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Date: 18 March, 2020

# Preventing Elder Abuse: Coronavirus Scams

**JOHNSON CITY, Tenn.**—Scamming the elderly is a multi-billion-dollar business in the United States. According to the Department of Justice, older adults lose at least $3 billion annually to scammers, and other sources estimate that amount to be closer to $35 billion. The Federal Trade Commission reports that the median amount lost to persons over age 80 is $1,000, and $600 for those age 70–79. This population is made up of trustworthy members with good credit and carefully-saved funds, but isolation and lack of familiarity with the internet and its scams make them attractive potential victims to scammers.

The current COVID-19/Coronavirus pandemic has opened up a new market for frauds and scams. Scammers are taking advantage of fears surrounding this disease. They are setting up websites to sell bogus products, and using fake emails, texts, and social media posts as a ruse to take people’s money and get their personal information.

To keep yourself or your family members safe from those who would profit from the public fears of this pandemic, the Federal Trade Commission offers the following tips:

* Don’t click on links from sources you don’t know. At best, it could provide you with incorrect information; at worst, it could download a virus onto your device.
* Don’t open emails claiming to be from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) or other experts. These organizations don’t send out email blasts. For the latest trustworthy pandemic information, go directly to the CDC or World Health Organization’s websites (<https://www.cdc.gov/> and <https://www.who.int/>).
* Ignore online offers for vaccinations or other “cures”. A real medical breakthrough won’t be promoted through an online sales pitch.
* Do your homework before donating to any charity, or buying into investment opportunities claiming a company’s product can prevent, detect or cure coronavirus.

First Tennessee Area Agency on Aging and Disability (FTAAAD) supports older adults and family caregivers by providing resources and education and by offering an Information and Assistance line that informs, guides, directs and links Northeast Tennesseans to needed and available resources. Call 866-836-6678 for I&A assistance with local resources and programs, or for questions about potential scams or fraud. For additional information on programs and services for older adults or adults with disabilities, contact Kathy Whitaker at 423-722-5102.

**About First Tennessee Development District Area Agency on Aging and Disability**FTAAAD’s mission is to improve the quality of life for older adults and adults with disabilities who live in the eight counties of Northeast Tennessee by advocating, setting policy, identifying local needs, providing services, coordinating resources, and providing information to promote a continuum of care which supports independence, choice, and empowerment for those we are committed to serve. For more information, call 423-928-3258 or visit [www.ftaaad.org](http://www.ftaaad.org).