



NEWS RELEASE

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Grandparent Scam Continues to Target South Dakota Seniors

PIERRE, S.D. – Attorney General Marty Jackley is again warning South Dakota seniors that the grandparent scam has resurfaced targeting all parts of the state. The Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Office has received 8 reports in just 2 days from those being hit hard with this scam. It has been confirmed that three individuals have given cash ranging from \$17,000 to \$145,000.

“This is a plea from your Attorney General to talk with friends, neighbors and coworkers to make sure they are checking on the seniors they know and care about to discuss this scam,” said Jackley. “The scammers are making a relentless number of calls and use threats and fear to swindle cash quickly.”

The scam begins with a telephone call from someone claiming to be a grandchild or other family member and requests money for a critical situation such as legal proceedings, theft of their personal belongings or medical conditions.

Consumers need to be aware that the scammers are getting better at targeting their victims by the use of the internet and social media - they are doing their homework to make the call sound more legitimate. Some calls have multiple scammers on the line impersonating the “grandchild’s” attorney. The “attorney” indicates that they have already made an agreement with a judge and all they are waiting for are funds to be received in order for the grandchild to be released. One senior received a call, telling her there was a gag order in place and if she spoke to anyone regarding the matter her grandchild would be prosecuted.

In the past these scammers would insist on a wire transfer. The current reports involve the victims sending cash, wrapped in paper, and sent via a shipping company. With the holiday season and packages being sent daily, there is less attention to this method of shipping. Scammers also know that the weather is colder and more likely to find seniors at home. It is a scam of opportunity.

Tips to avoid becoming a victim:

- Ask several personal questions including something that only a grandchild would be able to answer like a nickname, name of a family pet or special family tradition. This will help determine if this is a fraud or not.

- Independently contact the grandchild or parent of the grandchild the scam artist is claiming to be at a known phone number.
- Do not fill in the blanks for the caller. If the caller says, “This is your granddaughter,” ask “which one?” or “where are you calling from?” The caller is looking for answers that will assist them in the scam.
- Be cautious if the caller asks you to not tell anyone else, like the parents, because he or she will get in trouble. It is all part of the scam.

If you believe the call is fraudulent then contact your local law enforcement agency. Those who have already sent money should contact the Consumer Protection Division at 1-800-300-1986 or by email at consumerhelp@state.sd.us.