

DVVC
MEETING
JULY 2019



Agenda

- Scams that target Veterans
- How to protect yourself
- Discussion



Fraud Watch Network

arp.org / fraudwatchnetwork

**If you or someone you know has been
a victim of fraud, contact:**

★ 877-908-3360 ★

*Text FWN to 50757 to receive
biweekly updates.*

So you've learned some good information today about the kinds of scams that target veterans and ways you can protect yourself. I hope you enjoyed our session – thanks for participating!

Benefits Fraud/Schemes

AARP
Fraud Watch Network

First up is benefits fraud. This type of fraud occurs when a scammer attempts to manipulate or gain access to a veteran's government benefits.

Benefits Buyout

Cash upfront in exchange for future disability or pension payments

Consider offers carefully; they are typically a fraction of the value of the benefits. Learn more at 1-800-827-1000 or benefits.va.gov/pension

AARP
Fraud Watch
Network

Let's talk about the "benefits buyout" scheme. This is where a company will seek out a veteran in need of money and offer an upfront payment of cash in exchange for the veteran's future disability or pension payments. These offers are typically a fraction of the value of the veteran's benefit.

While these offers aren't necessarily illegal, they take unfair advantage of veterans who may need quick cash. And they can be illegal if they are improperly structured. Call the number on the screen or go to benefits.va.gov/pension to learn about pension benefits through the VA.

Investment/Pension

**Overhaul your investment holdings
to claim additional government
benefits**

**Get credible information on
government benefits at
www.benefits.va.gov/benefits**

AARP
Fraud Watch
Network

In another benefits scam, unscrupulous investment advisors claim the veteran may be able to claim additional government benefits by overhauling their investment holdings.

According to the Federal Trade Commission, these advisors convince veterans to transfer their assets to a trust or invest in insurance products so they can qualify for Aid and Attendance benefits. But doing so could mean that the veteran loses eligibility for Medicaid or loses the use of their money for a long time. And these advisors are charging fees that range from hundreds to thousands of dollars for their services.

Get credible information on how to qualify for veterans benefits by contacting your state veterans affairs agency. Or you can visit benefits.va.gov/benefits.

Fake Government Programs

Scammers claim there is a little known government program for veterans that could result in big cash.

Don't buy it. Find out about VA benefits at benefits.va.gov/benefits

AARP
Fraud Watch
Network

Another scam explicitly targeting veterans has to do with fake government programs. When you get a call or an email or see an ad for a "little known government program" that could mean big cash for veterans, be wary.

Like I said before, you can get credible information on how to qualify for veterans benefits by contacting your state veterans affairs agency. Or visit benefits.va.gov/benefits.

Veterans Choice Program (VCP)

Fake phone number for VCP. Caller is scammed into giving a credit card number.

Dial the correct VCP number!

1-866-606-8198

AARP
Fraud Watch
Network

Scammers set up a phone number nearly identical to the number veterans dial to find out if they are eligible to use approved health care providers outside of the VA system.

The correct number provides information on requirements and eligibility for the program, among other services. Vets who call the fake number find out they are eligible for a fake reward or rebate of a \$100 – you just need to pay \$1.95 for processing. This is a ruse to get you to give up your credit card number.

Find out about your eligibility and more about the VCP at: www.va.gov/opa/choiceact

Charging for Records

A scammer attempts to charge for access to your military records or government forms.

Information is free through the VA. Find your State Dept. of VA at nasdva.us/links.aspx

AARP
Fraud Watch
Network

Another common benefits scam targeting benefits is where a scammer will attempt to charge a veteran for access to his or her military records or government forms.

All of your records and government forms you'd need to access are generally free through the VA. You can find your State Department of Veterans affairs at www.nasdva.us/links.aspx.

GI Bill

Deceptive marketing tactics to get you to attend expensive for-profit schools.

Use VA tool to locate a school & determine your benefits:
vets.gov/education/gi-bill or
<https://inquiry.vba.gov>

AARP
Fraud Watch
Network

Veterans seeking to take advantage of the GI Bill for college courses may be targets of deceptive marketing tactics that provide false information and encourage them to attend expensive for-profit educational institutions.

The VA offers a comparison tool to help you locate a school and determine your benefits. Visit www.vets.gov/education/gi-bill or for a list of schools that participate in VA Education benefits visit: <https://inquiry.vba.va.gov>

Identity Theft

AARP

Fraud Watch Network

Now let's talk about identity theft. Identity theft is when someone steals your personal information, like your name, Social Security number, and bank account information, and uses it to commit fraud or other crimes. It can include opening credit accounts in your name and racking up thousands of dollars of debt. It can mean a thief draining your bank accounts, or applying for government benefits in your name. Identity thieves may even use your information to file bogus tax returns.

Identity theft produces a victim every 2 seconds. \$35,600 is stolen per minute.

VA Phishing Scam

Scammers call claiming they are from the VA & ask for personal information to update records.

Hang up on unsolicited calls from the VA.

AARP
Fraud Watch
Network

With **phishing**, someone typically contacts you and says there is some problem with your bank account and you need to verify the account with a Social Security Number or other personal information. When phishing scammers go after veterans, they will call by phone and claim to be from the VA and ask for personal information to update the veteran's records.

This is a scam. Never accept an unsolicited call from the VA. Hang up immediately.

Other Common Scams

AARP

Fraud Watch Network

Fake Charities

Scammers claim to be fundraising for a veteran-related cause, but they pocket the money.

Look up the organization before donating. Check out charitywatch.org or charitynavigator.org

AARP
Fraud Watch
Network

Scammers are well aware that veterans remain true to the men and women who serve. They will make up fake charities that have the word "veteran" in them or they'll use a name that closely resembles a real charity. In our recent survey, a whopping 62% of veterans reported that they have been targeted by fake veterans charities.

Before you donate, check the organization out. There are several ways to do that online. You can go to the charitywatch.org or charitynavigator.org.

Rental Scam

Rental property ads offering discounts for active duty military and veterans.

Avoid buying sight unseen, and don't wire money.

AARP
Fraud Watch
Network

A scammer posts a fake rental property on a classified ad website offering discounts for active duty military and veterans. You just need to wire transfer a security deposit to the landlord. Only there is no rental property and you just lost your security deposit. As with other special offers for Veterans, tread carefully and NEVER wire transfer money.

Special Deals Scam

Scammers offer special discounts for veterans on a range of products, like home loans and car purchases.

Check offers carefully and never wire money. For home loan information, visit benefits.va.gov/homeloans

AARP
Fraud Watch
Network

Scammers offer special discounts for veterans on a range of products, like home loans and car purchases. Often, the products aren't discounted at all, or they don't actually exist. Check out offers carefully, and never wire money to someone you don't know.

Visit benefits.va.gov/homeloans for home loan information.

Employment Scams

Bogus job openings targeting veterans on online boards. Scammer uses or sells personal information from the application.

It's a scam if you have to pay to get the job, need to supply a credit card, or refers to "previously undisclosed" federal jobs.

AARP
Fraud Watch
Network

Employment scams also target veterans. This is where someone will post bogus job openings targeting veterans on online job boards. The goal of the scammer is to obtain your personal information from the job application to use or sell.

It's a scam if you have to pay to get the job, you need to supply a credit card, or the posting refers to "previously undisclosed" federal jobs.

Source: <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0243-job-scams>



Now that we know what to watch out for, let's talk about some things you can do to protect yourself and your family from these common scams targeting veterans.

1. *Be wary of unsolicited offers of help or money.*

2. *Be cautious of offers that seem too good to be true.*

3. *Be suspicious of requests for personal information.*

4. *Be alert to phishing attempts via email or text.*

General Prevention Strategies

- **Never make a buying decision in a heightened emotional state**
- **Ask questions**
- **Read about the product before buying**
- **Develop a refusal script to stop unwanted interactions**

AARP
Fraud Watch
Network

There are a number of things you can do to protect you and your loved ones from the tactics that scammers use.

- Never make a buying decision in a heightened emotional state.
- Ask more questions than you answer.
- Read about the product before buying.
- Develop a refusal script to stop unwanted interactions. This can be something as simple as saying "No" and hanging up the phone or walking away.

General Prevention Strategies

- **Protect PINS & passwords**
- **Protect your information online**
- **Protect your mail**
 - **optoutprescreen.com or 888-5-OPT-OUT**
 - **dmachoice.org**

AARP
Fraud Watch
Network

- **Protect Personal Identification Numbers (PINS) & Passwords**
 - Don't carry your PINS and passwords in your wallet or purse.
 - Avoid using easily available information for your PINs or passwords, such as your mother's maiden name, your or a family member's birth date, your SSN or phone number, or a series of consecutive numbers (i.e., 1, 2, 3, 4).
 - Choose a different PIN for each account.
- **Protect Your Information Online**
 - Beware of emails that claim to come from a bank, Internet Service Provider, business or charity that ask you to confirm your personal information or account number.
 - Don't conduct personal or financial business on shared/public computers or over public wireless hotspots.
 - Install the latest version of established anti-virus software on your computer.
 - Make sure websites are secure, especially when shopping online. A secure website will begin with "https" not the usual "http".
- **Protect Your Mail**
 - Call 1 (888) 5-OPT-OUT or visit **optoutprescreen.com** to stop pre-approved credit card applications that a thief could steal and use to get credit in your name.
 - Place outgoing mail into a locked mailbox such as a blue postal service box.
 - Don't leave incoming mail sitting in an unlocked mailbox.

- Cut down on junk mail by contacting the Direct Marketing Association at dmachoice.org.

General Prevention Strategies

- **Protect your SSN & personal information**
- **Monitor your bills & financial accounts**
- **Do your homework before investing**
 - <http://smartcheck.gov>
- **Watch over your credit reports**
 - annualcreditreport.com
 - 877-322-8228

AARP
Fraud Watch
Network

- **Protect Your Social Security Number & Personal Information**
 - Don't carry your Social Security card in your wallet.
 - Don't print your SSN or driver's license number on your checks.
 - Shred sensitive information.
 - Limit the number of credit cards you carry.
 - Keep copies of credit cards (front and back) in a safe place in case a card is lost or stolen.
- **Monitor Your Bills & Financial Accounts**
 - Watch for missing bills and review your monthly statements carefully. Contact your creditors if a bill doesn't arrive when expected or includes charges you don't recognize.
- **Don't invest in anything you are not absolutely sure about.**
 - Do your homework on the investment, the company, and the salesperson to ensure that they are legitimate. You can look them up at Smartcheck.gov.
- **Watch Over Your Credit Reports**
 - You are entitled to one free credit report each year from each nationwide credit bureau. To get your free report, go to annualcreditreport.com or call 1-877-322-8228.

General Prevention Strategies

- **Sign up for the Do Not Call Registry**
 - donotcall.gov or 888-382-1222
- **Double-check references**
- **Verify charities**
 - charitywatch.org
 - charitynavigator.org

AARP
Fraud Watch
Network

- Never give personal information to telemarketers who call you on the phone. To cut down on unwanted telemarketing calls, sign up for the Do Not Call Registry at donotcall.gov or call (888) 382-1222.
- Double-check references for door-to-door sales, home repair offers and other products. Verify that businesses and others who contact you are who they claim to be before you provide any personal information. If you think the request for information is legitimate, contact the company at a number you know is valid to verify the request.
- Check out a charity before donating to make sure they are legitimate at charitywatch.org or charitynavigator.org.

Operation Protect Veterans

www.aarp.org/protectveterans

VETERANS ANSWERED THE CALL TO SERVE.
NOW SCAMMERS ARE CALLING.

Scams Targeting Veterans

AARP and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service have launched Operation Protect Veterans to help raise awareness of common scams targeting veterans. Here are some of the scams to watch out for.

To learn more download the Watchdog Alert Handbook or call the AARP Fraud Watch Network Helpline at [1-877-908-3360](tel:1-877-908-3360).

Sign up for the
Fraud Watch Network

Name *

Email *






Zip Code *

Get proven tools & resources related to veterans scams at aarp.org/protectveterans, and be sure to pass on the information to family and friends.

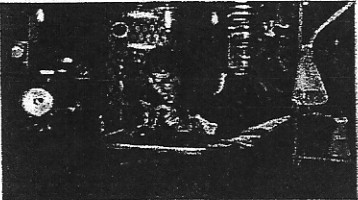
Fraud Watch Network

www.aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork



MONEY · CONSUMER PROTECTION
Fraud Watch Network








[Consumer Protection](#) · [Living on a Budget](#) · [Managing Debt](#) · [Saving & Investing](#) · [Taxes](#)




SOCIAL MEDIA SCAMS
Don't be Spooked by Ancestry Scams
Victims are watching you on social media - learn how to protect yourself

1 of 6  



Fraud Watch Network
Get Watchdog Alerts
Sign-up for free Watchdog Alerts to stay up on the latest tricks

Resources and Help



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Get access to information about how to protect yourself and your family

[More Articles and Resources](#)

And while you're at it, check out the AARP Fraud Watch Network online. It is a free go-to resource for everyone, whether or not you're an AARP member. On www.aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork, you'll find:

- Free information and proven resources.
- Up-to-date information on the latest scams. As criminals develop new ways to target victims, we'll provide you warnings and critical information so you can always be on your guard.
- Scam-tracking map: See what the latest fraud alerts in your state are and hear stories from scam-spotters who are sharing their experiences so you'll know how to protect yourself and your family.
- One-stop resource for getting help: Find out what to do if you or someone you know has been victimized.

By becoming a part of the AARP Fraud Watch Network, you can pass this information along to others who might need it as well.