



# SCAM SQUAD

## AGENDA

**Scam Squad Conference:**

# How to Protect Residents

A conference for professionals who investigate  
scams and assist victims

**June 12, 2025**

**Cleveland State University Law School**

1801 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44115

[Scam Squad Conference Registration Link](#)

Cuyahoga County Department of Consumer Affairs

216-443-7035 | [consumeraffairs@cuyahogacounty.gov](mailto:consumeraffairs@cuyahogacounty.gov)

(5.75 CLE/CPU hours pending)

Cleveland State Law School sponsoring organizations:

Cybersecurity Center, Associate Dean Brian Ray

Student Public Interest Law Organization

# Agenda

8:00 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.	<b>Registration</b>
8:45 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.	<b>Opening remarks</b>  <b>Chris Ronayne</b> , County Executive, Cuyahoga County
9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	<b>Session 1: Panel</b> <b>Navigating the Scam Landscape (1.0 hour)</b> Scammers employed sophisticated techniques and new technologies, including artificial intelligence, to steal record amounts from consumers in 2024. Speakers will use national and local data to explore current and emerging scam threats. Additionally, the session identifies free resources to help residents and clients spot, avoid and recover from scams. <b>Speakers:</b> <b>Christian Capece</b> , Assistant Regional Director, Federal Trade Commission, East Central Region <b>Sheryl Harris</b> , Director, Cuyahoga County Department of Consumer Affairs  <b>Moderator: Jennifer Leach</b> , Associate Director, Division of Consumer and Business Education, Federal Trade Commission <b>Objectives:</b> Attendees will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recognize current scams</li><li>• Help scam victims report scams</li><li>• Access free resources to help residents spot, avoid and recover from scams</li></ul>
10:00 a.m. -10:15 a.m.	<b>Session 2: Presentation</b> <b>Quick Tip: Tracing Robocalls Faster (.25 hour)</b> The call path of an illegal robocall involves, on average, six to ten service providers. Subpoenaing records from phone companies to trace the source of an illegal robocall can take months. Learn how a little-known government-industry alliance helps investigators track robocalls in a matter of days, sometimes within 24 hours. <b>Speaker: Fil Maria de Banate</b> , Attorney, Federal Trade Commission <b>Objectives:</b> Attendees will learn: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The call path of an illegal robocall</li><li>• About the work of the Industry Traceback Group</li><li>• How to use the secure portal to request information for your investigation</li><li>• How the FTC has used the tool to quash scam calls</li></ul>
10:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	<b>Break</b>

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10:30 a.m. – Noon

**Session 3: Panel**

**Case Studies: Multidisciplinary Approaches in Elder Fraud Cases (1.5 hours)**

Panelists will use fact sets from closed elder fraud cases to demonstrate civil and criminal enforcement approaches in elder fraud. Agencies will discuss the different authorities they have and how to bridge “gaps” in the system by using collaborative, multidisciplinary approaches.

**Speakers:**

**The Honorable Laura Gallagher**, Cuyahoga County Probate Court

**Brian McDonough**, Assistant U. S. Attorney, U.S. Department of Justice for the Northern District of Ohio

**Ian Ortega**, U.S. Postal Inspector, United States Postal Inspection Service

**Sylvia Pla-Raith**, Deputy Director, Community Programs, Cuyahoga County Division of Senior and Adult Services

**David Peters**, Assistant County Prosecutor, Cuyahoga County Prosecutor’s Office

**Moderator: Natasha Pietrocola**, Director, Cuyahoga County Division of Senior and Adult Services

**Objectives:**

Attendees will be able to:

- Describe how various agencies use their authority to address scams against older residents
- Understand the evidence collected and used in criminal or civil cases
- Identify the tools courts can use to protect the most vulnerable victims

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Noon -1:00 p.m.

**Lunch on your own**

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1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

**Session 4: Panel**

**Victim-Centered Approaches to Stopping Scams and Gathering Evidence (1 hour)**

Conducting victim-centered, trauma-informed interviews with scam victims can benefit investigations. By understanding the impact of trauma on a victim’s memory, behavior and ability to provide accurate information, investigators can enhance their communication and build better cases. The panel explores how using the same principles may also lead to more effective ways to extract people who are enmeshed in scams.

**Speakers:**

**Jay Hadam**, Detective, Cuyahoga County Sheriff’s Department

**Antoinette Smith**, Associate Executive Director of Housing and Financial Wellness, Benjamin Rose

**Lori A. McGee, M.A.**, Manager, National Elder Fraud Hotline

**Moderator: Paul Matias**, Chief, Mayfield Village Police Department

**Objectives:**

Attendees will be able to:

- Understand the principles of trauma-informed interviewing
- Know the words and terms to avoid when talking to people about their scam experience

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- Discuss the challenges of extracting people who are in the midst of a scam
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2:00 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.

#### **Session 5: Presentation**

### **Reaching Your Audience Every Time (.75 hour)**

Discover simple tips for communicating better with any audience. This session will help you craft clear, effective messages, whether you're writing for the public, law enforcement, prosecutors, or the court.

#### **Speaker:**

**Jennifer Leach**, Associate Director, Division of Consumer and Business Education, Federal Trade Commission

#### **Objectives:**

Attendees will learn how to:

- Write more concise reports
  - Craft better fraud warnings
  - Avoid common mistakes that bog down reports and consumer alerts
  - Use design to streamline your message
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2:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

#### **Break**

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3:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

#### **Session 6: Panel**

### **Clawing Back the Money: Crypto, Wires, and Gift Cards (1.25 hours)**

This session provides an overview of payment methods scammers rely on and looks at ways to help victims recoup their money. Panelists will take a deep dive into cryptocurrency and explain two new, complementary efforts to claw back payments made in crypto.

#### **Speakers:**

**Mark Hoy**, Criminal Intelligence Unit Supervisor, Bureau of Criminal Investigations, Ohio Attorney General

**Dirk Halscheidt**, Special Agent, Organized Crime Investigative Unit, USPS - OIG

**Tiffany Smedley**, Investigator, Federal Trade Commission

**Moderator: Harris Senturia**, Attorney, Federal Trade Commission

#### **Objective:**

Attendees will learn:

- Federal, state, and local resources available to assist in cyber cases
  - Crypto currency and bitcoin basics
  - Evidence needed to pursue tracing and possible recovery
  - How to stop other forms of payment such as wires and gift cards
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4:15 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

#### **Closing remarks, feedback survey, CEU CPT CLE paperwork**

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