

New York State Office for the Aging Issues Guidance Against Government Grant Scams

Guidelines, Tips, and Warnings About Potential Scams of Homeowners

Earlier this week our office was notified by the Montgomery County Office for the Aging that they have been getting a large number of NY Connects calls from older adults who had received a postcard mailing addressed to “resident” from the National Residential Improvement Association (NRIA) offering to help them get a grant to repair their home. The postcard looks official, but it is not a government program, and the company currently does not have a valid business license. NRIA has been reported to the Better Business Bureau multiple times since 2008. This is a scam.

Government grant scams are on the rise. With the recently passed federal stimulus bill, scammers are taking advantage of homeowners of all ages by making bogus offers to secure generous grants for home repairs.

What to look out for:

- Unsolicited phone calls or emails from someone claiming to be an official from the Federal Grants Administration (which does not exist), or a nonprofit organization like the National Residential Improvement Association offering grants or funding for repairs.
- Social media messages or posts from people excited to share the thousands of dollars they claim to have received from an organization that secures grants for homeowners.
- Callers who ask you to pay a fee in order to receive a grant. Federal grants never charge for grant applications.
- Magazine or newspaper ads that offer “free grants.”
- Calls or emails that claim you’re eligible for a personal grant that does not restrict how you spend the money.

Protect yourself:

- Do not answer your telephone if you do not recognize the caller or number.
- Never share personal information over the telephone, like your Medicare number, Social Security number or banking information.
- Never pay a fee to a company that says it will help you get a grant.
- Block or unfriend anyone who offers unsolicited grant information on social media. Even if you are “friends” with that person – they may have been hacked.
- Only use local contractors with validated references to do work in your home.

If you have been a victim of such a scam:

- Report it to the New York State Attorney General’s Office: 800-771-7755
- Report to the AARP Fraud Watch Network: 877-908-3360
- Report the scammer to the Better Business Bureau: <https://www.bbb.org/consumer-complaints/file-a-complaint/get-started>