

Special Alert: Please be Aware of Scams/Frauds During COVID-19

While most of us are working together to help each other and our communities during this time of need, please be aware there are scammers who are taking advantage of the stress and confusion being created by the COVID-19 virus. Here are a few COVID-19 scams that appear to be targeting members of our community, particularly seniors and other vulnerable populations:

Coronavirus Vaccine Scams

Scammers are calling people claiming to have a vaccination or preventative drug against the virus. They are requesting over-the-phone payments from people to reserve a dose.

Please **ignore online or telephone offers regarding vaccinations**. Please refer to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website at [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) for up-to-date information about when a vaccination for the coronavirus will be available for public use and how it can be accessed.

Investment or Research Development Scams

Scammers are calling inviting people to invest in companies that are allegedly researching and developing a vaccine against the virus.

Do your research before sending any money to anyone. If an investment opportunity sounds too good to be true, it is!

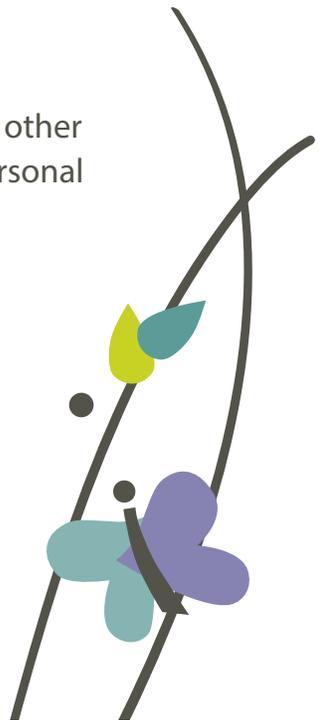
Government Assistance Scams

The Federal Trade Commission is warning about potential scams related to fees or other charges associated with collecting government assistance and attempts to get personal information.

Do **not** give out your personal information to anyone over the phone. If you are unsure if the caller is legitimate, ask for their contact details and inform them you will call them back. Check in with a trusted friend or loved one if you are unsure.

Home Sanitation Scams

Seniors are reportedly being targeted with phone or online offers to have their homes cleaned and sanitized, requesting that payment be made in advance. Do not give any prepayment for services. Do not give any financial information over the phone.



N95 Masks and Personal Protective Equipment

Scammers are reportedly sending out emails offering this equipment for sale at exorbitant prices and requesting prepayment.

Do not provide payment to anyone from an untrusted source. Remember that it is important to reserve masks and protective equipment for our healthcare providers working on the front line of this crisis. Remember that you can protect yourself by staying at home and limiting your exposure to groups of people. If you feel you are in need of an N95 mask, do your research and thoroughly explore your options.

Dangerous Websites/Email Blasts

There are reports of increases in fake websites and emails with harmful attachments claiming to sell products that cure or prevent coronavirus, or which claim to have preventive tips or fake information about confirmed cases.

Do not open links from untrusted sources. Watch for emails purporting to be from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) or the World Health Organization (WHO). Many of these scamming websites will have web addresses that end in ".int" rather than the more common ".com", ".gov", or ".org."

Remember that most of us are treating each other with kindness and support during this challenging time. Please use extra caution when you receive phone calls, emails, or inquiries requesting you to share any kind of personal information or financial information. Ask family or friends if you are unsure about the legitimacy of a request or a caller.

If you do suspect a scam report it to the North Carolina Attorney General's consumer hotline toll-free within North Carolina at **1-877-5-NO-SCAM** or **919-716-6000**.

You can also join the Do Not Call registry to limit unwanted telemarketing calls.

To sign up, call **1-888-382-1222** from the number you wish to register or visit www.donotcall.gov.