

Detecting and Dealing with Financial Elder Abuse

- Questions? Contact attorney [Ronald P. Adams](#)

The news is full of elder abuse horror stories. Many are so common they've become archetypes.

We've all heard stories of a grandmother who was swindled out of thousands of dollars for home repairs that were never made. Equally common are instances in which an elderly person repeatedly purchases products of dubious value from the same "friendly" telemarketer. Sometimes, the culprit is a family member – perhaps a gambling- or drug-addicted adult child who influences an aging parent, time and again, to bail them out of their financial crises.

The elderly are particularly vulnerable to scams or to financial abuse. This can be very difficult to detect, but there are warning signs to watch for to help protect your elderly parents or other family members.

What to Watch Out For. Following are a few key warning signs that can indicate if an elderly loved one is a victim of financial abuse:

- The disappearance of valuable objects (jewelry, antiques, artwork, etc.)
- Withdrawals of large sums of money, checks made out to cash, or low bank balances
- A new "best friend," or isolation from other friends and family
- Large credit card transactions Signatures on checks appear different
- A name added to a bank account, or joint accounts that are newly formed
- Indications of fear of caregivers

What to Do Next. State laws vary, but most, like Arizona, have elder abuse statutes and may be able to get restitution for breach of fiduciary issues.

The National Center on Elder Abuse offers guidance on how to investigate and seek justice for elder abuse. There are state resources as well.

If you suspect someone of being financially abused, there are several actions you can take:

- In Arizona, report suspected crimes to [Adult Protective Services](#) (877-767-2385) and/or the Attorney General's Office (602-542-3881).
- File a police report.
- Explore options at a local probate court. (The court can intervene if someone in the family is misusing a power of attorney or role as guardian or conservator.)

- Try to get a temporary restraining order from a court while building your case.

For more information on detecting and responding to indications of elder abuse, review the Attorney General's publication, "[Elder Abuse: Potential Legal Remedies.](#)"
