**Stop People taking your Money**

People with disabilities and older adults may need someone to help with their money. Sometimes people who should help someone with their money instead uses the money for themselves. This is called “financial exploitation.”

If this happened to you or someone you know, there are different ways to report what happened and to protect yourself or the person harmed.

This fact sheet answers the following questions:

1. What is financial exploitation?
2. How do you report it?
3. How I protect myself or others from more harm?

What is financial exploitation?

Financial exploitation is when someone uses someone else’s money, things, or information for themselves or against the other person’s benefit.

Some examples include:

* Stealing or misusing their checks, credit cards or money
* Faking their signature
* Forcing or tricking them into signing things like checks, contracts, or legal documents
* Taking their things without permission
* Misusing a power of attorney for their own gain

How do you report financial exploitation?

Several state agencies help with reports of financial exploitation and put services in place to protect people with disabilities from harm.

Which agency looks into the report depends on different things, like where the exploitation happened and who did it. You do not have to know everything about the problem to report it.

You should call any one of the agencies below if you think a caregiver or other person is financially exploiting a person with disabilities or an older adult. The person answering your call will help you find the right agency to take your report.

Each agency has a hotline that is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The person taking your call will ask you questions that can include:

* The victim’s name, address, telephone number, age, and condition
* The exploiter’s name and relationship to the victim
* As much detail as possible about why you think the victim is being exploited
* If the victim is in danger
* Names and contact information

Reporting to the Department on Aging

The Illinois Department on Aging’s Adult Protective Services unit looks into complaints of abuse, neglect and financial exploitation of people with disabilities and older adults who live in an unlicensed facility, alone at home, with family, with a support worker or caregiver, or with others. They also look into it when someone outside of a licensed facility or provider, like a guardian, power of attorney or someone else in the community, is the exploiter.

To report someone, call the Adult Protective Services (APS) Hotline at **1-866-800-1409**. APS will visit the victim and may talk to other people and agencies. If APS thinks that financial exploitation happened, it will work with the victim and others to help create a plan that can include services to help stop future losses and get back what was lost.

Reporting to the Office of the Inspector General

The Office of the Inspector General for the Illinois Department of Human Services (OIG) looks into abuse, neglect and financial exploitation. They do this for people who get mental health or developmental disabilities services in facilities or programs that are licensed, funded or operated by the Department of Human Services. These places include CILA group homes, community day service providers, community mental health providers, state developmental centers, and state mental health centers.

To report, call the OIG Hotline at **1-800-368-1463**. OIG will look into it right away if the victim is at risk of harm. OIG may also call other agencies to get services or help for the person, or tell the police.

Once they get the report, the program or facility that serves the victim must try to protect them right away. If OIG thinks that financial exploitation or other abuse happened, the facility must stop the accused employees from having contact with the victim or other people in the program until the investigation is done.

Reporting to the Department of Public Health

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) looks into abuse, neglect and financial exploitation of people living in nursing homes or other long-term care facilities and hospitals.

To report, call the IDPH Hotline at **1-800-252-4343**. IDPH must look into all cases where the victim is at risk of harm within 24 hours. IDPH should look into all reports of abuse or neglect within seven days and all other reports within 30 days.

How do I protect myself or others from more harm?

There are many things you can do for yourself or others for protection from financial exploitation.

The following are some of the actions that may be available to you:

**Call the police:** If someone is in danger, call 911.

**Order of Protection:** You can ask for an Order of Protection in court to protect yourself or others from financial exploitation. Do this if a disability makes it hard to stop the problem and if a family or household member is exploiting you.

“Family or household members” are people related to the victim, someone related to the victim’s spouse or former spouse, or someone the victim is or was dating. They are also people who live with or used to live with the victim. Personal assistants or caregivers of the victim are also “family or household members.” See Equip for Equality’s “**Orders of Protection for People with Disabilities**” fact sheet for more information.

**Informal advocacy:** People who exploit others may be less likely to do that if someone else is around. Just having someone else help and make themselves known can help. Also, just knowing that someone is involved and giving help may result in more action being taken for the victim after a report has been made. If the person doing the harmful things is an employee of the facility where the victim lives, think about asking for that employee to be removed or replaced.

**Have More Questions?**

Call Equip for Equality.

1-800-537-2632

contactus@equipforequality.org

<http://www.equipforequality.org/stop_abuse>

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