

## Scams That Target Veterans

1. **Special deals for vets.** These veteran scams take a number of forms -- usually offering a discount on things like loans, car purchases and house rentals.

They may not be really discounted at all. And, in some cases, they may be for non-existent products or services, fooling veterans into parting with their money in the belief that they get a special deal when, in fact, they get nothing at all.

**Action:** Some organizations do offer genuine discounts for veterans but check these offers out carefully and, as we always warn, never wire payments to someone you don't know.

2. **Phishing.** The most common trick here is for the scammer to phone the victim, claiming to be from the Veterans Administration, who supposedly need to update their records.

**Action:** Don't accept the caller is who they say they are. Ask for their name, hang up and call the VA yourself to check.

3. **Dubious investment advice.** According to the retirement organization, AARP, solicitors calling themselves "veterans advocates" target vets in community centers and nursing homes, claiming their victims are entitled to additional benefits.

They say they need to review the veteran's investment portfolio first and then they usually try to persuade them to place their investment in a trust, so they appear to have fewer assets than they really have, entitling them to an additional pension.

That may or may not be true, but as AARP says, "The bigger concern is that the new trust usually contains annuities, long-term investments that are often considered inappropriate for older retirees. Some annuities must be held for a decade or longer before they pay out a monthly income."

Note, in particular, you should always check out the credentials of an investment adviser via your state regulatory office.

4. **Charging for military records.** This veteran scam is a variation on a well-known con in which people are fooled into paying for information that's already available for free.

**Action:** Contact the VA or your service unit if you want copies of your records. Don't allow someone who's providing another type of service for you to claim they have to pay for your records -- get them yourself.

5. **Nigerian scams.** Two well-known variations of the Nigerian scams, which try to fool people into handing over money, use the military as a cover story.

The original Nigerian email scam in which the crook claims to have access to money or valuables they want you to help smuggle out of the country, pretends to be from a soldier on active duty who has discovered a secret stash.

This was more common during the days of the war in Iraq.

More recently, the scammers have changed their game, now posing as lonely-heart servicemen or veterans in search of love but needing money to help get them out of the service or start a business.