

Teresa Hatfield
District Extension Agent, Family and Community Wellness

Everyone Can Prevent Medicare Fraud

Fraud costs Medicare an estimated \$60 billion per year. It costs Medicare beneficiaries in time, stress, their medical identities, and even their health. It costs families, friends, and caregivers worry and lost work when helping their loved ones recover from falling victim to Medicare fraud. At this time of year, we see an increase in instances of Medicare fraud and abuse.

Medicare fraud has a devastating impact on both beneficiaries and the Medicare program. The Senior Medicare Patrol program educates individuals on how to prevent Medicare fraud. By preventing fraud, this program helps individuals and protects the Medicare program.

Everyone can play a part in the fight against fraud. Here are some steps you can take to combat Medicare fraud.

Medicare beneficiaries: Monitor your insurance statements to ensure that the products and services received match what is listed on your statements. Keep a record of your healthcare appointments and services you receive, and compare this to your Medicare Summary Notice (MSN).

Caregivers: Be on the lookout for items such as durable medical equipment (like boxes of knee braces) that may have been shipped to the beneficiary without their or their doctor's approval. They can remind their client or loved one to never give out their Medicare number or other personal information over the phone.

Families: talk to your loved ones about protecting their Medicare number just as they would a credit card number. Create a Medicare.gov account to access your Medicare statements online or remind yourself to open and review them when they arrive in the mail.

Healthcare providers: educate patients about healthcare-related scams, such as those involving durable medical equipment and genetic testing schemes. Remember that products and services should only be ordered by physicians whom they regularly see. Medical items that are needed should never be ordered through TV ads or unsolicited calls.

Community members: look out for older neighbors. Encourage those they know to consult a trusted source for their Medicare questions and inform neighbors about the latest Medicare scams.

Your local Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) program can help educate and empower Medicare beneficiaries in the fight against health care fraud. Your SMP can assist you with questions, concerns, or complaints regarding potential fraud and abuse issues.

For questions about Medicare fraud and abuse, contact the Meadowlark Extension District, your local SMP, and the Senior Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas (SHICK) program, Teresa Hatfield, thatfield@ksu.edu or 785-634-4125.

Source: Senior Medicare Patrol