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PROTECTING THE ELDERLY FROM FRAUD BY CAREGIVERS

In what has become an all-too-common story, it was recently reported that a 92 year-old Wisconsin woman suffering from dementia was defrauded by her caregiver. The caregiver, who allegedly stole $25,000, recently pled guilty to fraud and identity theft. More details on the story, which was reported by Milwaukee WISN 12, can be found here.

Like many who suffer from dementia, the victim of this crime was living in her home, with the assistance of caregivers. While most caregivers are certainly professional and trustworthy, in this case, the caregiver—Andrea Gooseberry who worked for Home Care Assistance—allegedly was not.

The criminal complaint alleges that the caregiver used Marilyn's debit card and identity to steal approximately $25,000 through 47 separate ATM transactions, all of which occurred over the course of one month. According to victim's son, Marilyn was no longer capable of using an ATM card on her own.

The sad news does not end there, unfortunately. The police are also investigating whether four family friends stole another $20,000 from Marilyn.

There are steps that can be taken to reduce the risk that a loved one will be defrauded. For one thing, it is important that steps be taken to monitor a loved one's bank account to identify suspicious transactions. In addition, arrangements can be made to have a financial power of attorney put in place. If necessary, court proceedings can also be filed to seek the court appointment of a representative to take charge of the finances of one who is no longer able to handle his or her finances alone.

Whenever fraudulent activity of the sort described above is discovered, it is important to contact the local authorities. In addition, depending on the circumstances, the filing of a lawsuit may be the best option to put yourself in a position to investigate suspected fraud, particularly if that fraud is not discovered until after your loved one has passed.

If you would like more information on this topic, you are welcome to call Trevor Lippman at 414-276-5000 or trevor.lippman@wilaw.com