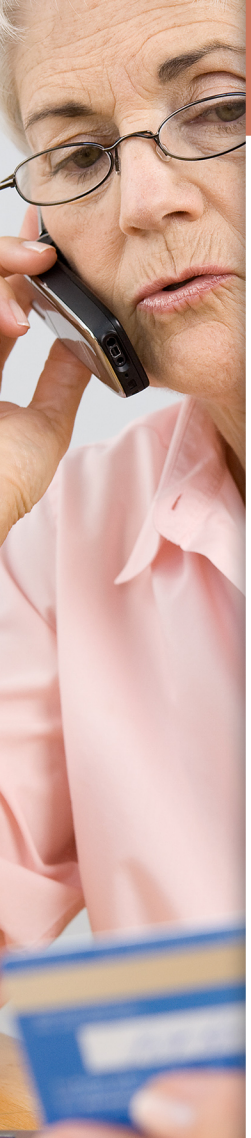

HOW TO AVOID "THE GRANDPARENT SCAM"

Grandparents will do almost anything for their grandkids. Don't let criminals impersonating your grandkids take your money.

In a "grandparent scam," you get a call or an email from someone who claims to be your grandchild. The caller says there's an emergency and asks you to wire money immediately. The "grandchild" claims he or she has gotten into some kind of trouble: for example, they have been in an auto accident, have been mugged, need money for bail or must pay customs fees to get back into the United States from another country. The scammer says, "Grandma/Grandpa, can you please help me? But don't tell Mom or Dad." **Beware**—there's a good chance this is an imposter trying to take your money!

Scammers will often try to trick you into providing information that helps them impersonate your grandchild.

Typical conversation:

You receive a phone call from someone who greets you with, "Hi, Grandma."

You: "Hi."

Scammer: "Do you know who this is?"

You: "Jeremy?"

Scammer: "Yes, Grandma, this is Jeremy!"

Without knowing it, you supplied the scammer with the name of a grandchild. The scammer proceeds to impersonate your grandchild and asks you not to tell other family members until it's too late.

If someone calls, emails or sends a text message claiming to be a family member or a friend desperate for money, take the following steps.

Stop: Verify the emergency! Don't keep it a secret!

- Resist the urge to act immediately, no matter how dramatic the story.
- Verify the person's identity by asking questions that a stranger couldn't possibly answer.
- Call the family member at a phone number that you know to be genuine.
- Check the story out with someone else in your family or circle of friends, even if you've been told to keep it a secret.
- Don't wire money or send a check or money order by overnight delivery or courier.

Report this type of call or any strange unsolicited calls asking you to send or wire money to the Illinois Attorney General's Senior Citizen Consumer Fraud Hotline at 1-800-243-5377.

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