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GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Office of the Attorney General

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**CONSUMER ALERT (COVID-19): PROTECTING DISTRICT SENIORS FROM
FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE**

*OAG Will Enforce the Law Against Anyone Who Harms Seniors and Vulnerable
Residents During the Coronavirus Pandemic*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Attorney General Karl A. Racine today issued a consumer alert with tips and resources to help District seniors and other vulnerable residents protect themselves from abuse and exploitation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the District’s nearly 83,000 seniors are at higher risk of exploitation or abuse because they must rely on others for assistance. District seniors, their caretakers, and community advocates should report any suspected wrongdoing, abuse, or exploitation to Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), Adult Protective Services (APS), and OAG’s Elder Justice section at (202) 727-3807 or elderjustice@dc.gov.

“Many District seniors are at risk of abuse and exploitation because they must rely on others for money management help, healthcare, and daily tasks,” said AG Racine. **“Now more than ever, we urge District residents to be vigilant and report any type of abuse or fraud to MPD, Adult Protective Services, and the Office of the Attorney General. My office will investigate complaints and bring civil and criminal cases against anyone who harms our vulnerable residents during this pandemic.”**

Tips for Seniors

We urge all District residents to be on the lookout for fraud, scams, or other forms of abuse targeting District seniors and other vulnerable people. **Take the following steps to protect yourself against exploitation:**

- Talk to your bank about identifying a trusted emergency contact the bank should reach out to if you are unable to communicate yourself.

- Always seek the advice of a trusted family member or friend before giving out personal or financial information online, over the phone, or in person.
- Ask a trusted family member or friend for help with determining whether you qualify for emergency benefits, and to sign up.
- Watch out for benefits fraud—do not trust anyone claiming to be an aid worker offering to help you enroll in emergency benefits.
- Call a family member, friend, or known neighbor if you need help with errands—be vigilant and cautious if a stranger knocks on your door offering to pick up groceries, prescriptions, or other goods.
- Check the website for the [Department of Aging and Community Living](#), along with their [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) accounts, to see whether they are providing any services you need, including food distribution.
- Get [powers of attorney](#) in place right now, if possible.
- [Sign up](#) for OAG email alerts, and check <https://oag.dc.gov/coronavirus> for updates.

If you are a District senior experiencing abuse, neglect, or exploitation, or you are aware of a senior being victimized, do not hesitate to get help by:

- Filing a report with APS by calling their 24-hour hotline at (202) 541-3950
- Contacting OAG’s Elder Justice Section at (202) 727-3807 or elderjustice@dc.gov

OAG’s Work to Protect Seniors

The Financial Exploitation of Vulnerable Adults and the Elderly Amendment Act was enacted in November 2016 with the help of Councilmember Anita Bonds and the D.C. Council. The law granted OAG additional investigative powers around elder financial exploitation cases. It also gave OAG authority to pursue civil relief, including fines, revocation of licenses and permits, freezing bank accounts, and preventing perpetrators from working with elders or otherwise vulnerable adults. OAG also criminally prosecutes individuals and organizations that are legally required to report suspicions of exploitation to APS but fail to do so.

In 2019, OAG established an Elder Justice Section to pursue civil cases involving financial exploitation of District elders and vulnerable adults. The team also provides [informational resources](#) to residents about their rights, common scams, and other relevant issues. The Elder Justice Section has filed several cases this year:

Granddaughter Steals Grandmother’s Credit Card, Forges Checks

In March, OAG’s Elder Justice Section filed a lawsuit against a Maryland resident, alleging she stole over \$14,000 from her grandmother, a bedridden 90-year-old District resident. The defendant allegedly made at least 77 purchases—ranging from indoor skydiving and go-kart racing to vacations and casino nights—totaling over \$9,200 on the victim’s credit card, and forged the victim’s signature on a check for almost \$5000. OAG is seeking a court order barring the defendant from assuming financial responsibility for an elderly person in the future, while requiring relief for the money stolen and up to \$5,000 in civil penalties for each violation of the law.

D.C. Woman Marries Senior with Dementia, Depletes Half of His Savings

Also in March, OAG filed suit against a 27-year-old District resident who allegedly entered into a relationship with and then married a 73-year-old suffering from dementia in order to exploit him. The defendant purportedly used this relationship to secure a Power of Attorney, granting her control over the victim's finances. She then spent more over \$200,000 of the victim's savings on digital purchases via Apple, Amazon, and Hulu, vacations in Montreal, Hawaii, Miami, and the Virgin Islands, and other expenses. OAG is asking the court to bar her from assuming financial responsibility for any vulnerable adults and require payment of up to \$5,000 in civil penalties per violation of the law. OAG is also seeking a court order forcing the defendant to repay the victim.

Nursing Facility Employee Forges Checks

In 2018, OAG filed a lawsuit against a nursing facility employee and three co-conspirators who allegedly stole checks from two elderly residents' rooms, forged signatures, and deposited \$11,475 in their own accounts. OAG is seeking \$35,000 in penalties for each perpetrator in this ongoing case.

OAG Partnership with the United States Attorney's Office (USAO) for the District of Columbia

In 2019, an OAG attorney was named as a Special Assistant United States Attorney (SAUSA) to work at USAO. The SAUSA reviews reports of suspected exploitation—assessing more than 100 so far—and can pursue criminal charges to hold perpetrators of financial crimes against elders accountable. This year, the SAUSA had a direct role in reaching resolutions in two criminal elder exploitation cases.

Rashad Liverpool and Robert Tillery

The first of these cases involved two former SunTrust Bank Employees. Liverpool, 27, and Tillery, 44 conducted after-hours home visits to a 72-year-old client residing in Ward 7. Through deception and undue influence, they drained over \$80,000 of the victim's funds into accounts they controlled and used the money for their own benefit. The perpetrators pleaded guilty to one count of Financial Exploitation of an Elderly Person or Vulnerable Adult and agreed to pay restitution. They will be sentenced in Superior Court on June 16. More information is available [HERE](#).

Moureen Masika

The second involved a home health aide. Masika, 31, stole over \$3000 from an 88-year-old client with dementia using cash back from debit card purchases at CVS. She was found guilty of Financial Exploitation of an Elderly Person or Vulnerable Adult and Second-Degree Theft in the first known trial involving the Financial Exploitation charge. A Superior Court judge sentenced her to a suspended sentence and a long period of probation. She was also ordered to pay \$1800 in restitution, an additional \$200 to the Victims of Crime Act Fund, and barred from working as a home health aide for three years. Masika has since filed a notice of appeal. More information is available [HERE](#).

OAG's COVID-19 Resources

In response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) is teleworking until at least April 27. You can access OAG services online and over the phone during our telework period at:

- **Website:** oag.dc.gov
- **Email:** oag@dc.gov
- **Phone:** (202) 727-3400
- **Fax:** (202) 347-8922
- **TTY:** (202) 727-3400
- **More information about COVID-19 is at:** www.oag.dc.gov/coronavirus

Know Your Rights: Read [OAG's Consumer Alert](#) to protect yourself from scams, price gouging, discrimination, and to get information about consumer, worker, and tenant rights during the pandemic. This alert is also available in [Amharic](#), [Chinese](#), [French](#), [Korean](#), [Spanish](#) and [Vietnamese](#).

Get the latest OAG updates by signing up for our newsletter: www.oag.dc.gov/newsletter

For more District Government updates and how you can prevent the spread of germs visit: coronavirus.dc.gov

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The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) works to protect and defend District residents, enforce District laws, and provide legal advice to D.C. government agencies. Karl A. Racine leads OAG as the first elected Attorney General for the District of Columbia. Visit www.oag.dc.gov to learn more.

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