



## Spring Break Offers Golden Opportunity for Grandparent Scams

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MADISON – If you are a college student preparing for spring break, you have a lot to worry about with packing, finalizing travel arrangements and completing outstanding coursework. But it’s not just yourself you need to think about. While on break, scammers could be working the phones, trying to rip off your relatives through family emergency scams – better known as “grandparent scams.”

To help protect family members in your absence, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) asks travelers to share their vacation plans and discuss this scam with their families.

Scammers target elderly victims by impersonating a grandchild and claiming they need money for an emergency. The grandparent is asked to keep the call a secret from family members and authorities. The thieves typically request the money by wire transfer.

“There is nothing more frightening for a doting grandparent than hearing that a grandchild is in trouble, and that fear drives many vulnerable victims to wire thousands of dollars to scammers – no questions asked,” said Frank Frassetto, Division Administrator for Trade and Consumer Protection.

The scammer may already know some basic facts about the grandchild they are impersonating – especially if the grandchild has a social media presence that is open to the public. A second person claiming to be a police officer, lawyer or bondsman may also call the grandparent to add legitimacy to the story.

“Spring breakers should talk with relatives about their vacation itinerary and make a family plan for dealing with these potential calls,” said Frassetto. “As part of this plan, consider using a code name that only family members know.”

DATCP offers additional tips for anyone who may receive these fraudulent calls:

- Resist the pressure to act immediately.
- Hang up and try to contact the grandchild or another family member at a number that you know is accurate.
- Do not wire money or provide your bank or credit card account numbers.
- Do not give out any personal information or confirm anything that is told to you.
- If you cannot reach a family member and are not sure what to do, call the Bureau of Consumer Protection or your local police on their non-emergency line.
- Remember that this scam is not exclusively dependent upon the grandparent/grandchild relationship – scammers could also claim to be a niece or nephew or a family friend.

For more information about grandparent scams or other fraudulent activities targeting elderly citizens, visit the Consumer Protection Bureau at <http://datcp.wisconsin.gov>, send an e-mail to [datcp@datcp.wisconsin.gov](mailto:datcp@datcp.wisconsin.gov) or call the Consumer Protection Hotline toll-free at 1-800-422-7128.

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