

CRIME VICTIMS RESOURCE CENTER

WINTER 2026 Newsletter

Serving victims in Mower County since 1977 • To subscribe or unsubscribe, email miller.tori@mayo.edu



**JANUARY 24TH
RIVERSIDE ARENA
7:05 PM**



\$10 TICKETS

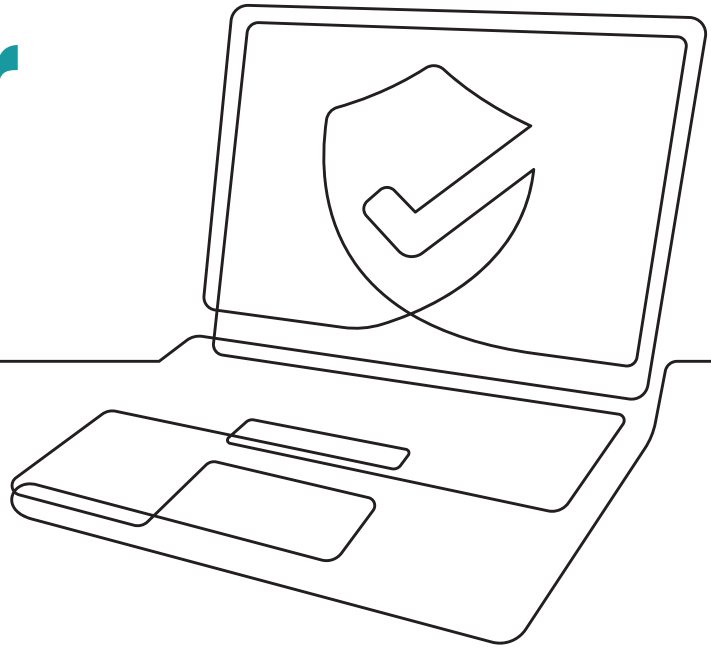
**\$5 OF EVERY TICKET
SOLD GOES BACK TO
THE CRIME VICTIMS
RESOURCE CENTER!**

**SCAN THE QR CODE
AND USE PROMO
CODE "HOPE"!**



Protect Your Finances:

Be Aware of Cybersecurity Scams



Fraudulent activity is becoming increasingly sophisticated, making today's scams more convincing and more dangerous than ever. Understanding how these threats work and how they continue to evolve is an important step in protecting your personal information and financial assets. Below are several types of scams currently on the rise and key warning signs to watch for.

1. One-Time Passcode Scams

If you've ever logged into an online account, you've likely received a one-time passcode (OTP) via text message as a security measure. While these codes add an important layer of protection, they are also becoming targets for fraudsters who find ways to intercept or manipulate them without the victim's knowledge.

How to protect yourself:

- If you receive an OTP you did not request, contact the issuing institution directly to confirm its legitimacy.
- Never share an OTP with anyone—even if the person claims to be from your bank or another trusted organization. Legitimate representatives will never ask for it.

2. Investment Scams

Investment scams have existed for decades, but with advanced technology, it is more difficult to detect the scams. Promises of quick profits, vague details about returns, and pressure to act immediately are common red flags. Scammers frequently reach out through social media, text messages, or online ads.

Emerging investment scams to watch for:

- **Cryptocurrency "pig butchering" scams:** A scammer builds trust with a victim before convincing them to invest in cryptocurrency. The funds ultimately go straight to the scammer.
- **Gold bar scam:** Criminals claim that banks are unsafe and pressure victims to convert their funds into gold, which they then hand over to a "courier" who disappears with the assets.
- **Investment club scams:** Fraudsters promote fake "investment clubs" through social media ads, pushing people to purchase shares of a low-priced security. Once enough victims buy in and the price spikes, the scammer sells their own shares for a profit and the price crashes—leaving victims with losses.

3. Financial Institution Impersonation Scams

Fraudsters increasingly pose as banks or other financial institutions, knowing that consumers tend to trust communications that appear official. While institutions may send password reset emails or alerts, they will never ask for sensitive information that would allow someone direct access to your accounts.

Emerging impersonation schemes include:

- **Anti-fraud team impersonation:** Scammers pretend to be a bank's fraud department to gain trust and access to funds.

- **Financial transaction fraud:** Victims receive a text or email that appears to be from their bank asking them to verify a large, fraudulent transaction. When they call the provided number, they reach a fake representative who instructs them to move money into a “secure” account controlled by the scammer.

4. Imposter Scams

Beyond financial institutions, scammers also impersonate government agencies, employers, financial advisors, and other trusted individuals. Always be cautious with unexpected calls, emails, or text messages from these sources.

Common imposter scams to watch for:

- **Social Security Administration scams:** Scammers claim your identity has been stolen or attempt to obtain your Social Security number through fabricated threats or scenarios.
- **IRS scams:** Fraudsters pose as IRS officials, threatening legal action over unpaid taxes or offering fake refunds to trick you into revealing personal information.
- **USPS delivery scams:** Victims receive unsolicited messages about a nonexistent package. The goal is to lure them into clicking a malicious link under the guise of tracking a shipment.

5. AI-Fueled Fraud

Rapid advances in artificial intelligence have made scams more realistic and convincing. Fraudsters are leveraging AI tools to create personalized, highly believable messages, audio, and video.

AI-driven scams include:

- **Voice cloning:** Scammers use AI to mimic the voice of someone the victim knows—often a family member—requesting emergency funds.
- **AI-powered romance scams:** Chatbots convincingly impersonate potential romantic partners, building trust before requesting money.
- **Deepfake impersonations:** Fraudsters use AI-generated videos or audio of someone the victim knows or trusts to pressure them into transferring funds.

What can you do?

Be wary of unsolicited messages.

Be mindful of any unsolicited financial advice or requests to move your money or investments:

- Treat phone calls or text messages from unknown numbers with skepticism, even if they appear to be from your financial institution.
- Avoid clicking on links or responding to messages asking for personal information, as these could lead to malicious attacks.

Resist urgent tactics or threats.

A consistent red flag of most fraud attempts is that the victim will feel pressured to act immediately or suffer negative repercussions if they do not. Scammers may try to scare or entice you with messages such as:

- *“Secure your accounts with this guaranteed system right now.”*
- *“This opportunity is available for the next 20 minutes only.”*
- *“Respond immediately, or your account will be suspended.”*

Closely monitor your financial accounts.

Regularly review your accounts for unusual activity. Contact your bank or financial advisor if you have concerns.

Together we
R-I-S-E

Resilience
Independence
Support
Education



Crime Victims Resource Center hosts a weekly group for women in difficult relationships. Women's R•I•S•E (Resilience, Independence, Support, and Education) is held on Wednesdays from 5:30 pm-7:00 pm. This group is for individuals to come together and share their experiences, build coping skills, share resources, and learn about abusive relationships in all forms.

It's commonly assumed that the group is only for women who have experienced intimate partner violence. However, abuse can be present in any type of relationship. In early 2024, we opened the group to those who have experienced difficult relationships in broader settings, such as with family, children, roommates, close friends, etc. This allowed more people to come together and benefit from the support and education provided in the group environment.

The group welcomes all. Whether someone is processing ongoing experiences or needing a place to reflect on the past, everyone's experiences are valuable. Bringing these different perspectives together helps build understanding and connection among everyone involved.

Many women have found comfort and strength in learning that they are not alone.

Women's R-I-S-E is free to all participants.

For questions or
meeting location,
call 507-437-6680.

As participants share, the group offers far more than just a meeting place for women of all ages.

"I've been coming to group for almost 2 years. It took me 6 months to finally open up. The support the other women discuss with each other is confidential and we respect each other's opinions and stories."

"I have learned that I have a voice, that I have self-worth, I am able to make my own decisions. After 39 years of marriage, I received from the women in the group strength and courage. My husband was very controlling and manipulative, verbally, violently, mentally, and emotionally abusive."

"The group honestly became like a family. You grow friendships, cry together, laugh together, and stand by each other in every way. I recommend the women's group to all women going through any type of fear and abuse. Once you take your 1st step in the door, it gets easier."

Submitted by 64-year-old

Women's R-I-S-E is free to all participants.

For questions or
meeting location,
call 507-437-6680.

"2024 and 2025 were very hard years for me. After finally getting the courage to leave my emotionally abusive relationship I decided to start joining this group to help me feel more supported about my decision to leave."

After attending only a few sessions, I have felt very validated and very supported by other amazing women. While I have felt that my 'situation' seemed minor compared to others, the group has shown support for the trauma I have been through."

"No problem is too small for this group. I would highly recommend!"

Submitted by 33-year-old

Recognizing Codependent Tendencies & Steps to Break the Cycle

You've probably come across someone along the way that had a tendency of going from one unhealthy relationship to the next with very little break in between. Whether it is with a romantic partner or friendship, that person never seems to manage being alone. They are often drawn to others that they think can help or rescue. There have been various labels to describe this type of characteristic but one has been more commonly used in the last several years.

The term codependent initially referred to individuals that found themselves in a relationship with a chemically dependent partner, and many times were labeled as an enabler. As time went on, the definition expanded beyond just focusing on codependent tendencies in substance use relationships.

Professionals providing therapy services began to recognize that codependency can be present in a variety of relationship dynamics. Many of them are very dysfunctional where one individual finds themselves assuming a caretaker role who is getting very little in return. These types of relationships can be incredibly destructive, unfulfilling and even abusive. It is important to recognize the signs of codependency in order to take the step to end the cycle.

Signs of Codependency

- Looking to others for your emotional stability
- Difficulty making decisions
- Being hesitant to express your opinions
- Low self-esteem
- Hiding your partners dysfunctional behavior in an attempt to protect the relationship
- Always worried about what other people think
- Feeling abandoned or rejected

- Exaggerated sense of responsibility for the actions of others
- Allowing someone else's choices and wants to count more than your own in order to avoid conflict
- Feeling like you haven't done enough
- Motivated or manipulated by guilt

This is not an all-encompassing list, and signs of codependency can vary from person to person. These tendencies can manifest for many different reasons, but much of the research reflects that it often stems from childhood experiences. With something that is possibly deep rooted, how do you go about developing healthier relationships?

Moving Forward

- The narrative you tell yourself is a powerful one, change the negative self-talk
- Be self-aware, recognize the signs of co-dependency
- [Set boundaries!!](#)
- Improve communication skills and increase your ability to assert your own needs
- Explore your own likes and interests
- Work to reconnect with friends and family that you have lost touch with due to the relationship
- Seek professional help such as therapy

For any relationship to succeed, there must be a healthy balance. Communication and positive self-esteem are key pillars to building positive connections. Learning to build these skills takes time and work. Be patient with yourself and give yourself grace!

Our sincerest appreciation to our 2025 donors

Our ability to provide Crime Victims Resource Center services is significantly impacted by local contributions. Many thanks to the following organizations for their support:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ✓ The Hormel Foundation | ✓ Hormel Foods Charitable Trust |
| ✓ United Way of Mower County | ✓ LeRoy Lutheran Women of E.L.C.A. |
| ✓ Westminster Presbyterian Church | ✓ St. John's WELCA of Elkton |

Crime Victims Resource Center

1000 First Drive NW, Austin · 507-437-6680

Empowering victims of crime through education, intervention, support and advocacy.

The Crime Victims Resource Center will help individuals who have been victims of many different types of crime. Some of the specific crimes we work with are:

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| ▪ Accidents involving intoxicated driver | ▪ Elder Abuse |
| ▪ Assault | ▪ Harassment |
| ▪ Burglary | ▪ Sexual Abuse/Assault |
| ▪ Child Abuse | ▪ Stalking |
| ▪ Domestic Abuse/Assault | ▪ Terroristic Threats |
| | ▪ Theft |



Tori Miller
Director



Sasha Border
Victim Advocate



Coleena Snyder
Victim Advocate

Victim Support Services

- 24 hour crisis hotline
- Crisis counseling
- Safety planning
- Arranging emergency shelter
- Support groups
- Referrals to other agencies
- Emergency transportation
- Support during hospital examinations
- Support during police reporting
- Assistance with Orders for Protection and Harassment Restraining Orders
- Assistance with understanding the criminal justice system
- Accompaniment to court proceedings for support
- Updates on the progress of court proceedings
- Notification of victims' rights

Free and confidential service funded by The Hormel Foundation, Minnesota Department of Public Safety-Office of Justice Programs, and United Way of Mower County.