inadvertently they share personal information and details that are valuable to bad guys.

Often, when authorities investigate senior fraud, some version of the comment, “he was such a nice boy” is one of the first statements made by elderly victims.

Delightful conversations lead to opening up, the memories, the vital information and the wallet.

## **Startling Truth No. 2**

### **Fraud is Progressive**

Even legitimate charitable organizations are taking a page from fraudster’s practices – because they work. Swindles are not always single events. In fact, the majority are not. The majority are progressive.

The first “donation” made by your aging parent may be for a small amount like \$5 or \$10. Once that first bit of money is paid, the scammer keeps coming back to the same well. Each time they ask for a larger amount. As time goes by, the amounts continues to go up and up. And, the periods between requests gets shorter and shorter. What might start as an annual donation becomes a quarterly donation and then a monthly donation.

While the loss of a single \$20 donation might not seem important or significant, the U.S. True Link Financial study found that seniors who had lost \$20 or more to financial exploitation then went on to lose an average of \$2,000 a year to other scams over the next five years.

That is because once a shark finds a school to exploit, others come to join the feast. Which leads to Startling Truth No. 3, but before we go there, you need to be aware of one more step in the progression of faster and more donations.

The golden egg is scheduling a regular deduction from a checking account or a charge to a credit card. Once that information is obtained, it isn't long before the accounts are attacked. Savings are drained and credit cards are stolen and used for purchases.

You know what follows that? All out identity theft. Seniors don't have the time to recover from identity theft that can leave them financially bereft.

### **Startling Truth No. 3**

#### **Swindlers Make it a Habit**

This Truth is really a scary issue for the elderly and their families. In part because it is *legal*. It is not a crime, but it is abuse.

Simply, swindlers sell a product and charge exorbitant fees for shipping and handling. A relatively worthless item is shipped at a low price, but the cost to get the item to their residence is high. Now, this might seem insignificant and easy to ignore a single loss of \$20 on a piece of junk. But if the practice becomes a habit, then the swindler is racking up profits in the fees.

The key is that the item purchased is not exactly a piece of junk. It's not something of exceptional value, but it's not going to get tossed right into the trash, either.

If the purchases are set up as a subscription or regular monthly shipment, the senior gets used to getting the item and doesn't cancel it. And then, the senior is approached for more purchases. Pretty soon packages are arriving daily or at least weekly and the fees are draining the fixed income budget.

Your aging parents may get defensive if you ask about the spending on all these new items and tell you how cheap it is. Check into the costs for shipping and handling to see how "cheap" it really is.

## **So What Can You Do to Protect Aging Family Members?**

You know you can't be with your aging family members 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Even if they live with you or nearby, they want to be independent and will take phone calls and make their own decisions. And maybe even tell you it isn't any of your business.

*Keeping In Touch Solutions* Founder, Diana Beam, recognized the problem of protecting elderly family members from frauds, scams and swindles when someone close to her was victimized. As caregiver to several aging relatives, it was another worry she didn't need. So she developed *Senior Fraud Alert*.

*"I didn't realize how many phone calls I was getting from people wanting me to donate to supposed charities. I gave lots of money and my bank information away before. Now that I have *Senior Fraud Alert* I think maybe I had been conned before! No more! Thank for helping me out." – Ruth, 72; retired nurse*

Diana made the program easy for seniors to manage and for loved ones to monitor. For sure subscribers appreciate the peace of mind that comes from a reasonably priced, easy-to-follow process.

## **Here's how *Senior Fraud Alert* works**

Seniors receive a package which contains a script to follow informing a caller that someone else helps them with all their financial decisions. Therefore, if they have a request, they should call their advisor at another number, which the senior provides the caller. The number provided is actually a Keeping *In Touch Solutions* phone line.

The staff talks with the caller and if it is a legitimate request or service (usually only legitimate organizations will call the extra number), that information is then forwarded to the family.

The senior receives several stickers with the referral phone number to put near the telephone and a magnet for the refrigerator also with the referral number.

## **Two BIG benefits to *Senior Fraud Alert***

1. Using Senior Fraud Alert, family caregivers are able to help their elderly family members be selective on the donations given or purchases made.
2. By monitoring these transactions it makes decisions mindful and prevents development of bad habits to protect personal and financial well-being.

*"My husband, Jerry would give away the store to all these people calling us. But once I got him going with Senior Fraud Alert program, I don't have to worry about it. In fact, he started saying, "Another one bites the dust!" every time he hangs up after one of those call. It's kinda funny, but I'm really glad about it." –Suzanne, 81; Still married to a kind-hearted (but smarter) guy*

*Senior Fraud Alert* is offered by *Keeping In Touch Solutions*. It is available in several levels of service, all in a monthly subscription format. *Senior Fraud Alert*, like the entire family of services at KITS, is very reasonably priced, easy and convenient to use. Learn more about *Senior Fraud Alert* on the services page at the website, [www.KeepingInTouchSolutions.com/services](http://www.KeepingInTouchSolutions.com/services).

No one should live being worried about being swindled. Whether you are concerned about your own personal financial security or the security of an aging loved one, *Senior Fraud Alert* is the solution you need.



**Get the protection you need! Visit and subscribe today!**