

Tips to Avoid Medicare and Medicaid Fraud

Every year, taxpayers lose **BILLIONS** of dollars to fraud in health care. “Health care fraud” may mean that someone charges you or your insurance for a service that they never gave you. It may also mean that someone charges for a service that was different than what they gave you. **Fraudulent charges often prevent people from getting important health care services that they need.** For example, an equipment company gave Mr. Jones a scooter, but charged Medicare for a wheelchair instead. Later, when Mr. Jones needed a wheelchair, Medicare would not pay for it because they already paid for one. **The Illinois SMP Program is here to help you learn how to protect yourself from fraud like this.**

Here are some tips to avoid Medicare and Medicaid fraud:

- ✦ **DO NOT** give your Medicare, Medicaid, or Social Security numbers to someone you do not know. **NEVER** give these numbers to someone who calls on the phone or comes to the door. Trustworthy health care providers will not sell their services by calling on the phone or coming to the door. **Telephone and door-to-door marketing are often a sign of fraud.** If a caller or visitor tries to threaten or pressure you into something, hang up the phone or shut the door.
- ✦ **DO NOT** give anyone your Medicare, Medicaid, or Social Security numbers in exchange for “free” services. **If a service is “free,” they should not need your information!**
- ✦ **DO NOT** sign forms without reading them, and never sign blank forms.
- ✦ **DO NOT** accept health care services or equipment that you do not need. If someone offers you services or equipment that you do not need and asks for your Medicare or Medicaid number, they may be billing Medicare or Medicaid fraudulently for those services. **DO talk to your doctor if you need health care services. Your doctor should order any services or supplies that you need.**
- ✦ **Read your Medicare Summary Notice (MSN) Or Explanation of Benefits statements from your insurance plan. Watch for:**
 - **charges for services or supplies that you did not receive**
 - **services or supplies that were not ordered by your doctor**
 - **other errors**

*(Note: In Illinois, people with Medicaid do not receive statements. This makes it difficult to see if someone is billing Medicaid fraudulently. **The good news is that each of the other tips above applies to people with Medicaid.**)*

The Illinois SMP (Senior Medicare Patrol) Program educates consumers about health care fraud, waste, and abuse. If you have questions about a claim on your Medicare Summary Notice or Explanation of Benefits, call the Illinois SMP program at **(800)699-9043**. Information about the Illinois SMP program is also available on our website: **www.illinoissmp.org**