

New Free Town Resource Empowers People to Avoid and Respond to Scams

- Miriam Rosalyn Diamond, Brookline Council on Aging Communication Specialist

Protect Your Identity, Money & Information! How to Spot and Deal with Scams (1st Edition) is a free publication recently released by Brookline’s Council on Aging. “This booklet empowers readers to learn steps they can take to decrease the likelihood of getting conned or having their identity stolen. It also provides direction for individuals who suspect that they may have been misled or swindled, an increasingly common experience these days,” states Ruthann Dobek, Director of the Brookline Council on Aging/ Senior Center. According to the US Federal Trade Commission, consumers lost over \$23.7 billion through scams and fraud in 2023 alone; at least \$7.1 billion was stolen from people over age 60.

The manual describes and offers tips for recognizing a range of frequently encountered scams - from online dating schemes and Medicare fraud to vacation rackets and deceptive computer notifications. Items are grouped into easy-to-follow categories including “Buying & Selling Merchandise”, “Technology”, and “Financial Management.” The index allows people to search for specific subjects such as “Home Repair” and “IRS/Tax Returns.”

The publication also outlines actions to take and places to turn for advice regarding concerns about being swindled or identity theft. “Readers do not have to face these situations alone,” assures editor Miriam Rosalyn Diamond.

Information for this comprehensive and detailed guide was gathered from a variety of sources, including the Brookline Police, Norfolk County District Attorney’s Office, Better Business Bureau, AARP, Federal Trade Commission, and the Massachusetts Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation. Because new schemes are constantly emerging, the Council anticipates periodically publishing updated editions of this publication.

The book will be distributed at a special Senior Center event on March 31, 2025. Gayle Bellotti of the Norfolk County District Attorney’s Office and Officer Mike Disario of the Brookline Police will share up-to-date guidance on identity theft and scams. For more information and to reserve a space at the program, call 617-730-2770.

The booklet is available at the Brookline Senior Center at 93 Winchester Street. An electronic copy may be accessed at: <https://www.brooklineseniorcenter.org/2025/01/important-information-how-to-spot-and-deal-with-scams/>

Released 2/3/2025 by Miriam Rosalyn Diamond, Brookline Council on Aging

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