**Protect older adults from costly scams**

Criminals are more sophisticated than ever with how they target older adults, and many of the most heartbreaking scams start with a fake emergency involving a grandchild. These scams work because they play on emotions and instinct. Fraudsters count on grandparents’ desire to help their families, and they use urgency and fear to cloud judgment.

That’s why bankers are encouraging families to talk openly with elderly relatives about common scams and how to handle them, especially around World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15.

**Know the red flags and educate relatives**

One of the most common scams involves a phone call from someone pretending to be a grandchild – or claiming to be with law enforcement or a hospital calling on the grandchild’s behalf. The message is typically urgent, saying someone is hurt, arrested or stranded and needs money right away. These calls often come with instructions to stay on the phone, not tell anyone else, and send money fast.

Scammers will do everything they can to make the story seem real. Some use fake caller ID to make it look like the call is coming from a police department or medical office. Others may use tools to impersonate a grandchild’s voice.

Let elderly relatives know that any request for secrecy or urgency is a red flag. Remind them to hang up and call the number they know to verify before acting. It’s the safest way to confirm whether a call is real.

**Use a family password to stay ahead**

One smart way to guard against scams is to establish a family password – a unique word only trusted family members know. Pick something random, such as “butterscotch,” and use it regularly when calling or texting with grandparents. That way, if a scammer ever calls pretending to be a grandchild, your loved one knows to ask for the password. If the caller doesn’t know it, the call should end immediately.

It’s not always easy to spot a scam in the moment, especially when emotions are high. But by preparing ahead of time and setting some ground rules, you can help keep the people you care about safe.

**About the Iowa Bankers Association**

The Iowa Bankers Association represents Iowa banks and savings institutions. Iowa bankers are committed to the values of honesty, hard work and community service, and have been a trusted resource for Iowans for more than 135 years. Iowa banks offer FDIC insurance and lend nearly $88 billion to help individuals, business owners and agriculture. Nearly 40,000 Iowans work at an Iowa bank, and bank employees volunteer more than 300,000 hours to support local communities each year. To learn more, visit [www.iowabankers.com](http://www.iowabankers.com/).