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ONLINE COMPLAINT FORM:

<https://www.doj.nh.gov/consumer/complaints/index.htm>

ON VALENTINE'S DAY, DON'T LOOK FOR LOVE IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES.

At this time of year, many people are looking for love, and scammers are looking to take advantage. Romance scammers seek to form relationships with their victims, and once they have earned a victim's trust, they attempt to extract money and personal identifying information ("PII") from the victim. To stay safe and keep your money and PII secure, it is important to know how to identify and avoid romance scams, including what to do if you've already sent money or PII to scammers.

Romance scammers find their victims in multiple ways. They often target single individuals, particularly those recently divorced or widowed, by trolling dating and social media applications. The scammers use fake personas or pretend to be celebrities. They ingratiate themselves with the victim by claiming to share common interests or circumstances. The scammers learn this information through a victim's public social media accounts as well as other online resources, such as obituaries.

Scammers also connect with victims by sending them unsolicited messages through text and social media, such as "hi, how are you?" The scammers do this to elicit a response from a victim. The scammers then engage in conversation and eventually form a romantic connection with the victim. The scammers use a fake persona and send photos purportedly of themselves to victims. In reality the photos are often stolen from unsuspecting people on social media.

Once a scammer believes they have gained a victim's trust, the scammer asks for money and/or PII. The scammer will use a fake story to create a sense of urgency. For example, the scammer will tell the victim that they are travelling internationally and have lost all of their money. Scammers often ask victims to send funds in the form of gift cards, cash, or cryptocurrency.

If you are communicating with someone by telephone or online (including mobile applications) who you have not met in person, there are several signs that this person may be a scammer, which include:

- The person provides too much personal information too soon
- The person quickly tries to lure you off a dating website or social media to communicate through text, e-mail, or instant messaging
- The person has poor spelling and grammar
- The person makes excuses why you cannot meet in person
- The person claims to be living or traveling outside the U.S. (often claiming to be in the military or working on an “oil rig.”)
- The person claims he or she is trapped abroad and needs your money to get back home
- The person asks that you send gift cards, cash, cell phones, or cryptocurrency
- The person says that he or she has millions of dollars but can only access the funds if you first provide them money or other property

Avoid falling victim to a romance scam by:

- Not responding to unsolicited texts or messages from those you do not know
- Limiting the information that you provide publicly on social media websites
- Ceasing contact immediately if you suspect that you are engaged in a romance scam
- Refusing to send money, cryptocurrency, gift cards, or provide your PII to those individuals you speak with online but have not met in person
- Not clicking any links that are sent to you online by any person that you do not know or have not met in person.

If you or a loved one has lost money or property because of a romance scam, please call your local police department and the New Hampshire Consumer Protection Hotline at (603) 271-3641. You may file a Consumer Complaint online by following the instructions here: <https://www.doj.nh.gov/consumer/complaints/index.htm>. You may also report to:

- The Federal Trade Commission: www.ftc.gov/complaint
- The FBI: www.ic3.gov

In addition, anyone with knowledge that a vulnerable adult has been scammed or financially exploited should also contact the New Hampshire Bureau of Adult and Aging Services, at 1-800-949-0470.