

AG Schimel: Partners with Wisconsin banks and credit unions to curtail elder financial abuse

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MILWAUKEE, Wis. – Attorney General Brad Schimel today released a new [training video](#) aimed at educating tellers and other banking professionals on how to spot financial elder abuse and report it, alongside the Wisconsin Bankers Association, Wisconsin Credit Union League, and Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions (DFI).

“Elder financial abuse is growing rapidly in Wisconsin; from 2016 to 2017, it increased 17.5 percent,” said Attorney General Brad Schimel. “Tellers at financial institutions are at the frontlines of financial scams. By offering this free training on how to spot financial exploitation at the teller window, we can create an easy defense that will protect consumers.”

The Department of Justice (DOJ) produced the ten-minute training video with assistance from the Wisconsin Bankers Association, Wisconsin Credit Union League, and members of the Attorney General’s Task Force on Elder Abuse. The video details common red-flags that tellers in financial institutions should watch for when interacting with older adults who are often susceptible to financial exploitation.

“I applaud Attorney General Brad Schimel and his team at the Department of Justice for producing this video and encourage everyone at banks and credit unions in Wisconsin to watch it,” DFI Secretary Jay Risch said, adding, “Any one of them could be the person who spots the abuse and saves one of our seniors from becoming a victim.”

“Identifying and preventing elder financial abuse has always been a priority for

Wisconsin bankers,” said Rose Oswald Poels, President & CEO of the Wisconsin Bankers Association. “We were pleased to work with the Attorney General’s Task Force and the Department of Justice team to develop this useful resource to help our members with this critical mission.”

A [report](#) from 2015 estimates that elders lose nearly \$35 billion annually to elder financial abuse. The report also shows that the impact of financial exploitation extends beyond just economic damage, with 954,000 seniors skipping meals due to the abuse.

“The impact of financial elder abuse on Wisconsin seniors is real and growing,” said Brett Thompson, President & CEO of the Wisconsin Credit Union League. “We applaud Attorney General Schimel’s efforts on this important issue and credit unions across the state look forward to utilizing this new educational tool to better serve and protect their senior members.”

The Wisconsin Bankers Association and Wisconsin Credit Union League will be distributing the training video to members and encouraging them to utilize this new tool for their employees. The video will be made available for download for any financial institution or can be viewed on Attorney General Schimel’s Respect Your Elders Report Abuse website at www.reportelderabusewi.org.

Attorney General Schimel has prioritized elder abuse, and in August 2017, launched the Attorney General’s Task Force on Elder Abuse. The task force is charged with compiling the resources and knowledge of a multi-disciplinary team of professionals to study the impact of elder abuse in Wisconsin and assess ways to improve outcomes for this growing population of citizens. In addition to developing strategies to address barriers in investigations and prosecutions of elder abuse, the task force will strengthen consumer protection for seniors and create recommendations for improved cross-system communications.

In addition to the task force’s work, Attorney General Schimel has moved quickly to provide public safety tools to seniors and their loved ones. DOJ worked with law enforcement and aging and senior care experts and advocates to raise awareness about elder abuse and encourage citizens to report abuse against seniors. The public awareness campaign, first launched in January 2018 with [radio ads](#), encourages citizens to report suspected elder abuse of any kind, teaches how to recognize elder abuse, and connects victims with resources. In May 2018, Attorney General Schimel launched a new website, www.ReportElderAbuseWI.org, and paid

online outreach aimed at elder abuse victims.

In October 2017, Attorney General Schimel expanded [*Dose of Reality*](#), a statewide prevention campaign designed to raise awareness about prescription drug abuse and its effect on the opioid epidemic, to include resources and information unique to seniors and caregivers.

The attorney general also started the “[Safe Seniors Camera Program](#),” a new pilot project in Brown, Outagamie, and Winnebago counties that allows Wisconsin residents who suspect a caregiver is abusing their loved one to use a covert camera to provide surveillance over someone who may have been harmed by a caregiver in their residence.

To report suspected financial, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, please [contact your county elder adult-at-risk agency](#) or call 1-800-488-3780. If you witness an act of abuse, neglect, or exploitation that requires immediate attention, please call 911.

To learn more about elder abuse, go to www.ReportElderAbuseWI.org.