

## MDS Alert

### Clip and Save: Incorporate These Questions into Meetings with Resident Families, Representatives

#### Starting a conversation could make a big difference.

Be proactive with your care planning meetings and help advocate for residents' "whole" health by asking the right questions.

If a resident's family member or designated representative is managing the resident's finances, you can check in with these questions, sourced from the Federal Trade Commission's **IdentityTheft.gov**. Though a resident's financial health isn't part of the MDS or your responsibilities, checking in with the family or representative can be an important evaluation of your facility's safeguards of such sensitive information.

**Important:** Some attorneys are pursuing litigation against facilities where residents have had their identities stolen, categorizing the theft as evidence of "neglect."

If you don't have time to include these questions as part of the discussion during an in-person meeting, consider putting them into a handout so families can leave with the most important information - and one more sign that your facility truly cares about the residents living there.

#### Look For These Clues to Indicate Theft

Identitytheft.gov warns consumers to watch out for these signs, available on their website, which could indicate trouble:

- "You see withdrawals from your bank account that you can't explain.
- "You don't get your bills or other mail.
- "Merchants refuse your checks.
- "Debt collectors call you about debts that aren't yours.
- "You find unfamiliar accounts or charges on your credit report.
- "Medical providers bill you for services you didn't use.
- "Your health plan rejects your legitimate medical claim because the records show you've reached your benefits limit.
- "A health plan won't cover you because your medical records show a condition you don't have.
- "The IRS notifies you that more than one tax return was filed in your name, or that you have income from an employer you don't work for.
- "You get notice that your information was compromised by a data breach at a company where you do business or have an account."

If you do have a discussion and residents, their families, or their representatives are suspicious that the resident is experiencing identity theft, you can point them toward some resources.

If the suspicion involves the theft or loss of a Social Security number, check out and offer this information as a first step: <https://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10064.pdf>.

In general, head to the federal government's resources on identity theft to evaluate your options and how to move forward: <https://identitytheft.gov/>.