



## Community Protection Division

[www.bouldercounty.org/da](http://www.bouldercounty.org/da)

### Financial Exploitation: Take Steps to Recognize, Avoid and Report

**Exploitation**: *the illegal or unauthorized use of an at-risk adult's resources for another person's profit or advantage, by a person who knows or reasonably should know that the victim lacks the capacity to consent.*

**Undue Influence**: *the use of power and control to substitute one person's will for the other – to deceptively gain control over the other person.*

**303-441-1000 Adult Protective Services Intake Line**

### Signs of Exploitation

Signs to watch for are numerous, but any of the following could be an indication that exploitation of an at-risk adult has taken place:

- Withdrawing access to or isolating an elder from others – changing the phone number, refusing to let anyone talk to the elder, not allowing elder to contact anyone – “She’s napping, she’s sleeping, she’s busy...”
- Stops going to church or community groups, stops seeing friends or doctors
- Emotional manipulation - threats of putting elder in a nursing home or withdrawing companionship or comments such as, “No one loves you, I’m the only one who loves you, they’re all after your money but I’ll take care of you.” “If you don’t do what I say, I’ll put you in a nursing home to die.”
- Misses medical appointments or changes doctors frequently.
- Missing documents.
- Notices of insufficient funds, overdue bills.
- Caretaker or friend only asking financial questions.
- Caregiver may have been “given” expensive gifts, new cars or homes.

- Elder withdrawing or loaning large sums of money.
- Will or other financial documents have been changed.
- Power of Attorney changes.
- Possessions disappear.
- Mail disappears.
- Previously absent relative suddenly makes an appearance.
- Elder appears afraid to speak in presence of someone.
- Emotional manipulation reported, such as “If you deed your house to me, I’ll take care of you for the rest of your life.”
- Phone or other utilities cut off.
- Bank balances showing unusual amount of withdrawals or transfers without the elder’s knowledge or understanding.
- Notices for change of address for mail or accounts.
- Evidence that access has been obtained to Social Security checks, pension payments, checking or savings account, credit card or ATM by someone other than the elder.
- Withholding checks made out to an elder, or numerous checks made out to cash.
- Charging excessive fees for basic care.
- Reports from the elder that they have signed documents – mortgages, deeds, co-signing, POA, wills that they appear to be confused about.
- Provides confused or improbable explanations about what has occurred.

### **How to help victims recognize exploitation**

- Break control (guardianship or conservatorship if all else fails).
- Contact family members (if they are not the source of the problem).
- Reintroduce friends into the equation – create less isolation, which will also generate more feedback on the isolation.
- Get help from Adult Protective Services: 303-441-1000 for intake.
- Call law enforcement.
- Encourage community involvement – senior centers are a great resource.

### **Contacts from strangers – mail, phone, door**

- Sweepstakes calls – lotteries, sweepstakes mimicking Publisher’s Clearinghouse Sweepstakes (Do you want the balloons? What about the cardboard check?)
- Phony bill collectors – threatening collection actions.
- Calls from “police” urging them to pay collection notices or tickets.

- Unscrupulous home repair contractors – tree-trimming, roof fixing scams by traveling con artists.
- Inappropriate offers of financial products and services like annuities or reverse mortgages with astronomical fees.
- Loan fraud - victims have found their homes have been re-mortgaged or new home equity loans taken out, often by family members, without the elder's knowledge.
- Pigeon drop at bank – customer in the parking lot claims to have found money, offers to split it with an elder if they first pay some amount as a sign of good faith.
- “Grandma/Grandpa?” scam - convincing an elder his or her child has been injured or is in jail and needs money
- Fake charities.
- Sweetheart scams – Internet dating sites produce the love of their life who constantly needs money and/or asks for a fiancée visa to come to the U.S.

### **Plans to Protect Your Future**

- Plan ahead to protect your assets and to ensure your wishes are followed. Talk to someone at your financial institution, an attorney, or financial advisor about the best options for you.
- Make sure any financial power of attorney includes instructions for the use of the money.
- Never give personal information to anyone on the telephone or via e-mail without checking them out thoroughly.
- Cultivate lots of friends of all ages. **The best defense against fraud or exploitation is a tight circle of friends.**
- Be familiar with community resources – from aging resource specialists to money managers, transportation or food assistance.
- Never pay to collect sweepstakes or lottery "winnings."
- Never rush into a financial decision. Ask for details in writing and get a second opinion.
- Consult with a financial advisor or attorney before signing any document you don't understand.
- Consider a credit freeze to secure your credit information.
- Get to know your banker and build a relationship with the people who handle your finances. They can look for any suspicious activity related to your account.
- Check references and credentials before hiring anyone. Don't allow workers to have access to information about your finances.

- Pay with checks and credit cards instead of cash to keep a paper trail.
- Feel comfortable saying no, don't feel pressured or be intimidated into signing or doing something you don't want to.
- Attend classes or seminars on frauds and scams to educate yourself – check with your local senior center.

You should never be threatened or intimidated. If you think someone close to you is trying to take control of you or your finances, or of another person, call law enforcement or call Adult Protective Services at 303-441-1000.

If someone tells you they are afraid of someone or are being exploited, call law enforcement, and call 911 if it is an emergency. You can also make a confidential report to Adult Protective Services.

Law Enforcement

Boulder County Sheriff: 303-441-4444  
 Boulder Police Department: 303-441-3333  
 Longmont Police Department: 303-651-8555  
 Louisville Police Department: 303-441-4444  
 Lafayette Police Department: 303-665-6311  
 Erie Police Department: 303-926-2810  
 Nederland Police Department: 303-258-3250  
 Boulder District Attorney: 303-441-3700

Senior Centers

West Boulder 303-441-3148  
 East Boulder 303-441-4150  
 Longmont 303-651-8411  
 Louisville 303-666-7400  
 Lafayette 303-665-9052  
 Erie 303-441-4150

**Other Options:**

Boulder County Bar Association: Elder/Probate Attorney Section 303-440-4758

Contact the Bar for recommendations for elder and/or estate law attorneys

Civil Protection Orders (Restraining orders to keep someone away from you)

Guardianship, Conservatorship and other Protective Arrangements

Fiduciaries – someone to handle your money

Trusts – set up so a bank trustee monitors bills, expenses, etc.