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Tips to Help Older Adults Choose the Right Caregiver

According to the National Council on Aging, almost 90 percent of the financial abuse committed against older Americans are at the hands of someone they know and trust. Here are seven tips to help older Americans choose the right financial caregiver and prevent elder financial abuse:

- 1. Delegate someone you trust to make financial decisions.** If you are unable to facilitate financial transactions, carefully choose a trustworthy person to act as your agent in all financial matters.
- 2. Know who is in your home.** Conduct a thorough background check on all individuals you hire for personal care or home care services. Check references and credentials before you let them into your personal space.
- 3. Never sign something you don't understand.** Consult with a financial advisor or attorney before signing any document that appears suspicious or unclear.
- 4. Understand the terms of assigning a Power of Attorney.** Granting someone POA gives them the authority to act and make decisions on your behalf, including managing and having access to your bank and other financial accounts. Make sure you fully understand the terms and conditions of consenting a legal agent before you do so.
- 5. Always trust your instincts.** Exploiters and abusers are very skilled. They can be very charming and forceful in their efforts to exploit you. Don't be fooled – if something doesn't feel right, it may not be.
- 6. Safeguard your personal information.** Shred old bills, junk mail, bank statements and other personal documents you no longer need. Leaving unwanted personal documents around the house could lead to the misuse of your information. If you come across keepsake documents opt to store them in a locked cabinet or safe deposit box at your nearest bank.
- 7. Keep personal items out of plain sight.** Lock up checkbooks, credit cards and other monetary instruments to prevent unauthorized use.

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