



## Helping Loved Ones Report and Avoid Romance Scams

Romance scams are long-term scams that are financially and emotionally devastating for victims. Most are conducted online or through texts. By the time most victims realize the romance was a con, they've lost tens of thousands of dollars and have damaged their relationships with real people who love them, their family and friends.

### Red flags of a romance scam:

- The scammer claims to live out of state or work abroad (so they can't meet in person).
- The scammer tries to isolate victims from family members who are skeptical about the scammer's identity or about the relationship.
- The scammer grooms the victim to send money. Scammers may say they need a loan or draw victims into bogus investments. Victims send money repeatedly.

### Gathering evidence that a sweetheart is a scammer:

- **Put the scammer's photo(s) in Google or TinEye.com.** Scammers use stolen photos as their own. Reverse-searching the image will let you see if the photo has been used with other names or is linked to scams.
- **Do a Google word search.** Search a phrase or two of a treasured email to see if those lines were written by someone else. Stolen prose is common in romance scams.
- **Do an internet search for the name the scammer uses.** Some scammers recycle.

### Treat romance scam victims gently:

- **To victims, the romance is real.** Even once they realize they have lost money, victims may have difficulty believing a person they loved was an impostor seeking money.
- **Don't blame or judge.** Instead, express concern. It may help to nominate a gentle family member or friend to speak to the victim alone.
- **Share information about romance scams.** Victims sometimes feel they alone were scammed, but romance scams are an industry. It can help to share a news story or link to a TV show (try a Dr. Phil episode) about romance scams.
- **Encourage the victim to add up the money they've sent.** Victims rarely realize how much money they have sent. Tell them to start a ledger or compare their pre-romance savings to their savings balances now.

### Report Romance Scams

Need to talk or report a scam? Call Scam Squad at 216-443-SCAM (7226)