



Elder Financial Fraud and Exploitation Prevention Education and Outreach Campaign

Report to the Legislature
January 15, 2018

Under 2017 Laws of Minnesota, chapter 94, article 1, section 7,
subdivision 6 (b) (1)-(3)

Contents

Background3

Narrative Background and Overview3

Media Campaign3

Outreach16

Recommendations18

Appendix: Earned Media21

Background

Under 2017 Laws of Minnesota, chapter 94, article 1, section 7, subdivision 6 (b) (1)-(3), the Minnesota Legislature appropriated \$200,000 in fiscal year 2018:

To create and execute a statewide education and outreach campaign to protect older and vulnerable adults and their caregivers from financial fraud and exploitation.

The education and outreach campaign must be statewide and must include, but is not limited to, the dissemination of information through television, print, or other media, training and outreach to senior living facilities, and the creation of a senior fraud toolkit.

A legislative report must be submitted by January 15, 2018 on the results of the statewide education and outreach campaign and provide recommendations for supporting ongoing efforts to prevent elder financial fraud and exploitation.

Narrative Background and Overview

In the past several years, the Minnesota Commerce Department, the state's consumer protection agency, has focused on preventing senior financial fraud and exploitation through education and enforcement. In particular, the Commerce Department has stepped up its efforts to protect seniors against financial fraud and scams, working closely with law enforcement, prosecutors, financial professionals, and consumer advocacy and community organizations.

Older adults are often targeted for financial exploitation. It is estimated that one out of every five persons over the age of 65 has been victimized by a financial swindle. One recent study estimated that older Americans are defrauded out of nearly \$3 billion each year. Many older adults are targeted because fraudsters know that they have equity in their homes, a lifetime of savings and steady retirement income. Older adults can also be vulnerable to financial exploitation because of isolation, cognitive decline or physical limitations and health problems.

The threat of fraud and scams targeting older and vulnerable adults is expected to grow as the senior population itself grows. In Minnesota, the number of people age 65 and over will double between 2010 and 2030. In many Greater Minnesota counties, more than 25% of the population is now over age 65.

Given these facts, the Minnesota Legislature recognized the need to support a statewide education and outreach campaign to protect older and vulnerable adults and their caregivers from financial fraud and exploitation.

Media Campaign

Requests for Proposal

The Commerce Department sought proposals to create and distribute a cost-effective media campaign to educate older and vulnerable adults and their caregivers about how to prevent financial fraud and exploitation.

In the RFP, Commerce estimated the costs of the proposal not to exceed \$150,000. The Department received four proposals and awarded the contract to the highest-scoring proposal, which was from the Minnesota advertising firm Clarity Coverdale Fury (CCF), which specializes in communications aimed at behavior change.

The contract with CCF allocated \$110,000 for media spending and \$38,000 for creative production, planning and research. The purchased advertising launched in late November, just prior to the Thanksgiving holiday weekend, and is scheduled to continue through January 2018. Advertising placements were prioritized for the November-December holiday season because it is a time when families and caregivers are gathered together.

Objectives

The media campaign has two main objectives:

- Raise awareness and communicate an empowering and prevention-focused campaign to older and vulnerable adults and their caregivers that helps identify and protect older/vulnerable adults from potential financial fraud and exploitation.
- Motivate these audiences to obtain the senior fraud prevention toolkit from the Commerce Department by viewing or downloading it on the Commerce website or by requesting a copy from Commerce by email or phone.

Statewide Strategy

An important goal of the media campaign was to identify the geographic locations of primary and secondary audiences (older adults and caregivers, respectively). Through an analysis of county-level census data, the vendor developed targeted geographic areas where both audiences resided in greater proportion to the county's general population.

Statewide target audiences

Primary: Minnesota adults, 65 and older.

Secondary: Caregivers, heavily skewed female 45-64

The education and outreach functions worked in concert to maximize the geographic reach of the campaign's impact. In-person outreach efforts can be especially labor- and time-intensive. As a result, some portions of the state could not be reached by in-person events. However, these populations were reached by newspaper and radio ads, as well as by direct mail, email and social media communications.

Message and Call to Action

The messaging of the campaign was positive and prevention-focused. Rather than dwelling on the threat of the problem, the messaging sought to empower older adults and caregivers with the necessary education to prevent fraud before it starts. To deliver the message, Commerce developed an informational toolkit for both audiences.

The theme of the campaign centers on the “Hang up on Fraud” message. The focus is not just on fraud committed over the phone, though the phone continues to be the avenue for many scam artists who target older adults. The message is that older adults can “hang up” on fraud, no matter how or where it may be coming from, by being informed and aware. Another key campaign message is that everyone has the power to stop fraud before it starts. Fraud can be prevented through greater awareness of the red flags for common scams that try to entice older adults into sending money or providing personal information based on scare tactics such as “you owe money” or a “loved one is in jail and needs bail money.”

While the toolkit covers a wider scope of fraud, the concept of “hang up” communicates that it is easy for older adults to protect themselves. “Hanging up” is a reminder to not be caught off guard, but to just end the call, delete the email or stop a conversation when something doesn’t seem right.

“Hang Up on Fraud” Senior Financial Fraud Prevention Toolkit

The Commerce Department, as the state’s consumer protection agency, oversees a wide cross-section of Minnesota’s financial industry. The Department serves as regulator for insurance companies, agents and brokers; real estate brokers and salespeople; property appraisers; collection agencies and debt collectors; and financial institutions (e.g., state banks and credit unions, money transmitters and mortgage lenders).

The Commerce Department created a senior financial fraud prevention toolkit, entitled “Hang Up on Fraud: Financial Fraud Prevention for Older Adults and Their Caregivers.” The toolkit gathers consumer information that the Department has developed over the past several years based upon consumer complaints about regulated entities or professionals; enforcement investigations and actions; and reported scams.

Toolkit Cover



The Hang Up on Fraud toolkit is a branded two-pocket folder with single-sheet inserts containing information and tips on a comprehensive range of topics related to preventing fraud and scams against older adults. The toolkit is also available for viewing and downloading at the Commerce Department website. The toolkit has been (and continues to be) highlighted on the Commerce homepage, with two new webpages added to the Commerce website specifically to facilitate viewing and downloading of the toolkit:

- [Stop Fraud Before It Starts](https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/your-money/senior-safe/) (https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/your-money/senior-safe/)
- [Toolkit Request Form](https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/your-money/senior-safe/toolkit-request.jsp) (https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/your-money/senior-safe/toolkit-request.jsp)

As of January 10, the Hang Up on Fraud toolkit had been viewed or downloaded more than 9,000 times from the Commerce website. In addition, as of January 10, more than 500 toolkits had been distributed at outreach events and nearly 600 had been mailed in response to requests.

In producing the content of the toolkit, the Commerce Department consulted with partner organizations, including AARP Minnesota and the Minnesota Elder Justice Center. The toolkit includes the following topics:

- **Resources.** Features contact information for the Commerce Department’s Consumer Services Center, Minnesota Adult Abuse Reporting Center (Minnesota Department of Human Services), Senior LinkAge Line (Minnesota Board on Aging), Minnesota Elder Justice Center and AARP Minnesota.
- **How to Protect Yourself.** Features general fraud prevention guidance.
- **Phone Scams.** Highlights common phone scams and their tactics, with the recommendation to just “hang up” on fraud.
- **Protect Your Financial Information.** Suggests proactive steps to prevent identity theft and emphasizes the importance of checking credit reports.
- **Starting the Conversation.** Offers family caregivers some basic prompts for talking with older family members to assess their vulnerability to financial fraud and exploitation and to discuss their overall financial situation.
- **Protect Yourself Online.** Provides guidance on securing online financial accounts, spotting email phishing attempts, and staying safe on social media.
- **Tips for Smart Investing.** Offers suggestions on how seniors can protect themselves and their money when making decisions about investing their savings.
- **Buying and Selling Bullion Products.** Provides tips on avoiding scams related to gold or other bullion products that are offered as investment opportunities.
- **Pension Advance Scams.** Identifies red flags for scams that target retirees’ pension income and suggests questions for seniors to consider.
- **Timeshare Resale Scams.** Identifies red flags for scams that target timeshare owners who are looking to sell, and offers guidance to avoid fraud when selling a timeshare.

Paid Media Strategy

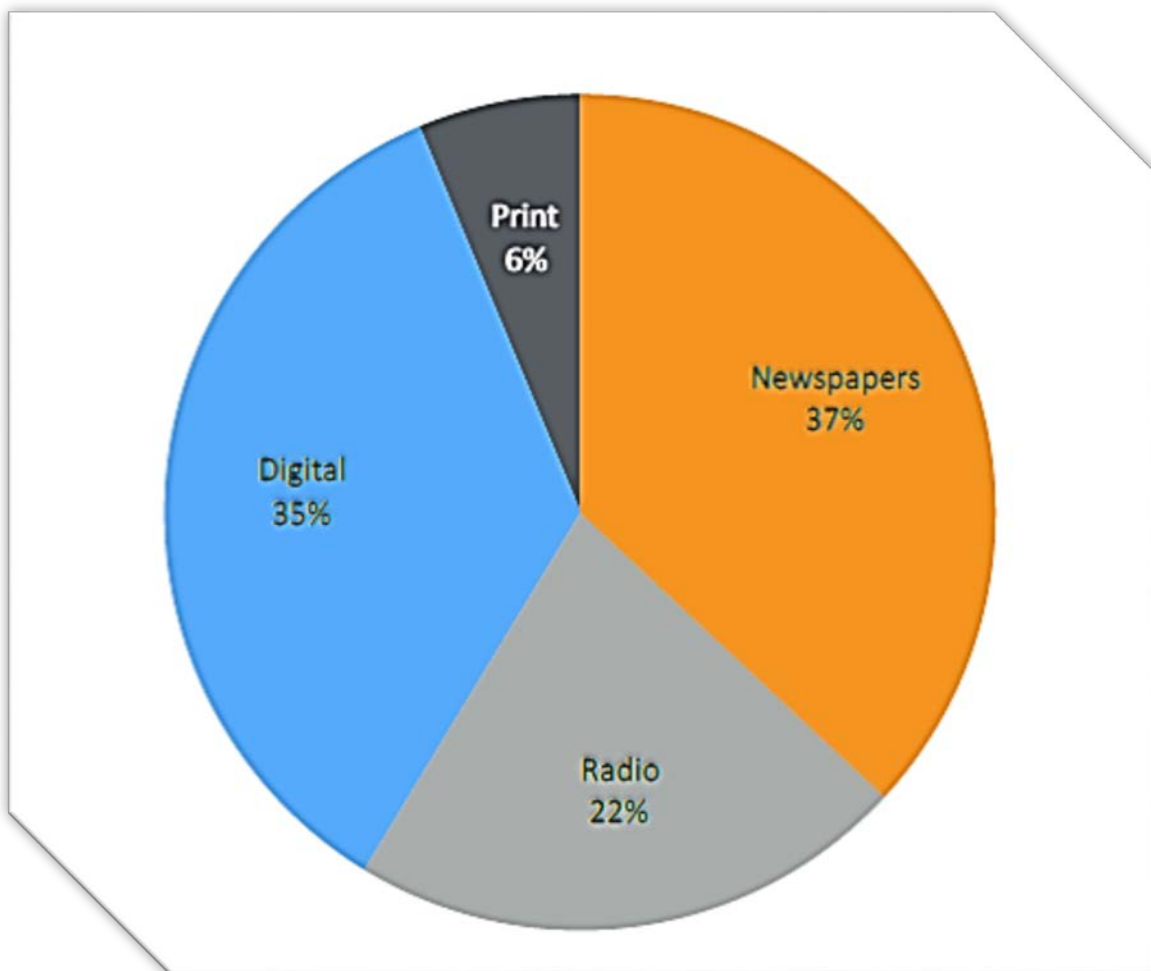
The Department determined that a mixture of newspaper, print, radio and digital advertising (including social media and email marketing) were the most cost-effective options to maximize the impact of the media campaign.

Print and radio advertising were prioritized in counties with the highest percentage of adults over 65. The reach of the campaign's message was enhanced with digital media purchases (including paid search, social media, native ads, display banner ads and email marketing).

The two graphs on this page and the next page show the breakdown of the media spending budget by category and tactic.

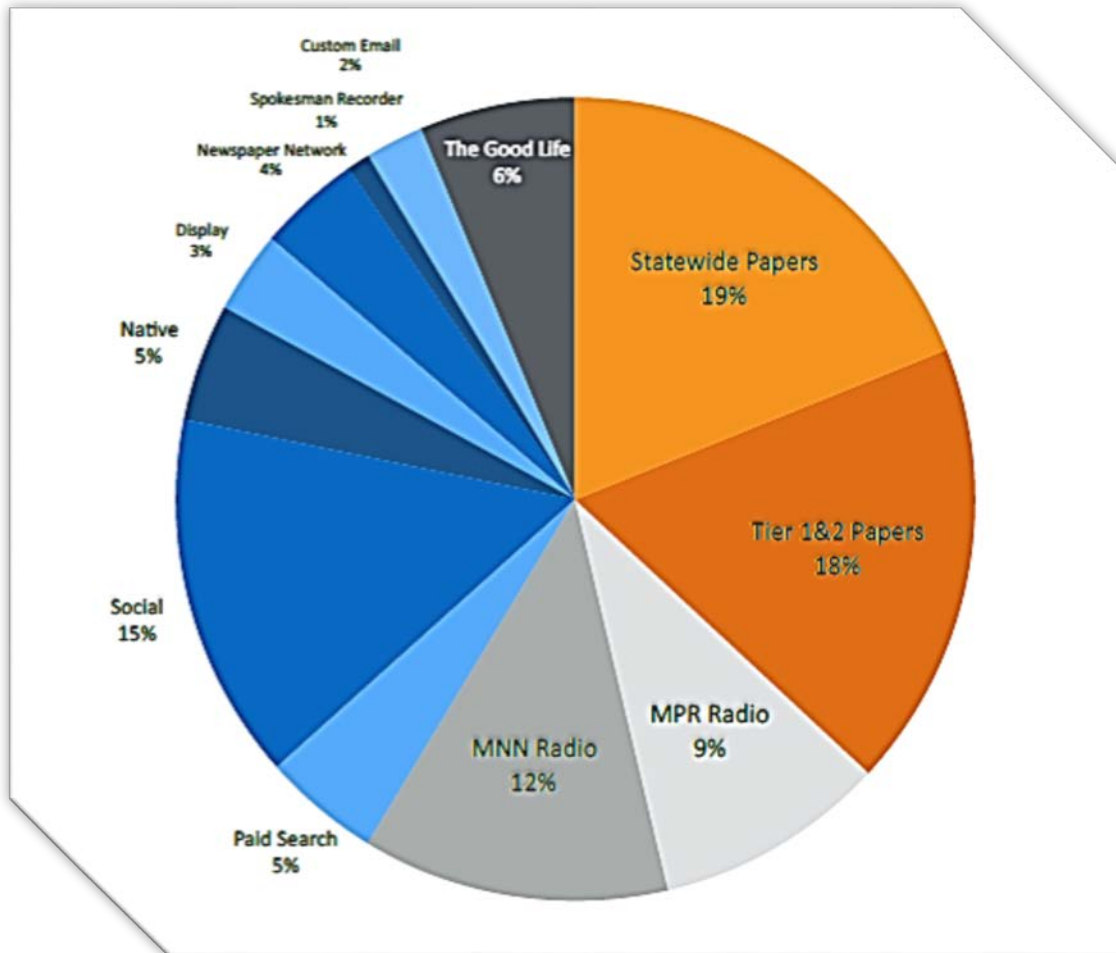
Media Budget by Category

This graph shows the breakdown of the media budget by general category



Media Budget by Tactic


This graph shows a more detailed breakdown of the media budget by tactic



Newspapers Ads

The Hang Up on Fraud campaign featured display print advertisements that appeared in daily and weekly newspapers statewide (excluding the Star Tribune and Pioneer Press). These ads appeared four times in each newspaper (with additional placements for some newspapers in Greater Minnesota areas with especially high concentrations of older adults).

Sample Newspaper Ad



**HANG UP
ON FRAUD.**

Stop fraud before it starts. Get a FREE fraud prevention toolkit for older adults.

EMAIL:
consumer.protection@state.mn.us

CALL:
651-539-1600 / 800-657-3602
(toll-free outside the Twin Cities)

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Newspapers Statewide

The Hang Up on Fraud general statewide newspaper advertising strategy was comprehensive, including 272 daily and weekly newspapers, with total circulation of 1.2 million, through the Minnesota Newspaper Association. The black-and-white, two-column display ads appeared four times in each newspaper.

Tier 1 & 2 Newspapers

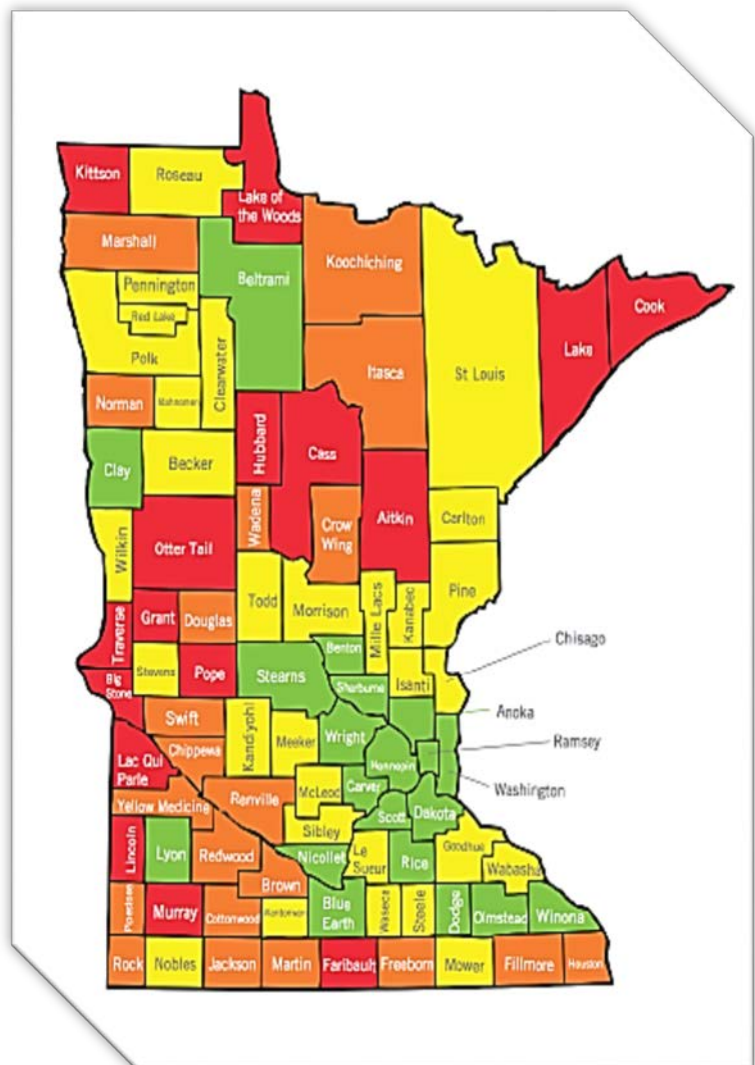
The newspaper advertising strategy targeted additional (and larger) ads for newspapers in “hot zone” counties based on higher concentrations of the target audiences in the local population.

The map and table on this page show the categorization of counties based on the “hot zone” analysis.

In addition to four two-column ads, the local newspapers located in counties identified as Tier 1 and Tier 2 “hot zones” also published four quarter-page versions of the ad. Total estimated impressions were 445,530.

Digital Newspapers

Digital versions of the newspaper ad also appeared on the websites of 64 participating newspapers statewide. These ads appeared over the course of four weeks, with total impressions of 838,219.



Hot Zones by Percentage of 65+ in Each County

Hot Zone Priority	Adults 65+	Share of Audience	Women 45-64	Share of Audience
● Tier One (16 Counties)	48,788	6%	29,697	4%
● Tier Two (21 Counties)	83,413	11%	55,802	8%
● Tier Three (30 Counties)	154,603	21%	125,514	17%
● Tier Four (21 Counties)	466,759	62%	524,588	71%
MN Counties - 87	753,563	100%	735,701	100%

Radio

The Hang Up on Fraud media campaign featured radio advertisements which were broadcast on stations that, cumulatively, delivered a statewide audience reach.

Minnesota News Network (MNN)

The Minnesota News Network includes 44 stations throughout the state, providing a statewide reach. Announcer-read 30-second advertisements aired 12 times each week on all stations in the network for four weeks.

Here is the text of the MNN live announcer-read script:

Do you know the red flags of a fraud?

Every day across Minnesota, older adults are targeted by scammers. Sometimes over the phone.

Common examples of fraud include:

A person calling from Microsoft, claiming your computer has a virus.

A person calling saying you've won a foreign lottery.

A person posing as a loved one in need of bail.

Hang up on fraud. Call toll-free at 800-657-3602 to get your FREE fraud prevention toolkit from the Minnesota Commerce Department.

That's 800-657-3602.

Minnesota Public Radio (MPR)

Announcer-read advertisements (known as sponsorships in public radio) were broadcast on MPR stations statewide. These 15-second live announcements aired 10 times per week for four weeks on each station.

Here is the text of the MPR live announcer-read script:

You have the power to stop fraud before it starts.

Hang up on fraud and stop scammers from trying to take your hard-earned money.

Call toll-free at 800-657-3602 to get information on fraud prevention from the Minnesota Commerce Department.

That's 800-657-3602.

“The Good Life” (Star Tribune quarterly lifestyle guide)

The Star Tribune publishes a quarterly lifestyle supplement, called “The Good Life,” targeted to adults over age 55. Distribution includes 180,000 copies inserted in the daily newspaper and 15,000 copies placed in racks at selected locations. In addition, the online version is expected to have 125,000 targeted digital impressions.

The next edition of this supplement (February 22) will include a half-page color version of the Hang Up on Fraud advertisement.

Ad for “The Good Life” Supplement



**HANG UP
ON FRAUD**

Beware of scammers targeting older adults.
Get a FREE fraud prevention toolkit:

EMAIL
consumer.protection@state.mn.us

CALL
651-539-1600 / 800-657-3602
(toll-free outside the Twin Cities)

VISIT
mn.gov/commerce

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Targeted Email Marketing

The Star Tribune offers a customized email marketing list with about 55,000 addresses of family caregivers of older adults. A prior mailing to this list by another organization experienced significant success, with a “click to open” rate of over 16%.

As part of the Hang Up on Fraud campaign, the Commerce Department sent a customized email message (see next page) to this list, with a direct click-through to the Department’s webpage to download the senior fraud prevention toolkit. The email elicited a very successful response. The open rate was 21% with a click-through rate of 14.1% for emails that were opened (far higher than the benchmark of 4.2%). Commerce website metrics showed a dramatic spike in traffic to the Hang Up on Fraud webpages immediately after this email was sent.

Targeted Email Marketing



While it may be an uncomfortable topic, we encourage Minnesotans to take the time this holiday season to talk with older family members about how they can protect themselves from fraud.

For example:

- Never give out personal information to strangers in response to calls, emails or text messages, regardless of who they claim to be or from where they claim to be calling.
- Be alert for behaviors that may indicate your parent is a victim of financial exploitation, such as unpaid bills, an unexplained lack of money or the sudden appearance of a new "friend."

To start the conversation, get the FREE Financial Fraud Prevention Toolkit from the Minnesota Department of Commerce. It provides the information you need to prevent fraud for yourself or a loved one — from empowering you to "hang up on fraud" if you receive a suspicious phone call to identifying a potential email scam or investment fraud.

Download your free toolkit by visiting the Commerce Department website, or request a copy by emailing consumer.protection@state.mn.us or calling 651-539-1600 or (toll-free) 800-657-3602.



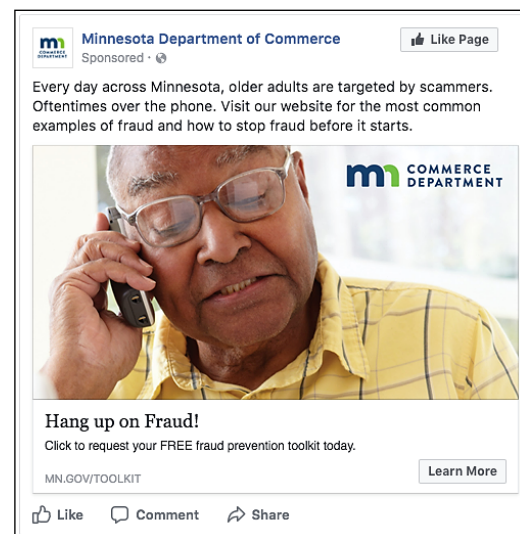
Minnesota Department of Commerce
[Unsubscribe](#) | [View this email in your browser](#)

Digital

Facebook

These advertisements are targeted to appear on the Facebook feeds of both seniors and caregivers in Minnesota. The ads include a direct click-through to Commerce’s Hang Up on Fraud website to download or request the toolkit. These ads are running from the end of November through the end of January. The number of impressions as of January 10 was 941,977 – with a click-through rate of 1.05% (above the benchmark of 0.90%).

Sample Facebook Ads



Paid Search

Hang Up on Fraud advertisements appeared when Minnesota online users searched over 20 keywords or phrases in Google related to seniors and fraud or scams. These ads include a direct click-through to Commerce’s Hang Up on Fraud website to download or request the toolkit. An advantage of the paid search option is that it only costs when a user actually clicks on an ad. These ads are running from the end of November through the end of January. The number of impressions as of January 10 was 2,341 – with a click-through rate of 7.00% (far above the benchmark of 1.91%).

Keyword combinations with the strongest responses included:

- +Phone +Scam – 11.92% CTR
- “Phone Scam” – 11.46% CTR
- “Is This A Scam” – 6.82% CTR
- +What +Is +Fraud – 3.03% CTR
- “Fraud Prevention” – 2.05% CTR

Sample Paid Search Ads

Protect Yourself from Fraud
MN Department of Commerce
www.mn.gov
Fraud against older adults takes many forms. Know the red flags.

Recognize and Stop Phone Fraud
Don't Become Another Victim
www.mn.gov
Minnesota Department of Commerce
protects against financial fraud.

Recognize and Stop Phone Scam
Don't Become Another Victim
www.mn.gov
Minnesota Department of Commerce
protects against financial scam.

Banner Ads

Programmatic display banner ads for Hang Up on Fraud appeared on a range of internet sites, targeted to Minnesota online users. These ads included a direct click-through to Commerce's Hang Up on Fraud website to download or request the toolkit. These ads ran from late November until the beginning of January. The number of impressions was 1,406,001 – with a click-through rate of 0.13% (above the benchmark of 0.08%).

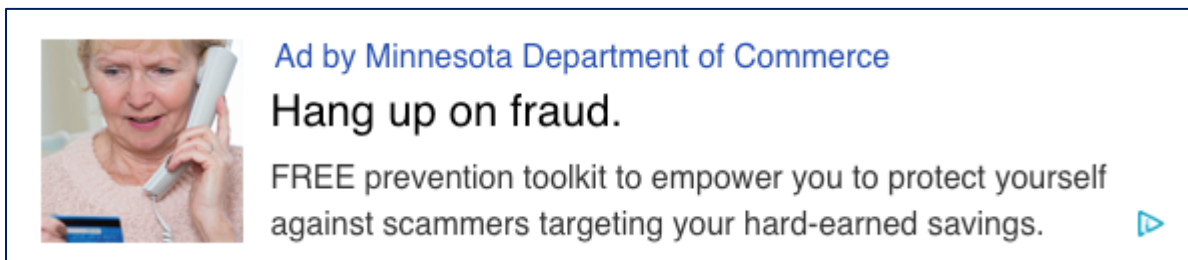
Sample Banner Ad



Native Ads

Native ads for Hang Up on Fraud appeared as sponsored or related content on internet pages with similar content, targeted to Minnesota online users. These ads included a direct click-through to Commerce's Hang Up on Fraud website to download or request the toolkit. These ads began to run shortly before the Christmas holiday and will continue through end the January. As of January 10, the number of impressions was 442,445 with a click-through rate of 0.11% (in the lower range of the 0.08-1.00% benchmark).

Sample Native Ads





Ad by Minnesota Department of Commerce

Stop fraud before it starts.

FREE toolkit to empower seniors and families to protect themselves against scammers targeting their savings.



Media for Underserved Populations

Both print and online advertisements for the Hang Up on Fraud campaign were placed in the Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder and Insight News, which serve the state's African American community. The 3.5"x4" advertisements appeared four times in each weekly publication. Estimated print impressions was 140,000 for each publication.

In early 2018, additional advertisements will be placed in media that serve the state's Latino and Hmong communities.

Print Ad in Spokesman-Recorder and Insight News

**HANG UP
ON FRAUD.**

Beware of scammers targeting older adults.
Get a FREE fraud prevention toolkit:

EMAIL:
consumer.protection@state.mn.edu

CALL:
651-539-1600 / 800-657-3602
(toll-free outside the Twin Cities)

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Outreach

As part of the senior financial fraud prevention campaign, the Commerce Department has to date participated in 27 outreach events across the state to make presentations and share information about fraud prevention. Through these efforts, Commerce reached an estimated 800 older Minnesotans and their caregivers. Partners in these events have included: AARP Minnesota, Minnesota Elder Justice Center, Better Business Bureau of

Minnesota and North Dakota, Minnesota Department of Human Services, Minnesota Board on Aging, Senior LinkAge Line and Minnesota TRIAD (law enforcement and seniors).

As a result of these outreach activities, more than 500 toolkits have been distributed directly by Commerce staff to Minnesotans. In addition, in connection with these events, Commerce staff were interviewed by five different news station in Greater Minnesota about preventing fraud and ordering the Hang Up on Fraud toolkit. (See Appendix for earned media coverage.)



Commerce also hosted several event across Minnesota and invited partners to provide localized information and resources. Law enforcement were present to inform community members how they can report suspected fraud locally. The events were promoted through the local media, partners and distributing flyers to senior housing in the area.

Outreach Meetings

To date, Commerce staff have participated in senior fraud prevention outreach events in the following communities:

Twin Cities Metro Area

- Apple Valley
- Eagan
- Edina
- Hastings
- Hugo
- Inver Grove Heights
- Lakeville (multiple locations)
- Minneapolis (multiple locations)
- Roseville
- Saint Paul

Central Minnesota

- Hutchinson
- Saint Cloud

Southern Minnesota

- Austin

- Mankato
- New Ulm
- North Mankato
- Rochester
- Saint Peter
- Sleepy Eye
- Springfield

Northern Minnesota

- Duluth (multiple locations)
- Moorhead

Direct Mail Outreach

Senior Housing

In January 2018, the Commerce Department is sending sample copies of the Hang Up on Fraud toolkit to a statewide list of nearly 1,500 senior living and residential care facilities as well as community centers that provide programming for older and vulnerable adults.

The mailing is addressed to the manager of these facilities. In addition to a copy of the toolkit, it includes a cover letter highlighting the importance of financial fraud prevention and introducing the resources available to help protect older Minnesotans. Managers of these facilities are invited to request additional copies of the toolkit or download it from the Commerce website. The letter also includes the opportunity for Commerce staff or partner organizations to make an on-site fraud prevention presentation to staff, older adult residents and/or their family caregivers associated with these facilities.

Houses of Worship

Also in January 2018, the Commerce Department is sending a postcard mailing to a statewide list of nearly 6,000 houses of worship. This effort recognizes that houses of worship are key, trusted intermediaries in reaching older Minnesotans and their family caregivers.

The postcard mailing highlights the availability of the Hang Up on Fraud toolkit and invites them to either download the toolkit from the Commerce website or request copies from the Department. The mailing also includes the opportunity for Commerce staff or partner organizations to make on-site fraud prevention presentations to older Minnesotans and/or their caregivers at these houses of worship.

Recommendations

Older Minnesotans and their caregivers express a compelling need for convenient access to easy-to-understand and “actionable” information that empowers them to protect their finances and prevent fraud. A general public awareness media campaign on senior fraud prevention, while useful, would not have addressed this specific need, would not have targeted the relevant audiences and would have been prohibitively expensive. Therefore,

the Hang Up on Fraud project developed a media and outreach campaign that targeted the specific audiences (seniors and caregivers), offered a specific call to action (“hang up on fraud”) and provided a specific resource (the toolkit) to support this action.

The results of the Hang Up on Fraud campaign suggest that targeted online communications can offer highly effective channels for reaching older Minnesotans and their caregivers. For example, targeted emails and internet ads produced strong responses, with the ease of clicking through to directly view or download the Hang Up on Fraud toolkit from the Commerce website. However, it is also important to recognize that some seniors are either not on the internet at all or are not entirely comfortable with accessing and using online information. Also, older adults continue to be heavy consumers of traditional print media. So it is still important to deliver communications through more traditional channels and provide seniors with the option of requesting and receiving the toolkit in physical form. Ultimately, effective communication requires repetition. To have the greatest impact, it is necessary to have multiple messages delivered through multiple channels, with multiple opportunities for the target audiences to pay attention and engage.

Direct outreach is also an essential element in a comprehensive public education strategy to reach older Minnesotans and caregivers with the message of “hanging up on fraud.” With seniors, it is important to meet them where they are – literally. Often, that means going right to where they live – in senior living residences. Outreach activities with this campaign have shown that older Minnesotans appreciate and respond to direct engagement. Face-to-face interaction provides some of the best learning opportunities, especially when so many seniors have questions about their own experiences or fears. Outreach also provides the opportunity to put toolkits directly in the hands of seniors and get their attention in a way that other media channels do not.

Through this initial Hang Up on Fraud campaign, the Commerce Department has also learned that one of the most effective outreach methods for reaching seniors and caregivers is by working through trusted intermediaries such as senior residences, houses of worship, local community groups and service clubs, and financial institutions. Their sponsorship and hosting of senior fraud prevention presentations is an important element in these outreach efforts.

To be effective, direct outreach is labor-intensive and time-consuming, and it involves travel throughout the state. Having staff dedicated to this responsibility is important to make it work.

Finally, the reality is that Minnesota’s senior population will continue to grow – and it is growing rapidly. Every year, from now through 2030, it is projected that 60,000 more Minnesotans will turn 65. Minnesotans are also living longer, and with increased age comes increased vulnerability. Accordingly, the need to protect older Minnesotans against financial fraud and exploitation will only continue to grow. That means senior financial fraud prevention in Minnesota requires a sustained effort.

Given these considerations, the Commerce Department recommends the following:

- As Minnesota’s older population continues to grow, the Hang Up on Fraud campaign should continue as an ongoing effort by the State of Minnesota to empower older Minnesotans and caregivers to prevent financial fraud and exploitation.

- This ongoing effort should include the development, as appropriate, of additional information materials – including print, online and video – that provide the most useful, “actionable” information that will enable older Minnesotans and caregivers to prevent financial fraud and exploitation.
- This ongoing effort should include dedicated staff to provide increased outreach and education activities statewide, focusing on senior fraud prevention presentations with senior living facilities, houses of worship, community groups and service clubs, financial institutions and professionals, and local law enforcement.
- An annual budget of \$500,000 should be appropriated to support these ongoing activities that will protect older Minnesotans and their finances.

Appendix: Earned Media



Learning session to help protect seniors from fraud



Posted: Dec 07, 2017 8:07 AM CST

ROCHESTER, Minn. (KTTC) - The Minnesota Department of Commerce wants to make sure seniors don't fall victim to common scams and fraud.

The office has launched a Hang Up on Fraud! initiative, hosting free public forums across the state to inform those that might be vulnerable to losing money through false threats.

Thursday, the Rochester Public Library hosts a session to give older Minnesotans a better idea at the warning signs to watch out for.

According to the Department of Commerce, one in every five people older than 65 have been victimized by a financial swindle.

Thursday's event starts at 12:30 p.m.



The Daily Journal

FERGUS FALLS, MINNESOTA

BE PART OF THE COMMUNITY

Hang up on fraud: Minn. Commerce Department launches senior fraud prevention campaign



Minnesota Department of Commerce Puts a 'Hang Up' on Fraud for Senior Citizens



December 08, 2017 08:43 AM

(ABC 6 News) - A series of public forums are being held across Minnesota for seniors and their families to learn more about potential fraud geared toward older adults.

On Thursday the Minnesota Department of Commerce provided information on how families and caregivers can protect seniors and their money from common scams. Jen Fox is the Director of Outreach for the Department of Commerce. She said during the holiday and tax season scammers are persistent so if you suspect something say something.

"Talk to your friends about it share the information, share if you think you have been frauded, report frauds and scams that you see and call the department of commerce," said Fox.

The event is in conjunction with this month's launch of the Commerce Department's "Hang Up On Fraud" initiative.

ST. PAUL — The Minnesota Commerce Department is convening a series of free public forums to provide information for older Minnesotans and their family caregivers on how to protect themselves and their money from common scams and fraud.

“These events are in conjunction with the launch this month of the Commerce Department’s Hang Up on Fraud! initiative,” said Commerce Commissioner Jessica Looman. “This is a statewide public information and outreach campaign to promote the availability of a new financial fraud prevention toolkit for older Minnesotans and their families.”

“The number of seniors and vulnerable adults who are targeted by scammers is alarming,” said Representative Paul Rosenthal (DFL-Edina), who carried legislation establishing the fraud prevention campaign. “Financial fraud can completely upend someone’s life and makes it more difficult for seniors and families to protect what they have worked so hard to earn. These proactive measures will help Minnesotans protect themselves from fraud and permanent financial hardships.”

Older adults are often targeted for financial exploitation. It is estimated that one out of every five persons over the age of 65 has been victimized by a financial swindle, with older Americans defrauded out of nearly \$3 billion each year. The threat of senior financial fraud is expected to grow as the senior population itself grows.

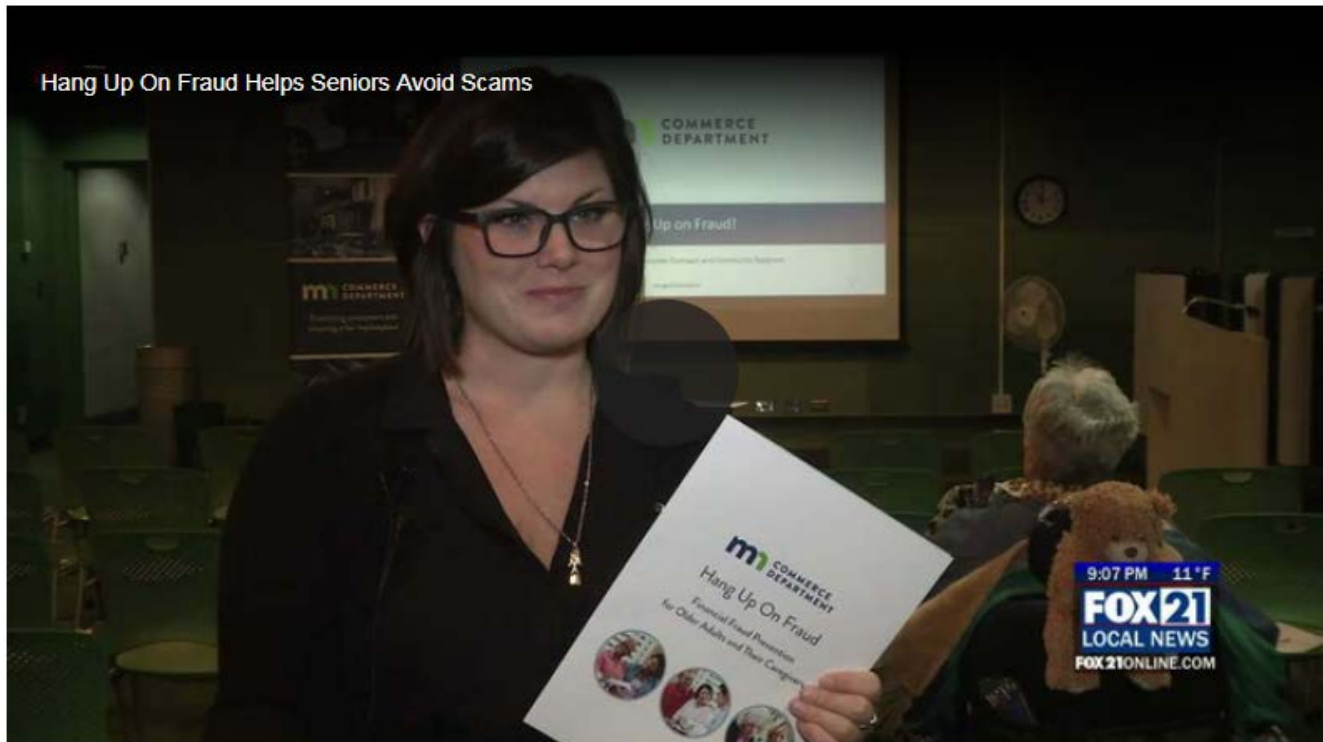
To provide older Minnesotans and their loved ones with the knowledge and tools to stop fraud before it starts, the Commerce Department is working with law enforcement, social service agencies and groups such as AARP Minnesota, Minnesota Elder Justice Center and Senior LinkAge Line (Minnesota Board on Aging).

A free copy of the Commerce Department’s financial fraud prevention toolkit can be requested by email at consumer.protection@state.mn.us or by phone at 800-657-3602. It is also available on the Commerce Department website (mn.gov/commerce).

Steps to Protect Elderly from Fraud

According to the Investor Protection Trust nearly one out of every five elderly American is the victim of fraud.

December 12, 2017 by [Lauren Leigh](#)



DULUTH, Minn.- Elderly Americans the ages 65 and up are estimated to be frauded out of nearly three billion dollars each year. To prevent this from happening to Northlanders, Hang Up On Fraud is the key message, the Minnesota Commerce Department wants Northlanders to remember.

[Visit fox21online.com](#)

Duluth Public Library Holds Hang Up on Fraud Forum



The Minnesota Department of Commerce was educating people on Tuesday about protecting against fraud with a free forum. | Photo: WDIO

WDIO

December 12, 2017 07:11 PM

DULUTH - The Minnesota Department of Commerce held a free forum at the Duluth Public Library on Tuesday to provide information for older Minnesotans and their families about fraud.