

Attorney General Raoul Offers Tips To Prevent Romance Scams Ahead Of Valentine's Day Holiday

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CHICAGO - Attorney General Kwame Raoul today encouraged Illinoisans to be vigilant when dating online to avoid becoming a victim of a romance scam.

“Romance scammers take advantage of victims’ openness and trust,” Raoul said. “It is important to be mindful of red flags that could indicate someone is not who they claim they are. If you think you may be a victim of a romance scam, do not let any embarrassment deter you from seeking help or filing a complaint with my office.”

With Valentine's Day approaching, Attorney General Raoul issued the following tips to help prevent individuals from falling victim to online romance scams:

- **Online scammers often create fake profiles or pose as celebrities and may attempt to contact you via social media.** You can identify a fake profile by running a reverse image search of the account's profile photo. If the search turns up different names for the same photo, or if the photo appears in multiple sources or profiles, the person is probably not who they say they are.
- **Beware of text messages or direct messages from strangers on your social media channels that attempt to lure you into a conversation.** If you are randomly contacted, it is likely not a case of mistaken identity or a stranger being friendly. You are most likely being targeted for a scam.
- **If using a dating website or app, communicate only through the website or app until you feel comfortable about the other person's intentions.** Beware if you are communicating with someone who immediately wants to stop messaging through the dating website or app and communicate directly via text, email or messaging apps. Scammers do this to collect personal information and avoid detection by the dating service moderators and law enforcement.
- **When using online dating sites or apps, use a separate username and email to protect your privacy.**
- **Avoid sharing your private information or private photos with someone you meet online.** A romance scammer may attempt to steal your identity or threaten to share sensitive information with your friends or family unless you give them money.
- **Be careful when downloading attachments or clicking links for apps, games or websites you receive from someone you met online.** Scammers often send these links to trick you into downloading malware that lets them take over your computer or smartphone. Search any shared link through a reputable search engine, and make sure your devices have updated antivirus and malware protections.
- **Be wary if your online love interest is avoiding meeting over video or in person.** Romance scammers often pretend to have a bad internet connection or security issue, or will pretend to work internationally or in a profession where they are unable to meet in person.
- **Never share your bank account or credit card information with anyone you meet online, and do not send money by wire transfer, money order, gift card or cryptocurrency.** Romance scammers may ask you for loans because of a supposed banking error, for a plane ticket to visit you, or due to needing urgent help with medical or legal bills and/or family emergencies. They may also offer you a "great business opportunity" that will make you rich. **It is always a red flag if someone wants you to send them money quickly.**
- **Tell a trusted friend or family member when you start a relationship with someone you met online.** Romance scammers and abusers try to isolate you from

family and friends. Someone who isn't a part of the relationship may be in a better position to notice red flags.

Anyone can become a victim of a romance scam, and Attorney General Raoul is reminding Illinois residents that there is no reason to feel embarrassment or shame. People who believe they have been a victim should save all copies of the communications, stop contact with the individual, and block any phone numbers, instant messaging accounts, and email addresses used by the scammer. Report the user's profile to the platform or website they are using and report the matter to the local police, the [FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center](#) and the [FTC](#).

Raoul also encourages consumers who believe they have been a victim of a romance scam to report the scam by visiting the [Attorney General's website](#) or by calling Attorney General Raoul's Consumer Fraud Hotlines:

1-800-386-5438 (Chicago)

1-866-310-8398 (Español)

1-800-243-0618 (Springfield)

1-800-243-0607 (Carbondale)