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## Boston seeks to curb consumer scams that target elderly

Posted by Matt Rocheleau August 24, 2011 03:54 PM

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(Courtesy: City of Boston)

Mayor Thomas M. Menino helped launch a new consumer protection campaign for the city's elderly Wednesday during a forum with seniors at the Roche Community Center in West Roxbury.

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

The city launched a new education campaign today aimed at protecting older residents against consumer fraud.

Mayor Thomas M. Menino, officials from the city's elderly affairs commission, and state Attorney General Martha Coakley announced the initiative's launch before a group of around 125 seniors at the Roche Community Center in West Roxbury.

At the campaign kick-off event, which was labeled with the catchphrase "If it's too nice, think twice," the elderly residents described firsthand accounts of being targeted by scammers, city officials said.

"Every year, thousands of seniors are targeted for scams ranging from financial fraud, to housing and health related frauds," Menino said in a statement. "It is important that we work together to provide our residents with the resources and information they need to protect themselves from scammers who would prey on vulnerable seniors."

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Added Coakley: “Our office hears from seniors across the state who have been victims of financial and other scams, and those scams typically increase during tough economic times. It’s why it’s so important that seniors have the tools and information they need to be an educated consumer.”

The city has taken smaller outreach measures in the past to educate residents about consumer fraud, but the new campaign is the first comprehensive, senior-specific effort, said elderly affairs commissioner Emily Shea. The initiative will focus primarily on identity theft, predatory lending, misleading contracts, and healthcare fraud, officials said.

“Many of those who fall victim to such scams end up facing serious issues including billing disputes, debt collection, loss of property, and undisclosed medical charges,” the city said in an announcement.

Today's forum presented information on the challenges, rights, and responsibilities of seniors in dealing with consumer protection issues. An informational brochure will be distributed in the coming weeks, and an advertisement campaign will soon be launched, based on the issues raised by the elderly who attended the forum.

Officials from the elderly commission are also planning to announce dates for additional training seminars and community discussions.

Officials from the city’s elderly commission, consumer affairs and licensing office, the state Attorney General’s office and the state’s consumer affairs department, among other agencies, will partner to help educate Boston’s elderly about consumer protection.

For more information on learning how to identify “warning signs” and how to report fraud, call the Elderly Commission at 617-635-4366.

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(Courtesy: City of Boston)

State Attorney General Martha Coakley attended Wednesday's consumer protection campaign launch with Boston seniors at the Roche Community Center in West Roxbury.

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