

# Understand Your Legal Issue

Solve Your Legal Problem

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Have you met someone

## Sweetheart Scams: Have you met someone new? Don't give them money!

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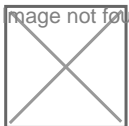
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### **Romance or “Sweetheart” scams are one of the most common fraudulent schemes**

- Florida is among the states with the most victims
  - February, especially around Valentine’s Day, is the most vulnerable time of the year
  - Seniors are the age-group most often targeted by scammers
  - Seniors are more trusting of strangers and more likely to help people in trouble
  - Many seniors have lost a spouse or partner and are looking for companionship
  - Seniors have accumulated a lifetime of savings and often own homes and other property
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### **Could you become a target?**

- You meet someone new
- In person at the gym, church, the store, the library, a waiting room
- Online on Facebook, on Messenger, or a dating website
- Your new friend spends lots of time speaking to you, sending lots of emails or texts
- Many times your new friend lives or works outside the U.S., so they can’t meet in person
- The relationship develops very quickly
- You make an emotional connection; you are not so alone any more
- Then suddenly your new friend needs money or help from you to solve a crisis
- Family situation? Medical emergency? Business opportunity? Government problem?
- Travel expenses? Lost wallet? Asks you to deposit a check into your account or cash a

check for them?

- It may start with a small favor but your new friend keep making more requests
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## **This new friend may be tricking you!**

- They may not be who they say they are; scammers use fake photos, create false identities, even make up locations
    - They go to great lengths to invent a profile that appeals especially to you
    - They may say they own property near you, convince you they know your friends, work in your same industry, have similar interests, belong to the same clubs, be looking for a life partner just like you
    - They read and study your personal information on social media or the Internet or "sucker lists"
  - This person could be a criminal who is trying to steal your money along with your self confidence
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## **Protect yourself**

- Don't give out your credit card information or bank account number; don't do wire transfers
  - Don't transfer property or cars to your new friend or add their names to titles or deeds
  - Don't buy them costly items or borrow against your home or retirement account to help your new friend
  - Don't buy gift cards or iTunes cards to send
  - Don't send revealing photos or intimate videotapes of yourself to your new friend
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## **If you've been a victim, take action to regain your power**

- Contact local law enforcement
  - Also call the Florida Attorney General Fraud Helpline 866-966-7226
  - File an Internet Crime Complaint with the FBI at [www.ic3.gov](http://www.ic3.gov)
  - You may help an investigator build a case to stop others from getting scammed or defrauded

- Get a 2nd opinion: consult people you trust if you are suspicious or concerned
    - Consider speaking with your financial advisor, accountant, attorney, clergy person, and/or close friends and family
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## Get free legal advice and referrals

- Call the Florida Senior Legal Helpline at 1-888-895-7873
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Last reviewed and updated: January 30, 2019.

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[Senior Legal Helpline of Bay Area Legal Services Sweetheart Scam Flyer \(PDF\)](#)

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Printed: March 25, 2019

<http://www.floridalawhelp.org/node/636/sweetheart-scams-have-you-met-someone-new-dont-give-them-money>

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