

Watch Out for Health Care Reform Scams!

With the beginning of any new program or benefit to help consumers, scam artists jump to action to find ways to swindle people out of their hard-earned money or benefits. The enactment of the new health care reform law is no exception. Over the last several months, consumers have been bombarded with information (and misinformation) about this Act from a variety of angles, leaving many people confused. As a result, scam artists are already hard at work. Here are a few examples of scams that have already been reported:

- ★ **“New Medicare card” scam:** Medicare beneficiaries in several states have been receiving phone calls from people telling them that because of health care reform, they need to be issued new Medicare cards. The caller asks the person for his/her Medicare number. In a similar scam, residents in at least six states have experienced phone calls from someone telling them that they need to re-register for Medicare because of health care reform, and the caller asks for the person’s Medicare number and personal information. SMP programs have also reported incidents of this “new Medicare card” scam where the caller “spoofs” the phone number on the consumer’s caller ID to show the following number: (866)234-2255. The caller claims to be calling “from Medicare” and requests the person’s bank account information.
- ★ **“Buy ObamaCare” scam:** As early as the day after the passage of the health care reform bill, SMP programs have been hearing about insurance agents who have told consumers that they need to change their insurance plan (Medicare supplement plan, prescription drug plan, Medicare Advantage plan, or private insurance plan) because of health care reform. Some agents have even claimed to sell “ObamaCare” policies.
- ★ **Home health scams:** A representative from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in Chicago reported incidents in which Medicare beneficiaries have received phone calls and/or home visits from home health company representatives who tell the consumers that, as part of health care reform, the President requires that they take “new” home health benefits that the company offers.
- ★ **\$250 rebate scams:** Beginning in June 2010, most Medicare beneficiaries who reach the “donut hole” in their Medicare prescription drug coverage will receive a \$250 rebate check from the government. We expect that a variety of scams may emerge related to this, ranging from phone scams asking for bank account numbers to deposit the rebate to mail fraud involving fake checks.

To avoid falling victim to one of these or other health care reform scams, consumers should remember that the government does not solicit for any reason. Do not give any personal information to someone who calls on the phone or comes to the door without an invitation, and contact the Illinois SMP program at **(800)699-9043** with questions about or to report a potential health reform scam. Information about the Illinois SMP program is also available on our website: **www.illinoissmp.org**