

# **‘Preventing Senior Scams and Fraud’**

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**An Educational Intervention Program  
Sponsored by the Schenectady County:**

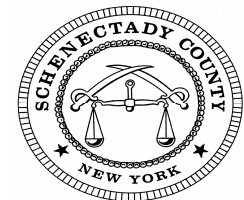
**Department of Consumer Affairs  
&  
Department of Senior and Long Term Care Services**





# Purpose of this Program

- **Reveal the different types of scams targeting seniors**
- **Promote the prevention of senior scams**
- **Provide useful information and resources to victims of fraud and scams**

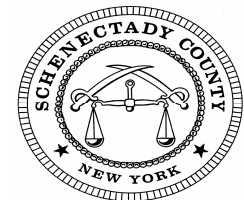




# Program Objectives

**By the end of this program, participants will learn:**

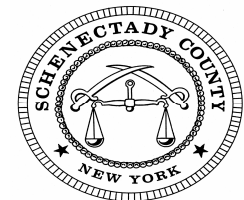
- **How to recognize the various types of scams**
- **How scams are perpetrated**
- **How to recognize when a scam has occurred**
- **How to prevent scams from happening to you**
- **Steps to take if you've been scammed**
- **Helpful resources**





# Why are seniors targets for scams?

- **Seniors can sometimes be more vulnerable because they are less threatening**
- **Seniors tend to be more trusting**
- **Seniors sometimes have trouble spotting fraud**
- **Seniors are often reluctant to seek advice about various matters because they fear losing their independence**
- **Seniors sometimes find it difficult to end unwanted calls, pushy salespeople, or people in need**

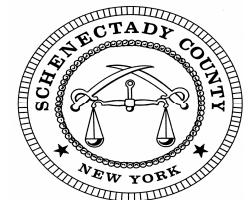




# Why do criminals target seniors?

## **Criminals believe seniors:**

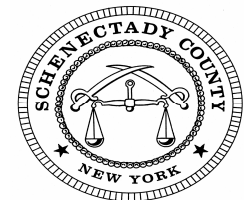
- **Have a lot of assets**
- **Are open to quick profits to bolster their retirement savings**
- **Have trouble remembering things**
- **Are isolated socially and desire company**
- **Have strong values about politeness in dealing with others**
- **Often avoid reporting that they've been scammed because they don't want family members to think they cannot take care of themselves**





# Common Scams & Methods

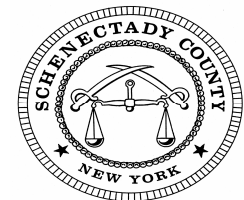
- **Sucker Lists – If you respond to sweepstakes or contests your name might get added to a list that could eventually be sold to a con artist. Con artists will use that list to perpetrate a scam**
- **Phishing – This is a term used for e-mails that claim to be from your bank or other reputable business. Criminals use this front to ask for personal information so they can steal money from you or your identity. Criminals send hundreds of e-mails hoping that someone will bite.**





## Common Scams & Methods

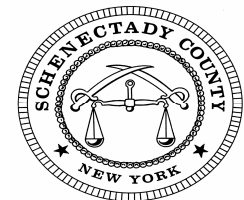
- **Nigerian Letters** – These are e-mails that outline a story involving large amounts of money that cannot be accessed. They ask people to provide their bank account number so that they can wire money to their bank. In return they promise a cut of the money. Unfortunately, recipients that respond to these letters will lose their money and receive nothing in return.
- **Sweepstakes, Lotteries and Contests** - These are generally e-mails or letters you receive indicating that you've won the lottery. All you need to do is pay for processing, taxes or delivery, or provide bank account information to verify your identity. The criminals will even continue the con by contacting the victims and claiming they are from an agency that can recover the stolen funds. All the victim needs to do is send money to cover the costs.





## Common Scams & Methods

- **Dumpster Diving - Criminals look in garbage cans and elsewhere for discarded credit card statements and receipts to obtain the card numbers. These papers can be used to steal your identity and set up credit in your name. It takes time and effort to close down accounts and have new credit cards issued and sent to you in addition to correcting bill statements and credit reports; therefore, shred all sensitive papers.**

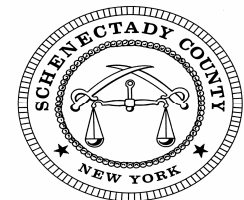






# Preventing Travel Scams!

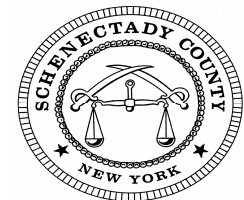
- **Before buying any travel package, get the offer in writing**
- **Check to see if the company is legitimate by:**
  - **Contacting the Better Business Bureau at 1-800-828-5000**
  - **Contacting the State Attorney General's Office at 1-800-771-7755**
  - **Contacting the Consumer Protection Board at 1-800-697-1220**
  - **Contacting the U.S. Dept. of Transportation 1-202-366-2220**
- **Legitimate businesses selling travel packages must be listed with the Department of Transportation**
- **Always use a credit card to purchase travel, Why? Under Federal Law you can dispute the charges if you don't get what you were promised**





# Preventing Charity Scams!

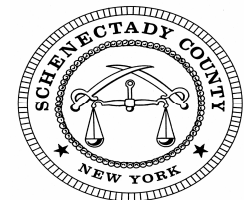
- Don't be fooled by “sound alike” names that criminals use to trick consumers such as calling themselves the Red Cross instead of the American Red Cross
- Before you donate, check to see if the charity is legitimate with the American Institute of Philanthropy at 1-773-529-2300 or [www.charitywatch.org](http://www.charitywatch.org)
- Sometimes only a small percentage goes to the charity, always ask what percentage will actually go to the charity
- Charitable organizations are required to file the IRS Form 990 to show how their spending their money. To access their filings go to [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org) or you can contact them at 1-757-229-4631





# Preventing Work at Home Scams!

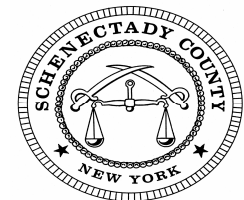
- **Do not respond to offers to work at home stuffing envelopes or doing other simple tasks-these offers are scams**
- **If you respond, crooks will ask you to pay in advance for supplies or training materials**
- **They will say they need your personal information, such as your social security number, to pay you. However, they will end up using it for fraudulent purposes**
- **If you are interested in earning extra income, contact local senior organizations for information about available positions and job training programs**





# Preventing Credit Card Fraud!

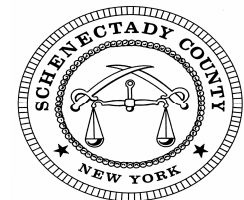
- **Keep an eye on your credit cards at all times**
- **Shred all credit card statements, receipts and solicitations before throwing them away**
- **Report a lost or stolen credit card immediately**
- **Don't buy the worthless credit card loss protection and insurance programs sold by telemarketers, Many credit card issuers also have a "zero liability" policy for unauthorized charges in the event your credit card number is stolen**
- **Your liability for unauthorized credit card charges is limited to \$50.00. Contact your credit card company for instructions on how to dispute charges you haven't authorized**





# Preventing Contractor Scams!

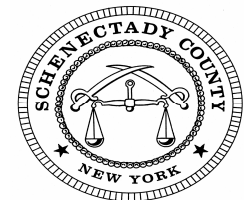
- **Traveling contractors offer home improvement deals but they are rarely licensed (plumbers/electricians) or insured and often take a large cash payment up front.**
- **When you need a contracting job, get at least 3 reputable estimates.**
- **Never pay a contractor in full before the work is completed. Divide the payments into three or at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$**
- **Always make sure a legal contract is in place and signed prior to any payment or work, our office can provide you with a sample contract**
- **Contact our office or the BBB to check whether or not a contractor has had complaints filed against them.**





# Preventing Telemarketing Scams!

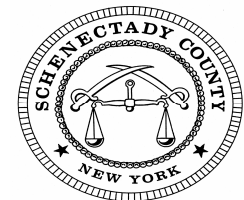
- **Calls between 9 P.M. and 8 A.M. are illegal**
- **Must tell you what company they are calling from and what they are selling**
- **Watch out for, “No purchase needed to enter or win”**
- **Watch for abusive or obscene language, threats or intimidation**
- **Be mindful of goods or services that seem exaggerated**
- **Telemarketers cannot withdraw a payment from your checking account without your written or recorded oral permission; SO DON'T GIVE IT OUT!!!**
- **To end telemarketing calls contact the toll free registry telephone hotline: 888-382-1222 or register online at [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov)**





# Preventing Home Equity Loan Scams!

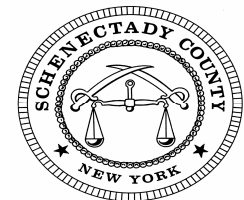
- **Be skeptical of door-to-door salespeople offering “easy financing” for improvements and home repairs that may not be needed at all.**
- **Most of the time, these people are working with unscrupulous lenders.**
- **The contractors they work with often do shoddy repairs or incomplete work.**
- **The loans they arrange are secured by your home and often carry very high interest rates and other costs**





# Preventing Refinancing Scams!

- **Brokers solicit homeowners to refinance their existing mortgages and replace them with bad loans, it is imperative that you always read the fine print**
- **Bad loans have inflated fees and interest and high monthly payments that homeowners cannot afford to pay**
- **The homeowner falls into default and the home is foreclosed**
- **The crooks buy up the real estate at deflated prices**

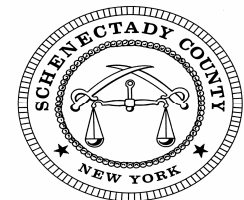






# Preventing Forgeries!

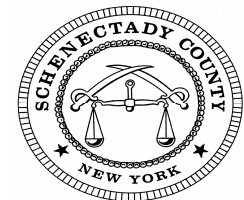
- **Scam artists forge signatures by using your signature from blank documents, signed contracts, or even letters. Always keep signed documents in a safe, secure location.**
- **Never sign blank contract documents or anything that you haven't read.**
- **When signing your name to a piece of paper, make sure your doing it for a reputable company or someone you can trust; not someone who is a stranger to you.**





# Preventing Investment Scams!

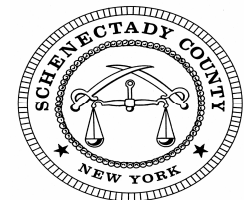
- **Everyone would like to see his or her money grow faster**
- **Crooks try to convince people to buy phony investments with promises of unusually high returns; therefore, do your homework about investments**
- **If you are targeted with questionable investment offers, notify the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)**
- **Call the state attorney general's office to file a complaint**





# Preventing Fake Check Scams!

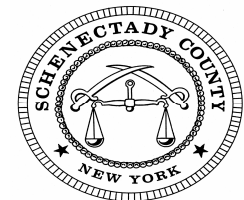
- **Crooks scan want ads looking for victims**
- **Crooks will answer ads and offer to pay by “cashier’s check” for more than the sales price. Crooks will ask you to wire the remainder of the money back to them or to give the extra money and the merchandise to a “shipper”**
- **Many times the check turns out to be a fake and you lose the merchandise and the money**
- **Contact your local bank and make sure the funds clear before shipping any merchandise.**
- **As a general rule, avoid taking additional money.**





# Preventing Medicare Fraud!

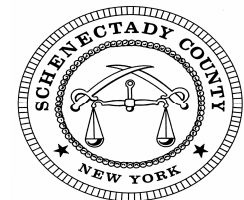
- **Medicare Scams - Con artists call senior citizens and tell them that their medical benefits are ending. The con artist tells the seniors that they have a certain amount of time to get a new card because their current card is soon to be inactive. If they don't act immediately, they won't receive their social security check in the mail. This threat scares many seniors into divulging personal information that the con artist will use to steal money and/or your identity.**
- **Play It Safe - If someone claims to be calling from the Social Security Administration (SSA) and asks for your bank account, credit card, or life insurance policy numbers, it's a scam. SSA will never ask for that information, and the only time someone calling from the SSA will ask for your Social Security number is if you applied for low-income assistance and the number you put on your application wasn't correct.**





# Preventing Medicare Fraud!

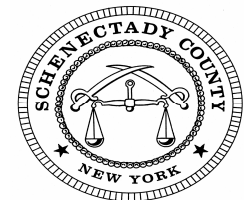
- Medicare prohibits companies offering its approved drug cards from calling you, sending emails or coming to your home unless you ask them!
- Drug discount cards that have been approved by Medicare will carry a “Medicare-Approved” seal.
- It is illegal to sell any Medicare product over the phone or door-to-door.
- If you are interested in the benefits available to you as a Medicare beneficiary, visit the federal government’s Medicare web site ([www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov)) or call 1-800-MEDICARE (800-633-4227)





# Preventing Health Care Fraud!

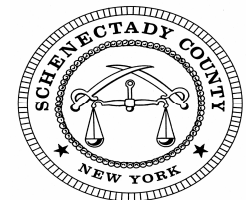
- **Signs of health fraud include:**
- **Promoters of cures who claim that medical establishments are keeping information away from consumers**
- **Testimonials from people who supposedly have been cured**
- **“Secret formulas” that no one else has**
- **The use of infomercials—programs that look like news, but are just lengthy ads paid for by the promoter**





# Preventing Funeral and Burial Scams!

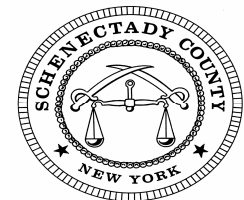
- **While it makes sense to plan your funeral and burial in advance, it is not a good idea to pay for everything in advance**
- **Draw up your plans with a reputable funeral business and save a copy for your survivors**
- **If you want cover the cost of your funeral include funds to do so in your will**





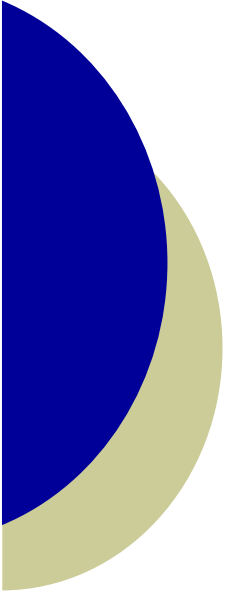
# Warning Signs of Fraud and Scams!

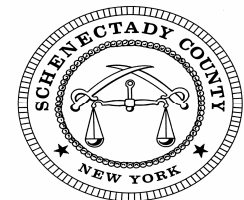
- **Be suspicious if you hear:**
  - You've been told you won a prize or free gift
  - You've been selected to receive a special offer
  - You must act immediately or lose out
  - You must pay for shipping your prize or free gift
  - Give us your credit card number and expiration date to verify that you are a credit cardholder
  - You're asked for personal information
  - You're asked to donate to an agency whose name sounds like a well known charity
  - You're one of only a chosen few to receive this offer





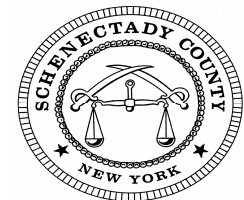
# Protecting your Assets!

- 
- **Never:**
  - **Give any personal information over the phone to an unfamiliar company. This includes your credit card numbers, but also the credit card expiration date, your social security number, driver's license number and bank account numbers. Even if you are told it is only for "identification" or "verification," this information can be used for unauthorized credit card charges or bank account debits.**
  - **Do business with strangers who approach you at home without doing a thorough check. Make sure you have a permanent address and phone number for the business. Check the company out with your BBB.**



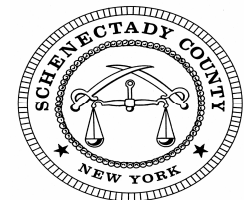
# Protecting your Assets!

- **Never:**
- **Respond to e-mails pretending to be from well-known companies. Such e-mails are often cleverly disguised scams from computer criminals trying to steal your credit card number and other personal financial data.**
- **Assign power of attorney to people you don't know very well**
- **Sign anything before you read it to make sure you understand it, and to make sure it matches what was verbally said to you.**



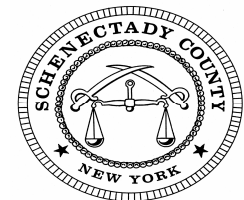
# If you become a victim!

- **Contact a state enforcement agencies such as the state attorney general**
- **Consumer Helpline: 1-800-771-7755**
- **Crime Victims Hotline: 1-800-771-7755**
- **Medicaid Fraud Control Unit: 212-417-5397**
- **Environmental Crimes: 1-800-771-7755**
- **For the Hearing Impaired: 1-800-788-9898**



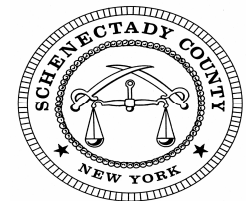
# If you become a victim!

- **Call the police - You may need a police report to help you prove that you were a victim (Schenectady County Sheriffs Department – 388-4300**
- **Contact the local Consumer Affairs Department – Schenectady County – 356-7473**
- **Contact the local Department of Senior and Long Term Care Services – 382-8481**



# Questions & Answers!

- **If you have any questions, now is the time to ask them!**



# Thank You!

- **Thank you to all the people at the Duanesburg Area Community Center for giving us the opportunity to be here today and share this information with you.**

