

Tips for Seniors for “Free Lunch” Seminars

Society of Certified Senior Advisors joins regulators in urging seniors to thoroughly understand “free lunch” seminars.

- The Securities and Exchange Commission advises that nearly all investment seminars are designed to sell. Although you have been invited to an “educational” program or investment “workshop,” never lose sight of the fact that the sponsor’s goal is to sell products. (CSAs must disclose in promotional materials if the purpose of the seminar or workshop is to identify prospects for the products and services the CSA sells.)
- Beware of seminars that have language such as “what your banker won’t tell you” or “no financial advisors allowed.”
- Investment seminars are legitimate marketing tools. However, some seminars may involve fraudulent sales practices such as sales of fictitious products or outrageous misrepresentations of risk and return. You should always thoroughly check any product before investing.
- Advertising and sales materials may include misleading or exaggerated statements about the safety, liquidity or anticipated rates of returns. Sales materials also may make comparisons between dissimilar investments or services.
- Make sure you understand the qualifications, education and experience of the seminar presenter. Always evaluate the background of any adviser before you hand over your money. *Certified Senior Advisors (CSA) have supplemented their individual professional licenses, credentials and education with knowledge about aging and working with seniors. You should ask what those licenses, credentials and education signify. The CSA designation alone does not imply expertise in financial, health or social matters.*
- Seminar solicitations should include information on the speakers and the name of the firm or product sponsors. Product sponsors, like mutual fund companies, brokerage houses or insurance companies, may fund the seminar with the expectation that their products will be sold to the attendees. Always get a disclosure about any products that you are thinking about purchasing, including information on fees paid by the product sponsor.