



Elderly Exploitation

- Joey Thacker

New River Valley Community Services

What is Exploitation?

- Exploitation means taking advantage of an elderly or disabled person's vulnerability to deprive them of their rights.
- This person may be physically, psychologically, socially, economically, or culturally vulnerable.

Types of Elderly Exploitation

- Investment schemes
- Tech support fraud
- Romance scams
- Impersonation scams
- Caregiver exploitation
- Abuse

Investment Schemes

- **Ponzi Schemes:** In this scheme, operators pay "returns" to earlier investors using money from new investors, rather than actual profits. The underlying investment often doesn't exist, and the scheme collapses when the flow of new money slows. (Bernie Madoff)
- **Pyramid Schemes:** Participants make money primarily by recruiting new members, not by selling legitimate products or services. These schemes require an exponential increase in participants and are unsustainable in the long term. (Vemma Energy/Weight Loss Drinks)

Tech Support Fraud

- **Unsolicited phone calls:** A scammer calls you, claiming to be from a company like Microsoft or your internet provider, and says they have detected a problem with your computer.
- **Malware:** They might trick you into downloading software that is actually malware or spyware.
- **Pop-up warnings:** A fake, alarming pop-up appears on your screen, often with loud sounds, claiming your computer is infected with a virus and directing you to call a phone number.

Romance Scams

- In romance scams, a criminal uses a fake online identity to gain a victim's affection and trust. The scammer then uses the illusion of a romantic or close relationship to manipulate and/or steal from the victim.
- Scammers often claim to be abroad, military, or in a crisis to gain trust and ask for money for emergencies, investments, or travel.

Romance Scams:

What to
look for...

- Quick, strong professions of love (fate)
- Asking to keep the relationship secret from the rest of the family
- Asking for money for plane flights, bus tickets for travel to see them
- Canceling trip after getting the funds
- Asking for funds via prepaid cards or online currencies

Impersonation Scams

- **Impersonating authorities:** Scammers may pose as law enforcement or government officials, claiming you owe fines, have unpaid taxes, or have violated a law. They often threaten arrest or suspension of benefits unless you pay immediately.
- **Impersonating businesses:** Fraudsters might impersonate tech support, a delivery company, or a bank, sending fake invoices for services you never used or claiming there's a problem with your account. They may claim to be from a specific company, like AIG or Geek Squad, to appear more legitimate.
- **Grandparent Scams:** Scammers contact an elderly individual claiming to be a grandchild who needs funds for an **urgent** matter.

Caregiver Exploitation

- **Financial exploitation:** This is one of the most common forms, involving the illegal or improper use of an individual's money, property, or assets.
- Abruptly changing financial documents like wills or a sudden transfer of assets to a family member or someone outside the family.
- Forging signatures on checks or documents, unauthorized withdrawals from bank accounts, and using an individual's identity to open new credit accounts.
- Theft

Abuse

- **Physical or emotional abuse:** This can involve physical harm, or emotional torment through threats, humiliation, and manipulation.
- **Neglect:** This occurs when a caregiver fails to provide for the basic needs of the person in their care, such as food, shelter, medication, or medical care, even when resources are available.



Local Trends

- Jury Fraud
- Scammer requesting **gift cards**
- Scammer requesting **Bitcoin** or similar payment platforms (Hard to track)
- “I think if the elderly knew that if they’re asked to get a gift card, it’s a scam, then our frauds would plummet.”

Example



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

IN THE GENERAL DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE CITY OF RICHMOND

Case No: VA-26-TR-273196 Judge: John Smith

NOTICE OF HEARING — TRAFFIC VIOLATION

You are hereby notified that you are alleged to have committed the following violation within Richmond, Virginia:

Violation: Parking Violation / Failure to Pay Electronic Toll

Authority: Virginia Code § 46.2-819.3 and applicable local traffic ordinances

Related Authority: Virginia Code § 46.2-1220 et seq.

It is alleged that the operator or registered owner of a motor vehicle committed a violation related to parking regulations and/or failed to pay an assessed electronic toll in accordance with applicable Virginia law and municipal traffic enforcement regulations.

You must:

- Appear for a hearing on the date and time listed below; **OR**
- Resolve the matter by payment of the assessed fine, toll, civil penalty, and authorized court costs prior to the hearing date.

HEARING LOCATION

Richmond General District Court
400 North 9th Street
Richmond, VA 23219
(804) 646-6667

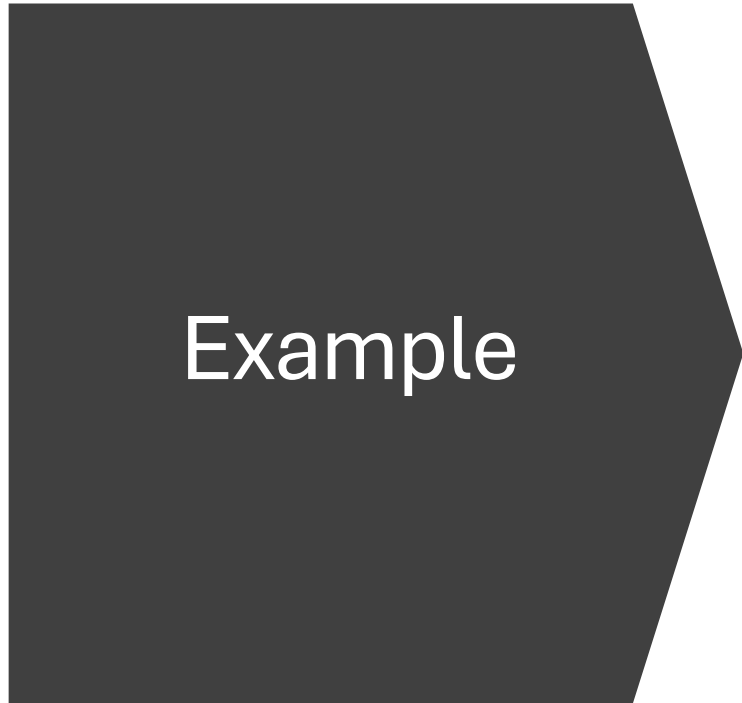
HEARING DATE & TIME

March 17, 2026
9:00 AM

Scan the QR code
to settle your unpaid balance;



John Smith
Clerk of the Court
Richmond General District Court
City of Richmond, Virginia



Example


+1 (437) 991-8864 ›
Text Message • SMS
Today 11:18 AM



Urgent Notice
Please Check
Attachment




BRAQR

 **USR981.pdf**
PDF Document • 16 KB

If you did not expect this message from an unknown sender, it may be spam.

[Report Spam](#)

+ Text Message • SMS 



Example

Narrows Police Department Incident





Statistics and Impact

- Many scams go underreported or not reported at all.
 - Only 1 in 14 scams that target the elderly are reported
- Elder financial exploitation costs older adults over \$30 billion annually.
- The trauma of abuse leads to an accelerated deterioration of physical/mental health and a higher risk of premature death.

What do we
do??

- Maintain regular contact with the older adult through visits, phone calls, and video chats to help them feel safe and build trust, and to help you spot changes.
- Keep an eye on financial transactions for unusual activity. Set up alerts for account activity
- Make sure all computer anti-virus and security software and malware protections are up to date. Use reputable anti-virus software and firewalls

What do we do?

- Ensure legal documents like a durable power of attorney and/or medical power of attorney are up-to-date. Appoint a trusted contact for accounts to provide a point of contact for financial institutions.
- Be wary of caregivers or others who discourage contact with family, pressure financial decisions, or ask for large sums of money.

Things to do...



- Be supportive
- “Google” common scams with the family member
- Show them this PowerPoint
- Set up account controls and notifications
- Multi-factor authentications

The Hard Talk...

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- Having a talk with your elderly family member can be difficult
 - This requires empathy, regular, and non-condescending conversation
 - Focus on empowering them by explaining how scams work
 - Use facts over lectures to help explain the intricacies of scams

What to talk about

- Red Flags
- Not trusting anyone over the internet
- Stop and Verify
- Common scams
- Support systems

Bad...

“How could you?”

“You need to stop.”

Good...

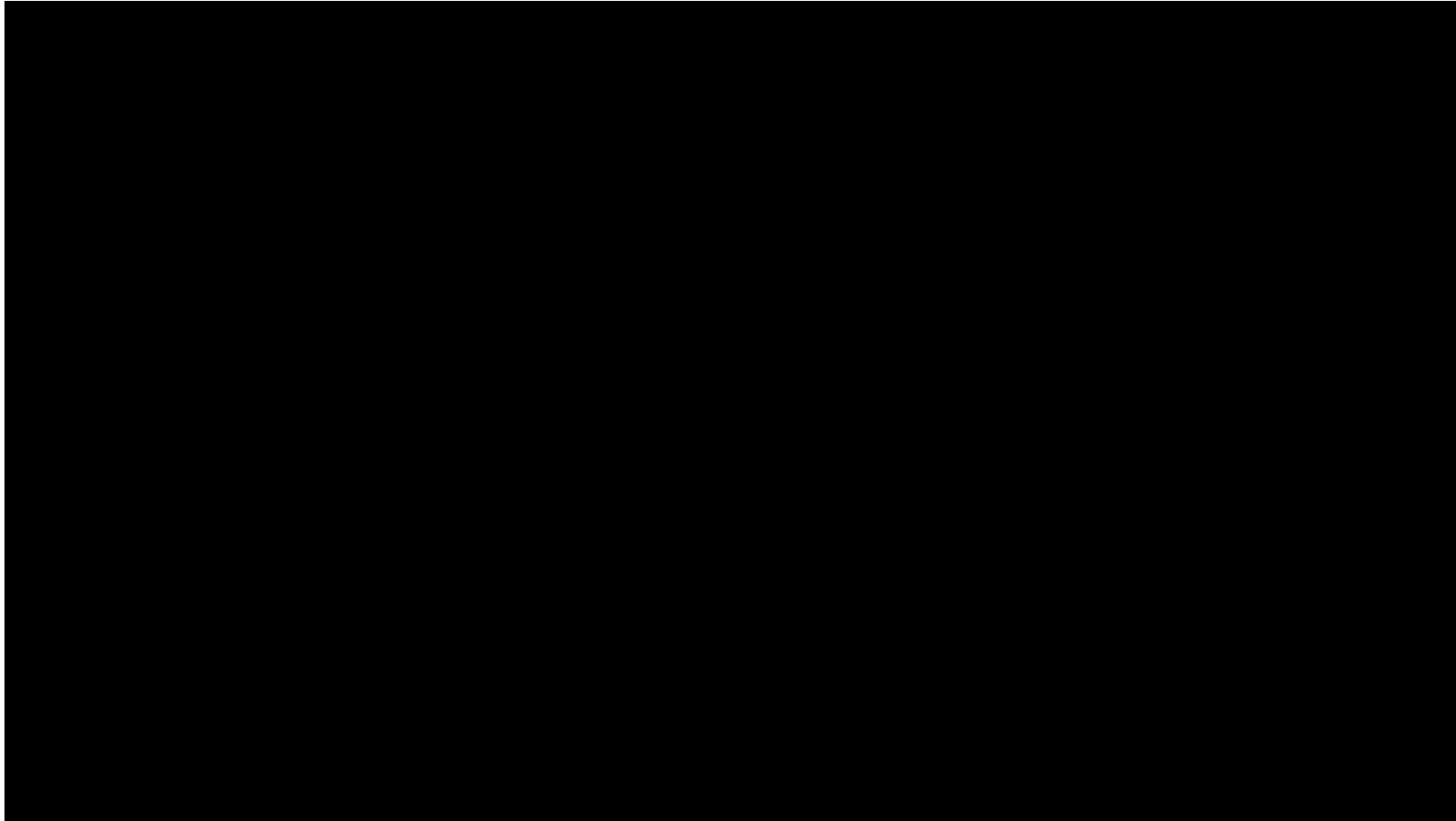
“I love you, and I'm worried because this person seems to be causing you loss. Can we talk about it?”

“I heard about a new scam, and it made me think of some things we should watch out for.”

If the worst happens...

- **Be caring and supportive**
- **Act Fast**
- **Break Contact with scammer**
- **Contact the social media platform that you first met the scammer on**
- **Change usernames and/or passwords**
- **Notify Law Enforcement**

Dr. Regina Koepp



Conclusion

- There are many ways that the elderly are being targeted by scammers.
- Many of these scams are preying on the lack of practical/technological knowledge of the elderly.
- We can limit loss by educating the elderly on the newest trends used by scammers.

Questions?

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