These tips will help you protect your money:

- Use direct deposit for your checks.
- Don't sign blank checks allowing another person to fill in the amount.
- Don't leave money or valuables in plain view.
- Don't sign anything you don't understand.
- Be aware of scams. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- Cancel your ATM card if you don't use it.
- Don't give anyone your ATM PIN number.
- Check your financial statements promptly and carefully for unauthorized withdrawals.
- Be cautious of joint accounts. Consider a convenience account instead.
- Build good relationships with the professionals who handle your money.
- Don't give any account number to a stranger.

For more information, contact the Maryland Department of Aging, toll-free
1-800-AGE-DIAL

To report suspected financial exploitation call the Maryland Department of Human Resources, toll-free
1-800-917-7383 TTY: 1-800-735-2258
Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Project SAFE is a public private partnership of:

- AARP Maryland
- Maryland Association of Area Agencies on Aging
- Maryland Bankers Association
- Maryland Department of Human Resources
- Maryland Department of Aging
- Maryland Triad/SALT Network
- Office of the Maryland Attorney General

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Available in alternative format upon request from a qualified individual with a disability.

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PROTECT YOUR MONEY

Don't become a victim of FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION

Project SAFE
Stop Adult Financial Exploitation

What Is Financial Exploitation?

Financial exploitation means any action which involves the misuse of a person's funds or property. Many people have been financially exploited by people they knew – paid caregivers, neighbors, even relatives. More people are exploited by people they know than by con artists who are strangers.

Examples of financial exploitation include:

- forging signatures on checks, withdrawal slips, or other financial documents
- making unauthorized withdrawals from financial accounts
- coercing or threatening someone into giving away money
- tricking someone with a memory impairment into turning over money
- charging excessive fees for rent or caregiver services
- committing person-to-person, mail, or telephone fraud scams

What You Can Do to Avoid Problems

Document financial arrangements.

- Put all financial instructions in writing and be specific. This protects you and reduces the likelihood of future misunderstandings. Keep complete financial records of all transactions.
- Understand any lifelong care agreements you are entering into. Document the agreement and specify the compensation, if there is any, paid to the caregiver.

Ask someone to review your financial agreements.

- Your attorney, financial consultant, or employee of a financial institution can help detect changes in your financial activity that may signal a problem. You can also ask a trusted friend or relative to review your monthly statements or other financial documents.

Be cautious of joint accounts.

- Both parties are equal owners of the account and both have equal access to the money.

Understand any power of attorney agreement.

- Before you assign a power of attorney, be sure you understand the authority you are giving to your agent. Know the person to whom you are giving this authority.
- Specify the compensation, if any, to be paid to your agent. If you and your agent agree that there will be no compensation, write that in the agreement.

Ask for help when you are unsure.

- Financial matters can be confusing. You can ask for help from an employee of a financial institution, trusted family member, social worker or other professional.

Stay connected to your community.

- Social isolation increases your risk of becoming a victim of abuse.
- Find out about community programs or social activities in your neighborhood.