

FraudAlert!

Helping keep the promise.



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• Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups Elder Law Center

From the Project Director. Elizabeth Conrad

Check out our website at www.wisconsinsmp.org

The Stop Medicare Fraud website allows you to search for fraud news by state. Check it out:

www.stopmedicarefraud.gov/innews/index.html

Why Volunteer for Wisconsin SMP?

By Judy Steinke, Wisconsin SMP Volunteer Coordinator

Why not volunteer? When volunteers are asked about their volunteer experiences – most reply that they volunteer because they want to help others, and they feel gratification in doing so.

Wisconsin SMP (Senior Medicare Patrol) volunteers have many different reasons for volunteering. Some have encountered healthcare fraud themselves or through helping a family member or friend. Some have worked in the field of aging and understand how complicated the billing process can be and how vulnerable the elderly population can be. Some are Medicare beneficiaries who are concerned about the integrity of the Medicare program. All are taxpayers who are concerned about the waste of Medicare dollars.

Whatever their motivation, Wisconsin SMP is fortunate to have many dedicated and supportive volunteers all across the state, but we can always use more.

If you or someone you know would like to help protect the Medicare program and those it serves, please contact Judy Steinke, the Wisconsin SMP Volunteer Coordinator, at (800) 488-2596, Ext. 342 or jsteinke@cwag.org for additional information on how you can join the ranks of Wisconsin SMP volunteers.

FRAUD ALERT! • Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups Elder Law Center

Wisconsin SMP

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Wisconsin SMP Launches Facebook Page

By Kevin Brown, Wisconsin SMP Capacity Building Grant Manager/Trainer

If you use Facebook, you are not alone. According to statistics on the company's website, there were 955 million monthly active users of Facebook at the end of June 2012. The average number of daily active Facebook users in June was equally impressive: 552 million.

Earlier this month, Wisconsin SMP (Senior Medicare Patrol) created a Facebook page for our project. If you use Facebook and like what we have been doing to empower seniors to prevent healthcare fraud in our state over the past fifteen years, please go to www.facebook.com, search for "Wisconsin SMP" and "like" us. We will use our new page to share information about healthcare and other scams with Facebook users and keep them informed of our upcoming activities.

While you're online, don't forget to check out our project website at www.wisconsinsmp.org. We publish a regular blog with the latest fraud news and are constantly adding new content to the site, such as podcasts and videos. All past issues of the Fraud Alert! are also archived on our website.

It Pays to Check Your Medicare Summary Notice for Errors

When Jerry opened his Medicare Summary Notice, which lists payments made for health care, he received quite a shock. It showed that Medicare had paid a claim for surgery to implant a pacemaker – a surgery he had *not* received! How could this happen and what should he do about it?

Each year Wisconsin Medicare beneficiaries are billed for services they didn't receive. Sometimes it's an honest billing mistake and sometimes it's Medicare fraud – often because a criminal has obtained personal Medicare information. To protect your health and your Medicare benefits, it is critically important to review your Medicare Summary Notice and report any errors. If a thief uses your identity to get care, your medical record will be incorrect, which could lead to receiving inappropriate treatment in the future. Your Medicare benefits may be in jeopardy, too. For example, if you are fraudulently billed for a wheelchair and then need one in the future, your claim will be denied because Medicare will pay for only one wheelchair.

To protect your medical records and benefits, take these important steps:

1. **Never, ever** give out your Medicare number or bank account information on the phone. Medicare will not call to ask about this information.
2. Keep a record of the dates that you see doctors and note the care you receive. Then compare your record with the charges on your Medicare Summary Notice. If you find errors, call your medical provider. It may be a simple billing error.
3. Call 1-800-MEDICARE to report the error.
4. If you need further assistance in resolving an issue or if you suspect Medicare fraud, contact the Wisconsin Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) at [1-800-488-2596](tel:1-800-488-2596), ext. 317.

To learn about healthcare and consumer fraud, visit the Wisconsin SMP website at www.wisconsinsmp.org.

Source: Wisconsin SMP Press Release (8/2/12)

DATCP Warns Consumers about “Rachel” Email Phishing Scam

Earlier this month, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) alerted consumers about an email phishing scam from the inveterate fraudster who goes by the name of “Rachel.” Individuals who receive an email from “Rachel, Customer Service, Employee Benefits Center, LLC” informing them that they have been issued a free \$1,000 Visa gift card on behalf of a local business should be aware that it is a scam and take no action with the email.

Consumers across the nation have been receiving the emails, which claim to offer free gift cards on behalf of a local company, charity, or government agency. The emails look official and request that recipients visit a website to claim the card. If a recipient visits the website, he/she is then asked to disclose a number of personal details. It is also possible that the website may try to load malicious software (known as “malware”) onto the victim’s computer.

Regardless of the company name being used, the scam emails include the same content:

- The subject line of the email will usually read: “(Your name), a thank you from (local company name).” For example: “Jim, a thank you from Company X.”
- The body of the email will include:
 1. The recipient’s first and last name and an “Issuing Branch” in the city or state where the recipient lives
 2. A “Valid until” date for the card (often listed as “08/2015”)
 3. A website address where the recipient can “claim the card and have it shipped to the address of your choosing”
 4. A 48-hour deadline to make victims respond more quickly to the “offer”
 5. A signature from “Rachel, Customer Service, Employee Benefits Center, LLC”

If individuals receive this email, DATCP advises them not to: 1) visit the listed website, 2) open any links and/or attachments, 3) respond to the sender, or 4) take any other action with the solicitation. They should also update their anti-virus software to ensure that their computer can recognize any malware attacks.

For more information or to file a consumer complaint, visit www.datcp.wisconsin.gov, send an email to datcphotline@wisconsin.gov, or call the hotline toll-free at 1-800-422-7128.

Source: DATCP Press Release (August 6, 2012)

Utility Scam in Green Bay Area

Wisconsin Public Service Corp. (WPS) alerted its customers on August 8 about a new scam in the Green Bay area. WPS said it “has received multiple reports of customers being told to pay their bill or face loss of utility service by someone claiming to represent the electric or light company.”

In one case, a customer was told to buy a prepaid card to make the payment. Another customer was told to “prepare a money pack” that would be picked up at their home. WPS said that it does not

request or accept payments in the field and would not request payment via a prepaid card. So far, the scam appears to be focused on the Green Bay area, targeting the Latino community, the utility said. WPS has asked customers to inform its call center (800-450-7260) of any similar scams. Customers should also report any scams to the state Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection at 800-422-7128 or www.datcp.wi.gov.

This summer, several utility companies in Wisconsin have warned customers about a different scam where customers were told that the federal government or the Obama administration was offering to help pay for their utility costs.

Source: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (August 8, 2012)

Medicare: We Need More Time to Calculate Cost of Removing SSNs from Cards

Five years after being told to look at removing Social Security numbers from Medicare cards, Medicare officials told lawmakers that they still need six more months to figure out how much it will cost.

Rep. Sam Johnson (R-Texas), chairman of the House Ways and Means Social Security subcommittee, said if military and health organizations can do it, “and you were asked to do it so many years ago, I don’t understand what’s taking so long.” In April, Johnson introduced a bill that would prohibit Medicare from including Social Security numbers on benefit cards. Johnson insisted that Medicare should be able to replace the old cards with new ones.

Tony Trenkle, Medicare Chief Information Officer, indicated that the process would be more complex, involving updating IT systems, educating Medicare beneficiaries about the changes, and reassessing budget priorities laid out by Congress.

Before Medicare officials can begin to strip cards of Social Security numbers, they must first present a new estimate on how much the operation will cost. Congressional auditors stated that an earlier estimate of \$800 million to \$845 million was faulty.

The director of health care at the Government Accountability Office (GAO), Kathleen King, indicated that changing to a new ID number from a Social Security number would require Medicare to work with health care providers who may have “antiquated” systems, complicating the process. The GAO estimates that as many as 48 million Medicare beneficiaries risk having their identity stolen because their Social Security numbers are displayed on Medicare cards.

“We all know Americans are told not to carry their Social Security cards to protect their identity in case a wallet is lost or stolen,” Johnson said. “Yet seniors are told they must carry their Medicare card which displays the Social Security number.”

Source: The Huffington Post (August 1, 2012)

Delinquent Payday Loan Telephone Collection Scams

The Internet Crime Complaint Center continues to receive complaints from victims of payday loan telephone collection scams. In these scams, a caller claims the victim is delinquent on a payday loan and must repay the loan to avoid legal consequences. The callers claim to be representatives of the FBI, Federal Legislative Department, law firms, or other legitimate-sounding agencies, and they say that they are collecting debts for companies such as United Cash Advance, U.S. Cash Advance, U.S. Cash Net, or other Internet check-cashing services.

According to complaints, the callers have somehow obtained accurate data about the victims, including Social Security numbers, dates of birth, addresses, employer information, bank account numbers, and the names and telephone numbers of relatives and friends. In some cases, victims reported that they had completed online applications for other loans or credit cards before the calls started.

The fraudsters repeatedly call the victim's home, cell phone, and place of employment. The callers refuse to provide details about the alleged payday loans and become abusive when questioned. If the victims do not pay, the scammers threaten them with legal action, arrest, and even physical violence, in some cases. In many cases, the callers harass the victims' friends, relatives, and employer(s).

Some fraudsters have instructed victims to fax a statement agreeing to pay a certain amount, on a specific date, with a pre-paid Visa card. The statement further states that the victim will never dispute the debt. The high-pressure tactics employed by the scammers continue to evolve. In one recent complaint, a person posing as a process server actually showed up at the victim's place of employment, and, in another instance, a fake process server showed up at the victim's home. In both cases, the victims were told they could avoid going to court if they provided a debit card number to repay the loan.

If you receive any calls like these, do not follow the caller's instructions. Instead, you should:

- Notify your banking institutions and credit card companies.
- Contact the three major credit bureaus to request that an alert be placed on your file.
- Contact your local law enforcement agencies if you feel you are in immediate danger.
- If you are the recipient of a legitimate loan and want to verify that you do not have any outstanding obligation, contact the loan company directly.
- File a complaint at www.ic3.gov.

Some tips to avoid becoming a victim of this scam include:

- Never give your Social Security number over the telephone or online unless you initiate the contact.
- Be suspicious of any emails that urgently request personal information.
- Avoid filling out forms in email messages that request personal information.
- Ensure that your browser is up-to-date and security patches have been applied.
- Check your bank, credit, and debit card statements regularly to ensure that there are no unauthorized transactions.

Source: FBI National Press Office

August 2, 2012

Fraud Task Force Warns Consumers of Scams Using Western Union, MoneyGram, Green Dot MoneyPaks

Thieves continue to use the Internet, mail system and phone service to steal millions from unsuspecting victims across the nation.

The Consumer Fraud Task Force urges consumers to recognize the most common tactics used by crooks to scam money. Most of the thieves masquerade as legitimate businesses and ask consumers to send money via such hard-to-trace methods as Western Union, MoneyGram or Green Dot MoneyPaks. Other times, a consumer may be asked to mail money directly to a scammer in another country or to an associate within the United States.

“The message should be loud and clear: Never, ever send money to somebody you don’t know or somebody you recently met online, regardless of the reason they give you,” the Task Force warns. “And never give your bank account information or a Green Dot MoneyPak access number to anyone unless you are absolutely sure you know exactly who you are dealing with and it’s for a legitimate transaction.”

Many of the most notorious scams have operated for years. Among the most common:

- **Advance Fee Loan Scam.** Typically, this scheme targets a consumer with poor credit who either applies online for a loan or receives a phone call offering a loan. The scam company may have a professional-looking website and a contract that looks legitimate. It may even use the name or address of a real company. But after the consumer sends an advance fee (usually for “insurance” or a “processing” fee), no loan is forthcoming. The scam company usually vanishes within a few days or weeks and then re-starts under a new name. Dozens of consumers recently lost between \$500 and several thousand dollars each to advance fee loan thieves claiming to have offices in the St. Louis area.
- **Sweepstakes Scam.** In this scheme, the thief mails an official-looking, but phony, announcement proclaiming that the recipient has won a lottery or sweepstakes. The letter says the money or prizes will be delivered as soon as the winner pays taxes or other fees – again, often through Western Union, MoneyGram or a Green Dot MoneyPak. Typical is a recent mailing to a St. Charles man informing him that he had just won \$450,000 in the “US Mega” sweepstakes. The notice included what appeared to be a legitimate check for \$4,600 that the letter said would help him pay taxes of \$3,800 on the winnings. The scammer is counting on the recipient to deposit the fake check into his or her bank account and then send out the \$3,800 in real money. Too often, the “winner” discovers too late that he or she has been duped and there is no sweepstakes.
- **Secret Shopping or Work at Home Scam.** In this scam, a business that appears legitimate offers a job seeker a chance to earn money as a secret shopper, shopping various stores and services and reporting the findings back to the company. In most cases, the company mails a legitimate looking check, instructing the recipient to keep a portion of the money and use the rest to “shop” businesses such as Walgreen’s or Wal-Mart. Almost always, instructions also call for the recipient to use most of the cash to “shop” MoneyGram or Western Union by sending a large portion of the check through one of those businesses to an out-of-town

recipient. A man from O'Fallon, Mo., recently alerted the BBB to a secret shopping scam that had stolen the name of a legitimate business in Lancaster, N.Y.

- **Craigslist Scam.** Although these can take several forms, the most common involves a scammer who responds to a consumer's offer on Craigslist to sell an item or service. The thief typically sends payment in the form of a phony check, claiming that a family member or associate accidentally has overpaid and then requests a partial refund by MoneyGram or Western Union. It is only after sending the refund that the consumer realizes he or she has been scammed.
- **Romance Scam.** Avoid sending money in any form to someone you have spoken with only online. If an email "friend" asks you for money – for any reason – it is probably a scam.

The Task Force, which marks its 10th anniversary in October, is a coalition of local, state and federal government agencies and nonprofit business and consumer groups in Missouri and Illinois that work together to protect consumer and donor rights and guard against fraud. Previous Task Force releases have focused on payday loans, tax scams, timeshare resellers, home remodelers, work-at-home scams, online auctions, credit repair scams, debt management advice, foreclosure scams, extended auto service contracts, sweetheart scams and fire and police organizations.

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August 2, 2012

Door-to-Door Selling Complaints Projected to Double Over Last Year

Better Business Bureau receives thousands of complaints each year from consumers who unknowingly fall for scamming door-to-door solicitors. While many door-to-door salespersons are honest, BBB receives troubling complaints from consumers who purchased items like magazines that never came, cosmetics and photography of poor quality, even meat that was no good. BBB warns that deceptive door-to-door sellers are looking to make a quick buck...and they're on the rise.

In 2012, BBB has already received more than a thousand complaints about door-to-door magazine sellers and dealers, a number that's well on its way to nearly doubling last year's whopping 1,300 complaints. Sellers often use high pressure sales tactics that can have anyone falling victim.

"Unscrupulous marketers sometimes trick consumers into paying hundreds of dollars for items they don't want or can't afford," says Randall Hoth, president/CEO of the Wisconsin BBB. "Oftentimes, their presentations are so slick that consumers aren't even aware that they have actually made a purchase."

BBB offers these tips on dealing with high pressure, door-to-door sellers:

Magazine subscriptions: BBB has already received more than 600 complaints in 2012 against companies selling magazines door-to-door. The most common complaint BBB receives involves consumers paying for magazines they never receive. Several consumers allege the sales representative misled them by claiming to work for a local school or charity fundraiser.

Food products: Sales representatives knock on doors selling produce or meat products, claiming their prices are much lower than grocery stores. So far in 2012, BBB has received 25 complaints against

companies selling meat products door-to-door. Consumer complaints to BBB allege that their orders never arrive, or are not of the high quality originally promised.

Other industries employing door-to-door sales tactics that BBB receives the most complaints about are cosmetics, photography and cleaning supply companies.

If visited by a door-to-door sales representative, BBB recommends consumers do the following:

Be safe. Ask for identification before you open the door. Never invite the solicitor into your home.

Be wary of high pressure sales tactics. A trustworthy company should let you take time to think about the purchase and compare prices before buying or putting down a deposit.

Research the company with BBB. Visit www.bbb.org to view the company's BBB Business Review to find out more about their marketplace performance. If you have a smart phone, you can download and use the BBB app to access the company's report while the person is standing at your door, or visit m.bbb.org on your mobile device.

Get transaction details in writing. Be sure you receive a contract or receipt explaining the details of your purchase and all the terms and conditions that apply.

Remember the "Three-Day Cooling-Off Rule." The Federal Trade Commission's Three-Day Cooling-Off Rule gives consumers three days to cancel purchases of more than \$25 that are made in their home or at a location that is not the seller's permanent place of business. Along with a receipt, the salesperson should always provide a cancellation form that can be sent to the company to cancel the purchase within three days. By law, the company must give consumers a refund within 10 days of receiving the cancellation notice.

Listen carefully and be aware of high pressure sales tactics. Some unscrupulous door-to-door sellers will put pressure on you to close the deal at that moment, and even make special offers to entice you. Listen to their tone. Are they increasing in volume as they speak to you? Are they ignoring you despite saying you are not interested? Find a way to end the conversation quickly to avoid long, drawn-out sales pitches.

Stand strong. Do not invite unsolicited salespeople into your home. If you do allow a salesperson inside and decide during the presentation that you are not interested in making a purchase, simply ask him or her to leave. If the salesperson refuses to leave, threaten to call the police, and follow through if they don't leave immediately.

Victims of fraudulent door-to-door sales can file a complaint with their Better Business Bureau at www.bbb.org, local law enforcement, or state Attorney General's.

CWAG Activities

Date	Activity	County
September 13	CWAG District 6 Fall Meeting-Cameron	Barron
September 28	CWAG District 1 Fall Meeting-Waunakee	Dane
November 14-16	CWAG Senior Statesmanship Class-Madison	Dane

SMP Activities

Date	Activity	County
August 4	SMP Booth-Wellness Fest-Gundersen Lutheran-La Crosse	La Crosse
August 14	SMP Presentation-Optimist Club-Madison	Dane
August 14	SMP Presentation-St. Mary's Hall-Superior	Douglas
August 15	SMP Volunteer Foundations Training-Superior	Douglas
August 17	SMP Presentation-Hampton Regency Apts.-Butler	Waukesha
August 19	SMP Presentation-First Unitarian Society-Madison	Dane
August 21	SMP Presentation-Rhine Haus-Rhineland	Oneida
August 22	SMP Booth-Ashland Senior Expo	Ashland
August 23	SMP Presentation-West Madison Senior Center	Dane
August 28	SMP Presentation-Grobschmidt Senior Center-South Milwaukee	Milwaukee
August 28	SMP Presentation-Lake Comus Apts.-Delavan	Walworth
August 28	SMP Presentation-Woodview Apts.-Delavan	Walworth
August 28	SMP Presentation-Quaker House-Madison	Dane
August 28-30	2012 SMP Regional Conference-Grand Rapids, Michigan	
August 30	SMP Presentation-Village Square Apts.-Walworth	Walworth
September 6	SMP Presentation-South Wood County Heart Club	Wood
September 12	SMP Presentation-VIP Group-Tomah	Monroe
September 13	SMP Booth-Health & Resource Fair-Madison Senior Center	Dane
September 16	SMP Booth-English Lutheran Church Block Party-La Crosse	La Crosse
September 15	SMP Booth-Church Women United in WI Conference-Madison	Dane
September 20	SMP Booth-Health, Wellness, and Safety Fair-Black River Falls	Jackson
September 24	SMP Booth-WI Counties Association Annual Conf.-La Crosse	La Crosse
September 25	SMP Presentation-Wausau RSVP Group	Marathon
September 25	SMP Presentation-Parkland Commons-Oconomowoc	Waukesha
September 26	SMP Presentation-Rockwell Court Apts.-Fort Atkinson	Jefferson
October 2	SMP Booth-Colloquium on Aging-Madison	Dane
October 2	SMP Booth-Beloit Senior Fair-Beloit	Rock
October 3	SMP Booth-Forever Young Fair-Green Bay	Brown
October 5	SMP Presentation & Booth-Triad Conference-Madison	Dane
October 8	SMP Booth-Wisconsin Alliance for Retired Americans-Milw.	Milwaukee
October 9	SMP Presentation-Booth Manor-Oak Creek	Milwaukee
October 10	SMP Presentation-St. John's Lutheran-Lannon	Waukesha
October 11	SMP Presentation-Nutrition Site Managers' Training-Two Rivers	Manitowoc
October 12	SMP Booth-Caregiver Retreat & Resource Fair-Weston	Marathon
October 15	SMP Booth-Hospice End of Life Forum-Madison	Dane
October 18	SMP Presentation-Nutrition Site Managers' Training-Menomonie	Dunn
October 18	SMP Booth-Senior Health & Info Fair-Two Rivers	Manitowoc
October 18	SMP Booth-Wisconsin Parish Nurses Conference-Steven Point	Portage
October 26	SMP Booth-Rock County Senior Fair-Janesville	Rock
October 26	SMP Booth-Fall Health Fair-Medford	Taylor
November 13	SMP Booth-Fall Alzheimer's Conference-La Crosse	La Crosse
November 15	SMP Presentation-Round House Manor	Outagamie

We are always looking for opportunities to support our colleagues in the aging network. Please contact Wisconsin SMP and let us know about upcoming events in your area.

FRAUD ALERT – ELECTRONIC VERSION

In previous issues, we told you that Wisconsin SMP *Fraud Alert* will be sent electronically unless we receive a “request for a paper copy” from you.

Contact Lisa Turner at lturner@cwag.org,
giving her your email address,
to add to our list.
Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Check out the Wisconsin SMP web site
www.wisconsinsmp.org

You can also access our publication by visiting our web site www.wisconsinsmp.org
Or you can visit the Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups web site www.cwag.org
Click on Publications then click on Wisconsin Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) and scroll down
and click on the edition you wish to view.

ATTENTION: All of You with Email...

In an effort to save paper, postage and be “volunteer friendly,” we will email issues of the *Fraud Alert!* to those who have email. Please contact Lisa Turner at lturner@cwag.org, giving her your email address to add to our list. Thank you!

For more information, contact:

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