

Financial exploitation involves a person, usually a loved one, taking advantage of an elderly person's money or assets. This usually occurs without the knowledge of the victim and restricts them from using their money. Concerned citizens are the first line of defense against financial exploitation. It is vital that one understands the warning signs so that the problem can be addressed before it is too late.

As you meet with seniors, keep these warning signs in mind. If you think that one or more of these signs are present, talk to the senior. If the senior seems hesitant, defensive, anxious, or confused when you address the issue, call us. Remember that the Aging Services Bureau is here to help. Contact the Legal Services Developer at 1-800-332-2272.

1. **Senior doesn't remember or is confused about a financial activity.**
 - a. If a senior doesn't remember a financial activity, they could have simply forgotten, but it could also mean that someone is accessing their financials without their knowledge or approval.
2. **Senior's physical abilities have declined.**
 - a. The less a senior can do themselves, the more they must rely on others, such as service providers to help with daily needs or contractors to keep up with home maintenance. This increased access means there are more opportunities to steal from the senior or use unethical sales tactics.
3. **Senior is isolated or lonely.**
 - a. Scammers prey on loneliness, which tends to make people more willing to trust strangers. It also ensures that home visits will be unsupervised.
4. **Senior's relatives display high-risk traits.**
 - a. Seniors are at a greater risk if relatives have a history of substance abuse or a gambling addiction, financial problems, health issues, criminal records, or are isolated themselves.
 - b. Be wary if a relative that interacts with the senior has made an unexpected life change, like quitting their job or buying a new car.
5. **Senior displays a sudden decline in their standard of living.**
 - a. Signs may include less frequent doctor visits, declines in hygiene, late bill notices or even evictions.
6. **Senior has a new caregiver, friend, or romantic partner.**
 - a. New relationships are often gateways for con artists to gain access to seniors' assets. Be wary of unlicensed caregivers or new friends, especially if they start online.

- 7. Senior's caregiver is overly concerned with how much is being spent on the senior's care.**
 - a. If the caregiver expresses concern that the senior is spending too much or tries to block the purchase of necessities, this can be a red flag that they are abusing the senior's funds.
- 8. Senior's Agent is using a Power of Attorney (POA) even though the senior seems capable.**
 - a. If an Agent (the person who has power of attorney over the senior) is using a POA, it means the senior is incapable of making financial or healthcare decisions, or has specifically requested assistance with certain tasks. If the Agent is using their POA for decisions that the senior has the capacity to make, outside of agreed upon tasks, this is a red flag for exploitation.
- 9. Senior lacks food and/or necessities in the house.**
 - a. If a senior's pantry seems bare or they are running out of necessities, this may mean that their resources are being stolen.
- 10. Senior is missing belongings or has many new ones.**
 - a. Fewer possessions could mean that someone has stolen them.
 - b. If a senior suddenly has new possessions, this could mean that someone is using the senior's funds to make purchases and disguising them as the senior's.
- 11. Senior displays a sudden change in mood.**
 - a. Sadness and anxiety could mean exploitation, but are also signs of dementia and other health issues and should never be ignored.
 - b. If a senior is hesitant to make normal purchases or if they are turning down opportunities to socialize, this could be a sign of exploitation.
- 12. Senior no longer receives bank statements in the mail.**
 - a. Bad actors will often divert the senior's bank statements so that changes go unnoticed.
- 13. Senior's care level doesn't seem consistent with the size of their estate.**
 - a. If a senior has the resources to pay for better care than they are receiving, this could be a sign that their funds are being used for other means.
- 14. Senior lacks documentation of purchases.**
 - a. If a senior doesn't have receipts or withdrawal slips, there is a good chance that someone else is taking that money.