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## MEDICARE NEWS

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### **“Help Prevent Fraud” Campaign – Drop-in Article**

# Medicare is Fighting Fraud and Abuse; You Can Help

Health care fraud drives up costs for everyone in the health care system and endangers Medicare’s ability to serve future generations. To address this growing problem, the federal government continues to expand efforts to recover improper payments and prevent fraud.

Significant progress in the fight against health care fraud has already been made as shown by the federal government’s recovery of a record \$4 billion last year from people who attempted to defraud seniors and taxpayers. The Affordable Care Act provides additional resources and tools to enable the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to expand efforts to prevent and fight fraud, waste and abuse including:

- Creating a rigorous screening process for providers and suppliers enrolling in Medicare to keep fraudulent providers out of the program.
- Authorizing CMS to temporarily stop enrollment of new providers and suppliers when Medicare spots trends that may indicate health care fraud.
- Authorizing CMS to temporarily stop payments to providers and suppliers suspected of fraud for investigation and case building.

Fraud prevention efforts focus on moving CMS beyond its former “pay and chase” recovery operations to a more proactive “prevention and detection” model that will help prevent fraud and abuse before payment is made. A good example is the recent CMS announcement that for the first time, through the use of innovative predictive modeling technology similar to that used by credit card companies, the agency will have the ability to use risk scoring techniques to flag high risk claims and providers for additional review and take action to stop payments and remove providers from the program when necessary.

Yet, as important as these aggressive new initiatives are, the first and best line of defense against fraud remains you – the health care consumer.

So here are a few ways you can protect your Medicare benefits:

- **Guard your Medicare number.** Fraud schemes often depend on crooks first getting hold of people's Medicare numbers. So treat yours as you would a credit card. Don't share it with anyone except your doctor or other Medicare-approved health care provider and don't allow anyone else to use it.
- **Look out for suspicious activities.** Be wary of salespeople who knock on your door or call you uninvited and try to sell you a product or service. Don't allow anyone except your doctor or other Medicare-approved provider to review your medical records or recommend services. And never let anyone give you "free" equipment or supplies in exchange for your Medicare number.
- **If you have Original Medicare, check your Medicare Summary Notice.** Use a calendar or personal journal to record all of your doctor appointments and tests. Then review your quarterly claims statement to make sure Medicare wasn't billed for something you didn't get. If you spot what you think is an error, call the doctor's office or health care provider and ask about it. If they can't resolve your questions or concerns, call 1-800-MEDICARE.
- **Report suspected cases of fraud.** If you think someone has misused your Medicare number, call 1-800-MEDICARE. If you suspect identity theft, or feel like you gave your personal information to someone you shouldn't have, call the Federal Trade Commission's ID Theft Hotline at 1-877-438-4338.

To learn more about health care fraud and ways to protect against it, visit [www.stopmedicarefraud.gov](http://www.stopmedicarefraud.gov) or contact your local Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) project. To find the SMP in your state, go to the SMP Locator at [www.smpresource.org](http://www.smpresource.org). More information about CMS fraud prevention efforts is available at [www.cms.gov/Partnerships/04\\_FraudPreventionToolkit.asp](http://www.cms.gov/Partnerships/04_FraudPreventionToolkit.asp).

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