



consumer tip

BBB Serving Central, Northern & Western Arizona
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Beware of Spring Break Scams Targeting Grandparents

(Yuma, AZ- March 12, 2013) As universities throughout Arizona prepare for spring break, Better Business Bureau (BBB) is warning students and their loved ones to be on the lookout for popular scams that typically target grandparents.

Although other family members can also be targets of these schemes, grandparents are the most likely to become the first victims. Typically, the grandparent receives a frantic phone call, which they are led to believe is their grandchild away for spring break. A scammer, posing as their grandchild, explains that he or she has gotten into trouble—often in Mexico or Canada—and needs their help. The “grandchild” might claim he or she caused a car accident or is in trouble with the law and requires money to be wired immediately.

“The grandparent scam preys on the love and concern a grandparent has for their grandchildren, said,” BBB President/CEO Matthew Fehling said.

“Unfortunately, with the popularity of social media and students sharing their travel plans and posting pictures, these calls may be more convincing than ever.”

BBB offers four tips to avoid falling for the “Grandparent Scam” this spring break:

1. Students should share their spring break travel plans with immediate family members before leaving the state or country and provide cell phone numbers and an email address of a friend they are traveling with in the case of an emergency.
2. Family members should remind students to be cautious when sharing details about travel plans on social media.
3. If a grandparent or relative receives a phone call from someone claiming to be their grandchild in distress, BBB advises not to disclose any information before confirming the person’s true identity.

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Ask a personal question about their childhood that only close family would know.

4. Be leery of requests to wire money through Western Union or MoneyGram, which should be seen as a "red flag". Funds sent via wire transfer are hard to track once received by scammers and are rarely recovered by law enforcement or banking officials.

BBB recommends that victims of this scam report the incident immediately to local police. If there is a request to wire money to Canada, the Canadian Anti-Fraud Call Centre (CAFCC) has established a hotline and website to report such fraud. Reports can be filed directly by calling the CAFCC at 1-888-495-8501.

For more consumer tips and alerts, visit BBB's News Center at Yuma.bbb.org.

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For more information or to request an interview with a BBB spokesperson, contact Janet Torricellas at 928-919-7940 or by email at jtorricellas@arizonabbb.org.

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