LOCK OUT FRAUD

ROMANCE SCAMS:
WHEN A RELATIONSHIP BECOMES A FRAUD



BEWARE OF ROMANCE SCAMS

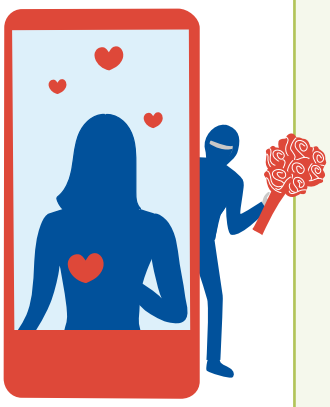
Criminals create fake identities to build emotional relationships to try and trick you into sending them money. Scammers often connect through social media, dating websites, messaging apps, or email. They will start a relationship with you to build trust, sometimes talking or chatting several times a day. Then, they make up a story and ask for money.

WHY ROMANCE SCAMS ARE DANGEROUS

Romance scammers are skilled at creating emotional connections and can spend weeks or even months building what appears to be a genuine relationship. They may claim to be traveling, serving in the military, working overseas, or facing a sudden emergency. Once trust has been established, they often ask for money to cover medical bills, travel expenses, business opportunities, or other urgent situations. Their goal is to make you believe you are helping someone you care about, but these stories are a lie.

IF YOU'VE BEEN A VICTIM OF A ROMANCE SCAM

Don't be ashamed. Banks have seen this before and are prepared to help. Contact your bank immediately if you have sent money, shared account information, or provided personal details to a suspected scammer. Prompt reporting may help prevent additional losses and allow your bank to provide guidance on next steps. Review your account activity carefully and continue monitoring your accounts for suspicious transactions.



Wisconsin consumers should also report the incident to local law enforcement and the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions. If personal information has been compromised, visit IdentityTheft.gov for recovery resources and step-by-step guidance. You may also file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission to help authorities track and combat emerging scam trends. Most importantly, do not feel embarrassed. Romance scammers are skilled manipulators who target people of all ages and backgrounds. Reporting the scam quickly can help protect both you and others from becoming victims.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

- **Be cautious** of individuals you haven't met before who profess strong feelings or commitment very quickly. But understand as well that criminals are willing to spend time developing seemingly serious and meaningful relationships. The following indicators can help you spot a scam.
- **Never** send money, gift cards, cryptocurrency, or wire transfers to someone you have only met online.
  - Be suspicious if someone consistently refuses to meet in person or participate in a live video call.
  - Be mindful that with artificial intelligence tools, even video calls can be spoofed.
  - Research profile photos and information, as scammers often use stolen identities.
  - Do not share banking information, passwords, account numbers, or other sensitive personal details.
  - Talk with a trusted friend or family member if someone you met online asks for money or financial assistance.
  - Trust your instincts. If something doesn't feel right, pause and verify before sending money.

To see more Lock Out Fraud Resources, check out: wisbank.com/lock-out-fraud/

Wisconsin Bankers ASSOCIATION