

**BBB SENIOR SCAM JAM**  
Information & Resource Guide  
2011

Welcome,

Thank you for joining us for **BBB Senior Scam Jam**, an event designed to educate you about scams targeting seniors, how to avoid them, and what to do if you do fall victim. We hope you have fun and learn a lot throughout the day.

We'd like to thank the organizations and businesses making **BBB Scam Jam** possible. A special thanks to representatives from the Missouri Attorney General's office, Federal Bureau of Investigations, U.S. Postal Inspection Service and Internal Revenue Service for donating their time and expertise. Finally, we'd like to thank our friends at the Southside Senior Center for generously donating their facility to us for this important event.

In addition to attending our panel, we hope you will take the time to visit our vendors, all of whom have products and/or services aimed at protecting seniors.

In case you can't visit every booth, we've included the contact information for all of our vendors in this handy guide. We've also included a dictionary of scam terms and definitions, and other resources for protecting yourself, your family and your pocketbook.

Start with BBB. Start with trust.

Judy Mills  
President/CEO  
BBB of Southwest Missouri

# Table of Contents

## **SCAMS DEFINED**

- Advance Fee Scam.....6
- Bogus Charity.....6
- Car Warranty Scams.....6
- Check in the Mail Scam.....6
- Contest Cons.....7
- Coupon Fraud.....7
- Craigslist Scam.....7
- Cramming.....7
- Credit Repair Scams.....7
- Door-to-door Sales.....8
- Employment Scam.....8
- Foreclosure Scam.....8
- Grandparent Scam.....8
- Healthcare Fraud.....9
- Home Reappraisal Scam.....9
- Home Refinance Scam.....9
- Identity Theft.....10
- Inheritance Scam.....10
- Investment Scam.....10
- IRS Email Scams.....10
- Lottery Scam.....11
- Money-making Schemes.....11
- Money Request from “Friend”.....11
- Mystery Shopper Scam.....11
- Nigerian Letter Fraud.....12
- Pet Scams.....12

## **SCAMS DEFINED (continued)**

Phishing.....	12
‘Ponzi’ Scheme.....	12
Pyramid Scheme.....	13
Rental Scam.....	13
Robocalls.....	13
Slamming.....	13
Telemarketing Fraud.....	14
Text Message Scam.....	14
Threatening Scam.....	14
Travel Scam.....	14
Vishing.....	15
Work from Home Schemes.....	15

## **EXPERT RESOURCES**

Better Business Bureau.....	16
MO Attorney General.....	16
Internal Revenue Service.....	16
Federal Bureau of Investigation.....	17
U.S. Postal Inspection Service.....	17

## **SCAM JAM VENDORS**

ABC Seamless Siding.....	18
Affordable Home Improvement.....	18
American Detection Specialists.....	18
Atlas Security.....	18
Bancorp South.....	19
Consumer Credit Counseling Service.....	19
Courtney Law Firm.....	19

## ***SCAM JAM VENDORS (continued)***

Crossover Investigations.....	19
Great Southern Summit Club.....	19
InTouch Insurance Services.....	20
Liberty Home Solutions.....	20
Mayor’s Commission on Human Rights.....	20
Medical Benefits Group.....	20
Morris Financial Group.....	21
My Movers.....	21
New York Life.....	21
Preferred Hearing.....	21
Prepaid Legal Services.....	21
SALT Council (Seniors & Law Enforcement Together.....	22
Shelter Insurance, Becky Hosp.....	22
Southwest Center for Independent Living.....	22
Walnut Lawn Funeral Home.....	22
Waterford at Iron Bridge.....	22

**Advance Fee Scam:** In this scam, the con artist requests that you make advance fee payments before receiving a product or service. For example, you might be contacted and told that you are set to receive a large sum of money but that you must pay some of the tax fees in advance. You should never pay fees in advance for something.

**Bogus Charity:** The truth is that not all charities operate with charitable intentions. Some charities are nothing more than scams designed to take your money with phony claims of helping the needy. Not only do con artists try to play on your sympathy, generosity and giving spirit, but their scams also steer money away from real charitable causes. Be sure to check out the charity with the Better Business Bureau and Attorney General before making any donation.

**Car Warranty Scams:** Be wary of any telemarketing calls and mailers claiming your auto warranty is about to expire. In this scam, consumers are sold an extended service contract that is not associated with the car manufacturer's warranty.

**Check in the Mail Scam:** This is a very common scam in which a person sends you a check for something you're trying to sell, but the check is for larger than the amount that you requested. They want you to send the difference back to them. The problem is that the check that they sent you is a fake, but you may not find that out until after you've sent them their money.

**Contest Cons:** Whenever you receive a letter saying you have won a prize, beware. The prize you win may not be worth the effort to collect it. These deceptively described prizes sometimes are used to attract customers to sales meetings for land or vacation timeshare or other merchandise.

**Coupon Fraud:** Be careful when printing coupons online. You could become involved in a coupon fraud scam. Scammers are manipulating the bar codes on online coupons. When the coupons are cashed in, the money goes to the scammer, instead of to the manufacturer, resulting in higher prices for everyone.

**Craigslist Scam:** Scammers are capitalizing on the growing popularity of Craigslist. Scammers target either the buyers or sellers. See “Rental Scam” for more information on how online scammers target buyers. Scammers also target sellers by offering to buy a product. They may then send you a check for an amount much larger than what the item cost and they’ll ask you to send the difference back to them. Problem, the check they sent you will turn out to be fake, but you won’t find this out until after you have lost the money you sent them.

**Cramming:** "Cramming" is when a company adds unauthorized charges to your phone bill. Be sure to check your phone bill carefully each month to ensure you haven’t fallen victim.

**Credit Repair Scams:** These so-called “credit-repair” companies charge \$50 to more than \$1,000 with promises to fix your credit report. In many cases, they take your money then do little or nothing to improve your credit report.

**Door-to-door Sales:** Unscrupulous sellers try to victimize consumers in their own homes. These sellers often use high-pressure or scare tactics and sometimes misrepresent the quality and value of their products. To protect yourself, never let them in your home unless you scheduled the appointment. Get everything in writing including price, warranty and all conditions. Tell the salesperson you will check it out and get back to him.

**Employment Scam:** Employment scams, also known as job scams, are a form of advance fee fraud scamming where certain unscrupulous persons posing as recruiters or employers offer attractive employment opportunities which require the job seeker to pay them money in advance. These companies often present themselves with official-looking websites and documentation. Once the victim has paid the advanced fees for employment, the 'business' either declines employment or disappears as soon as the transfer is finalized. Also see "Advance Fee Scam."

**Foreclosure Scam:** As if facing foreclosure isn't enough, now scammers are targeting people having trouble paying their mortgage. In this scam, someone contacts you about a possible home foreclosure and offering to help you out. Instead of helping you, they take your money.

**Grandparent Scam:** In this scam, the grandparent receives a distressed phone call from who they believe is their grandchild. The supposed grandchild typically explains that they are travelling in Canada or another country and have been arrested or involved in an auto accident and need the grandparent to wire money to post bail or pay for damages — usually amounting to a few thousand dollars. The scammer will sometimes even use the grandchild's name.

**Healthcare Fraud:** Healthcare fraud is committed when a provider or consumer intentionally submits, or causes someone else to submit, false or misleading information for use in determining the amount of healthcare benefits payable. Some examples of provider healthcare fraud are billing for services not actually performed, falsifying a patient's diagnosis to justify costly tests, surgeries or other procedures, and misrepresenting procedures performed to obtain payment for non-covered services. Some examples of consumer healthcare fraud are filing claims for services or medications not received, forging or altering bills or receipts and using someone else's coverage or insurance card.

**Home Reappraisal Scam:** In this scam, a person tells you they might be able to save you money on your mortgage by conducting a reappraisal of your home. However, the "appraiser" comes into your home when no one is there and may steal items or personal information. Never let people into your home unattended even if they present themselves as professionals.

**Home Refinance Scam:** There are a number of different scams that fall under this umbrella term, but the bottom line is, be cautious when someone is trying to sell you a loan that's based on the equity you have in your home. Certain abusive or exploitative lenders target senior borrowers who unwittingly may be putting their homes on the line. Abuse lending practices range from equity stripping and loan flipping to hiding loan terms and packing a loan with extra charges.

**Identity Theft:** Identity theft occurs when someone uses your personal information to commit fraud or other crimes. The thief takes your Social Security number, bank account number or other information and causes problems, like taking out loans in your name or charging money to your bank account or credit card.

**Inheritance scam:** In another common scam, you may receive an email from someone claiming that a long lost relative has left you a large inheritance. But to claim it, you must send a certain amount of money to cover taxes or an administrative fee. Or they may send you an overpayment check and ask you send them the difference. Either way, this is a scam and an email you should ignore.

**Investment Scam:** These schemes offer products and pitches that may sound tempting to many seniors who've seen their retirement accounts and income dwindle in recent years. It pays to remember that if an investment opportunity sounds too good to be true, it usually is. "Also see "Ponzi Scheme."

**IRS Email Scams:** If you receive an email supposedly from the IRS, ignore it. Every year, especially around tax time, scammers send out phishing emails that make it look as though the IRS is contacting you for information. These emails request your personal financial information and then use that information to steal your identity. The IRS never sends out unsolicited emails as a way of contacting you, so don't respond to emails that claim they're from the IRS.

**Lottery scam:** In this scam, you may receive an email claiming you won the lottery (even though you never bought a ticket!). Like the inheritance scam, to claim it, they say you must send them money to cover taxes or they may send you an overpayment check and ask you to send them the difference. Remember, you can't win a lottery or contest without entering and you should never send money to an unknown person.

**Money-making Schemes:** The term get-rich-quick has been used to describe shady investments since the early 1900's. Most such schemes promise that participants can obtain this high rate of return with little risk, and with little skill, effort, or time. Illegal schemes or scams are often advertised through spam or cold calling. Some forms of advertising for these schemes market books or CDs about getting rich quick.

**Money Request from "Friend":** Scammers are now stealing personal email accounts and contacting friends saying that they're in an emergency and need some cash. Most people want to help their friends so they don't think twice about wiring the money that's been requested. Before you send any money, confirm that the request is real. Often times, a quick phone call to your friend will confirm that it is a scam.

**Mystery Shopper Scam:** This scam preys upon people who want to earn extra money by working as a mystery shopper. They receive a check that they are supposed to deposit and use for doing their shopping. Then they are supposed to send it somewhere else as a "processing fee." The problem is that the original check is fake, so you lose whatever money you spent shopping plus the processing fee.

**Nigerian Letter Fraud:** One of the original email scams, this one still targets victims each and every day. In this scam, you receive a letter or email from someone who is reportedly trying to transfer large sums of money out of Africa. They ask you to assist them with this transaction for a percentage of the profits. This requires you to send them your personal financial information which results in the theft of your identity.

**Pet Scams:** Yes, scammers are even targeting pet lovers. Victims answer an online ad for a puppy and end up paying for a puppy they never receive or a puppy that is ill or dying.

**Phishing:** Phishing is a way of attempting to acquire sensitive information such as usernames, passwords and credit card details by masquerading as a trustworthy entity in an electronic communication. Phishing is typically carried out by e-mail spoofing or instant messaging, and it often directs users to enter details at a fake website whose look and feel are almost identical to the legitimate one. Also see “Text Message Scam” and “Vishing.”

**‘Ponzi’ Scheme:** This a fraudulent investment operation that pays returns to separate investors, not from any actual profit earned by the organization, but from their own money or money paid by subsequent investors. The Ponzi scheme usually entices new investors by offering returns other investments cannot guarantee, in the form of short-term returns that are either abnormally high or unusually consistent.

**Pyramid Scheme:** A pyramid scheme is a non-sustainable business model that involves promising participants payment, services or ideals, primarily for enrolling other people into the scheme or training them to take part, rather than supplying any real investment or sale of products or services to the public. Pyramid schemes are a form of fraud and are illegal in this country. Also see “Ponzi Scheme.”

**Rental Scam:** A common problem that is cropping up is the theft of rental home ads online. Scammers take real rentals that are available and re-advertise them at a much lower cost. They then may ask potential tenants for payment up front. Be sure to view any property before leasing it and if a rental price looks too low to be true, then there’s a good chance that it’s a scam.

**Robocalls:** Scammers may call your phone number and do something to get you to give them your private financial information. They may offer you a product for sale and take your credit card information for the (fake) purchase. Alternatively, they may tell you that they’re calling from your bank or credit card company to confirm some details of your account. Protect yourself by never giving your financial information to someone who has called you.

**Slamming:** "Slamming" is when a company switches your long-distance phone carrier without your knowledge. Unethical companies are betting that consumers won't read their phone bills. That is why careful review of your monthly phone charges is important.

**Telemarketing Fraud:** Be cautious of telemarketers that pressure to act immediately, refuse to send you written information, use scare tactics, demand you to send payment to claim a prize, request your financial account numbers, claim that you can make lots of money working from home, and refuse to stop calling when you say you're not interested. You can also add your number to Missouri's No Call List by calling 866-NO-CALL-1 or [www.ago.mo.gov](http://www.ago.mo.gov).

**Text Message Scam:** This is similar to the Robocall scam, except the con artists will send a text message to thousands of recipients, hoping to catch some victims. The message will say it's from a bank or credit card company and you must follow a link or call a number to confirm some details of your account. Protect yourself by never giving your financial information to someone who has texted you. Also see "Vishing."

**Threatening Scam:** There is a really frightening scam happening now in which scammers issue threats of violence against individuals if they won't pay them. The scammers may claim there's a warrant out for your arrest or they are collecting money on behalf of another business or individual. They may even claim to have kidnapped someone you know and are demanding ransom. These scams may happen via phone call, email, or even text message. Contact police immediately if you receive any threats.

**Travel Scam:** If you receive a phone call or postcard offering a free vacation, beware. There's a good chance you're about to get scammed. Scammers may claim you won a free vacation, only to turn around and demand a service charge or other fees.

Sometimes, the consumer is assured he will have a review period to decide if he wants the package before his account is billed for the service charge. This promise usually proves to be false.

**Vishing:** In this scam, you receive a text message or an automated phone call on your cell phone saying there's a problem with your bank account. You're given a phone number to call or a website to log into and asked to provide personal identifiable information like a bank account number, PIN, or credit card number to fix the problem. In reality, scammers are attempting to collect your personal information in order to help themselves to your money. Also see "Text Message Scam."

**Work from Home Schemes:** When money's tight, work-at-home opportunities can sound like just the thing to make ends meet. Some even promise a refund if you don't succeed. But the reality is many of these jobs are scams. The con artists may get you to pay for starter kits or certifications that are useless, and may even charge your credit card without permission. Others just don't deliver on their promises. The ads don't tell you that you may have to work a lot of hours without pay, or they don't disclose all the costs you might incur. People tricked by these ads have lost thousands of dollars, not to mention time and energy.

## **EXPERT RESOURCES**

### **Better Business Bureau**

430 S. Glenstone, Suite A

Springfield, MO 65802

(417) 862-4222

[www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org)

Mediates consumer complaints and provides information and reports on businesses to the public.

### **Missouri Attorney General**

149 Park Central Square, Suite 1017

Springfield, MO 65806

(417) 895-6567

(800) 392-8222

[www.ago.mo.gov](http://www.ago.mo.gov)

Acts as the consumer protection advocate for Missouri residents.

### **Internal Revenue Service (IRS)**

2937 S. Claremont Ave., Building A

Springfield, MO 65804

(800) 829-1040

[www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)

Provides assistance in completing federal tax returns and provides general federal income tax information.

## **Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI)**

Springfield Resident Agency

1932 W. Chesterfield Boulevard, Suite 200

Springfield, MO 65807

(417) 882-3303

[www.fbi.gov](http://www.fbi.gov)

[Springfield.Mo@ec.fbi.gov](mailto:Springfield.Mo@ec.fbi.gov)

Protects and defends citizens against terrorist threats.

Upholds and enforces the criminal laws of the U.S

## **U.S. Postal Inspection Service**

(877) 876-2455

<https://postalinspectors.uspis.gov>

Investigate criminals who fraudulently misuse the U.S. Mail to commit crime.

## **Springfield Police Department**

Emergencies: 911

Non-emergencies: (417) 864-1810

<http://www.springfieldmo.gov/spd/>

Partners with the Springfield community for quality police service and protection.

## **SCAM JAM VENDORS**

### **ABC Seamless Siding & Windows**

1020 Eaglecrest St.

Nixa, MO 65714

(417) 724-1221

[www.abc4siding.com](http://www.abc4siding.com)

### **Affordable Home Improvement**

910 W. Battlefield St., Suite 900

Springfield, MO 65807

(417) 887-9800

[www.affordablehomeimp.com](http://www.affordablehomeimp.com)

### **American Detection Specialists**

440 S. Cavalier Ave., Suite A

Springfield, MO 65802

(417) 883-6254

[www.americandetection.com](http://www.americandetection.com)

### **Atlas Security**

1309 E. Republic Rd., Suite B

Springfield, MO 65804

(417) 831-2866

<http://atlassecurity.net>

## **Bancorp South**

4039 S. Kansas Expressway

Springfield, MO 65807

(417) 889-2600

[www.bancorpsouth.com](http://www.bancorpsouth.com)

## **Consumer Credit Counseling Service**

1515 S. Glenstone Ave.

Springfield, MO 65804

(417) 889-7474

[www.cccsoftheozarks.org](http://www.cccsoftheozarks.org)

## **The Courtney Law Firm**

1910 E. Battlefield St., #B

Springfield, MO 65804

(417) 887-4949

[www.thecourtneylawfirm.com](http://www.thecourtneylawfirm.com)

## **Crossover Investigations**

2938 W. College

Springfield, MO 65802

(417) 827-5730

[www.crossoverpi.com](http://www.crossoverpi.com)

## **Great Southern Summit Club**

218 S. Glenstone

Springfield, MO 65802

(417) 887-4400

[www.greatsouthernbank.com](http://www.greatsouthernbank.com)

## **InTouch Insurance Services**

202 NW 11<sup>th</sup> Ave, Suite 5

Ava, MO 65608

(417) 623-6911

<http://intouchinsurance.vpweb.com>

## **Liberty Home Solutions**

2026 W. Vista, Suite D

Springfield, MO 65807

(417) 889-3218

[www.libertyhomesolutions.net](http://www.libertyhomesolutions.net)

## **Mayor's Commission on Human Rights**

Busch Municipal Building

840 Booneville Ave.

Springfield, MO 65802

(417) 864-1038

<http://www.springfieldmo.gov/boards/humanrights/>

## **Medical Benefits Group**

532 E. State Highway Cc

Nixa, MO 65714

(417) 725-0440

[www.insuranceinmissouri.com](http://www.insuranceinmissouri.com)

## **Morris Financial Group**

1557 E. Primrose St., Suite 100  
Springfield, MO 65804  
(417) 883-1551

## **My Movers**

1830 N. Nias Ave.  
Springfield, MO 65803  
(417) 882-6683  
[www.thepurplemovers.com](http://www.thepurplemovers.com)

## **New York Life, Jason Gaynor**

901 E. St. Louis St., Suite 103A  
Springfield, MO 65806  
(417) 829-2248

## **Preferred Hearing Care**

3242 S. National Ave.  
Springfield, MO 65807  
(417) 889-5353  
[www.preferredhearing.com](http://www.preferredhearing.com)

## **Prepaid Legal Services**

1233 E. Republic Rd.  
Springfield, MO 65807  
(417) 882-7927  
[www.prepaidlegal.com/group/curtgaddis](http://www.prepaidlegal.com/group/curtgaddis)

## **SALT Council (Seniors & Law Enforcement Together)**

Don Louzader, President

(417) 447-1620

<http://greenecountysalt.org>

## **Shelter Insurance, Becky Hosp**

1774 S. Grant Ave., Suite E

Springfield, MO 65807

(417) 869-1756

[www.beckyhospinsuranceagency.com](http://www.beckyhospinsuranceagency.com)

## **Southwest Center for Independent Living**

2864 S. Nettleton Ave.

Springfield, MO 65807

(417) 886-1188

[www.swcil.org](http://www.swcil.org)

## **Walnut Lawn Funeral Home**

2001 W. Walnut Lawn St.

Springfield, MO 65807

(417) 886-6127

[www.walnutlawnfuneralhome.com](http://www.walnutlawnfuneralhome.com)

## **Waterford at Iron Bridge**

1131 E. Lakewood St.

Springfield, MO 65810

(417) 881-5088

[www.waterfordatironbridge.com](http://www.waterfordatironbridge.com)

# NOTES