**Public Relations Media Toolkit**

**Timelines and Tips for Using Media Materials**

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A successful Medicare Fraud Prevention Week starts with advanced planning and a lot of follow-up. The following timeline – which includes media outreach tips and pitches – can help ensure your media outreach goals are met for promoting Medicare Fraud Prevention Week.

# Planning Timeline Before the Event

## [Two Months Before the Event](#Two)

### Find Center Resources

* Sign up to receive [Medicare Fraud Prevention Week emails](https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/E75A2hW/MFPW).
* Go to the SMP Resource Center’s [Medicare Fraud Prevention Week webpage](https://www.smpresource.org/Medicare-Fraud-Prevention-Week.aspx) for overall news and information on Medicare Fraud Prevention Week. Familiarize yourself with the content that has been created and decide if you need to create additional resources or modify what has been created. The resources available from the Center are:
  + Social media images and content
    - Available as is or editable
  + Press releases
    - Insert your information into the press releases ([see template](#_Sample_Press_Release)s)
  + Videos
    - Available to use on social media or embedded into websites
* Print all materials you wish to use from the Center. These include:
  + Postcards
  + Flyers
  + Brochures
  + My Health Care Trackers

### Familiarize Yourself with Event Messaging

* Read and learn the following messaging that can be used for both in-person and online events. This messaging can be used in full or part, as needed.
  + **Goal of the week:** Medicare Fraud Prevention Week focuses on the actions everyone can take to prevent Medicare fraud, errors, and abuse.
  + **Why is this week important:** Medicare loses an estimated $60 billion each year due to fraud, errors, and abuse. Every day, issues related to these problems affect people across the country, often costing them time, money, and well-being.

Medicare-related errors contribute to this annual loss even though errors can be honest health care billing mistakes. However, repeated errors by a doctor or provider could be considered a red flag of potential fraud or abuse.

* + When people steal from Medicare, it hurts us all and is big business for criminals. Some common examples of fraud, errors, or abuse could include:
    - Charging for services or supplies that were not provided
    - Misrepresenting a diagnosis, a person’s identity, the service provided, or other facts to justify payment
    - Prescribing or providing excessive or unnecessary tests and services
  + Falling prey to consumer scams or health care fraud may mean that your Medicare number has been “compromised” as a result of medical identity theft. Theft from Medicare leaves less available funds for those needing services now as well as those needing Medicare in the future.
* Targeted Messaging
  + **Messaging for beneficiaries:**   
    If you are a Medicare beneficiary, start the week by learning how to read your Medicare statements! Read your Medicare Summary Notice (MSN) or Explanation of Benefits (EOB) in the paper form that is mailed to you or go online to Medicare.gov and review them digitally. Remember the three steps from the SMP: Prevent, Detect, Report!
    - **Prevent**: Learn how to read your MSN by watching this video, [How to Read Your Medicare Summary Notice (MSN](https://youtu.be/Qan79r6YY_w)). You can also call your SMP or go to their website to learn how to best protect yourself and your loved ones from health care fraud, errors, or abuse. Find your SMP by using the [state locator](https://www.smpresource.org/Locator/Default.aspx).
    - **Detect:** When reviewing your MSN or EOB, look for services, products, or equipment you didn’t receive, double charges, or items your doctor didn’t order. Request and use a [My Health Care Tracker](https://www.smpresource.org/Content/You-Can-Help/My-Health-Care-Tracker.aspx) from your SMP to compare appointment information you recorded with what is printed in your MSNs and/or EOBs. If you find items of concern, call the doctor or company in question and ask them about potential mistakes. Call your insurance company if you still have questions.
    - **Report**: Call or email your local SMP if you believe that you have experienced health care fraud, errors, or abuse, or if you would like to request a My Health Care Tracker.
  + **Messaging for caregivers**:   
    Caregivers, help by educating yourself and your clients or loved ones on how to prevent and detect health care fraud, errors, and abuse. Be on the lookout for things like boxes of knee braces (known as durable medical equipment, or DME) lying around the house. This is a common scam and may mean your client or loved one has been a victim. Remind your clients or loved ones to never give out their Medicare number or other personal information over the phone.
  + **Messaging for families**:   
    Families, help by talking to your loved ones about protecting their Medicare number just as they would a credit card number. Encourage them to check their Medicare statements for fraud, errors, or abuse and never give out their Medicare number over the phone for any reason. Help your loved ones create a Medicare.gov account to access their Medicare claims online or remind them to open and review their statements when they come in the mail every three months. You can also register their phone number on “do not call” lists and go to optoutprescreen.com to opt out of marketing mailings.
  + **Messaging for partners and professionals**:   
    Partners and professionals, help by sharing SMP information on social media, referring clients and consumers to the SMP, and inviting the SMP to speak during a shared event. Identify ways to collaborate on mission-related topics and information.
  + **Messaging for health care providers:**Health care providers, help by talking to patients about health care-related scams such as those related to durable medical equipment, genetic testing, or new, plastic, or chipped Medicare cards. Reassure them that your office and their other doctors’ offices are not going to call to offer them services or equipment. Teach them that products and services should only be ordered by doctors they regularly see, like you, and that needed medical items should never be ordered through TV ads or unsolicited calls.
  + **Messaging for communities:**Community members, help by looking out for your older neighbors. If you overhear someone talking about Medicare, don’t be afraid to give information about the local SMP and SHIP. Encourage those you know to talk to a trusted source about their Medicare questions and tell your neighbors about the most recent Medicare scams. Consider volunteering with your local SMP!

### 

### Plan Activities

Activities for this week may happen virtually or in person. Planning options for both virtual and in-person activities will provide you with the most opportunity for impact. For any group event, be prepared to offer and/or mail printed materials. See the [Print Materials section](https://www.smpresource.org/Content/Medicare-Fraud-Prevention-Week/Print-Materials.aspx) of the Medicare Fraud Prevention Week website for ideas.

Ideas could include:

* In-person activities
  + Play fraud-related games (like fraud bingo – search the SMP Resource Library for “game”).
  + Exhibit at events.
  + Teach people how to read their Medicare statements.
  + Hand out My Health Care Trackers and teach people how to use them.
* Topics you may incorporate:
  + Invite someone who was approached by a scammer or scammed to share their experience.
  + Share tips on spotting Medicare fraud.
  + Make time for testimonials from volunteers – why they love volunteering for SMP.
  + Address the dangers of Medicare fraud, errors, and abuse.
  + Ask what preventing, detecting, and reporting Medicare fraud means to audience members.
  + Share written or spoken content from Medicare Minutes.

Do you have enough volunteers to help at events? Now would be a good time to see if you need to train more people.

### Engage Partners

* Send information about the events to your partners. Ask them to publicize and promote your events to increase attendance.
* Invite local partners to participate in your event.
  + Representatives from the police department or mayor’s office might be willing to discuss local scams.
  + Other local aging service providers might be willing to share their experiences with identifying possible fraud.
  + Partners might talk about how your programs are working together to serve the community.

### Prepare for the Media

#### Work with Media Outlets

* Start building or updating your list of media contact information you’ll need to promote media attendance or coverage of your events. Media outlets may include:
  + Newspapers
  + Radio stations
  + Television stations
  + Local newsletters
* Include names, contact information (email addresses, phone numbers, etc.), and a list of information these outlets often request. This will make the process more streamlined for future event requests.
* When working with newspapers or newsletters, find out who covers community events, as this contact may be different than your general contact.
* When working with television or radio, request contact information for the producer of the specific show during which you’d like your event to be covered.
* Ask if a media station’s website accepts calendar announcements ([template here](#_Sample_Calendar_Announcement)). If so, find out where to send information, which specific details are needed, and how far in advance the station requires submissions to be sent.

Story Pitches

* Write story pitches to entice media to cover your event ([see template](#_Sample_Pitch_Letter)). A news pitch is very similar to an elevator pitch in business, during which you have under one minute to get the journalist’s attention. Use this brief time to convince the journalist to engage with you, ask more questions, and hopefully cover your event.
* Consider asking a host of a program if they would participate in one of your activities (if appropriate).

Purchase Internet, Television, or Local Radio Commercials

* Contact any television or radio station (local or online) to purchase airtime.
* Radio script [templates are here](#_Radio_Script_Templates).

## [One Month Before the Event](#Two)

### Send your Press Release and Other Press Materials to Media Contacts

* Include press release content directly in the body of your email to reduce the likelihood of attachments being overlooked.
* Post the press release to your organization or program website.
* Send announcements about all events and activities to your regular channels for promotion.

### Send Promotion Material Packets to Your Partners

* Include organizational and program social media handles, press releases, photos, background information about the SMP and your agency, and announcements.
* Add your events to the community calendar sections of local media. Send out calendar announcements to editors.

### Promote the Event on Social Media

* Create an organizational Facebook event for both in-person and virtual events.
* Create and implement event advertisements on social media.
* Start posting about the week and any planned events on all relevant social media channels.

## A Week Before the Event

* Call your media contacts to see if they are planning on doing stories about the week. If so, offer to help.
* Follow up with previously contacted partners to ask if and how they’re promoting the week’s events.
* Email the prepared press release and other press materials to your media contacts.
* Send a follow-up calendar announcement or reminder ([see template](#_Sample_Calendar_Announcement)) to your channels to promote the event.
* Plan, prepare, and print all the materials you will distribute or otherwise make available during the event.

## Week of the Event

* Have your cellphone handy and check text and voicemail messages frequently. Media outlets often wait until the last minute to decide whether to cover an event.
* Assign a staff person to meet and greet reporters. This person will also be responsible for helping the reporter arrange any interviews or photo opportunities.
* Monitor social media platforms, ensure prescheduled posts are successfully posted, and be more attuned to your Facebook event page (if applicable).

# Interview Tips

## Prepare Beforehand

* Research news platforms and/or reporters beforehand to make sure you understand potential overlap between their typical coverage and the SMP program.
* Know the main messages you wish to convey. Be flexible if the interview conversation changes course but be sure to come back to your main messages before the interview concludes.
  + Remember to talk about the SMP mission, what the SMP does, and the SMP’s role in the event.
  + Give brochures, flyers, and other handouts, such as information about the SMP program and the My Health Care Tracker. Reference these materials in interviews, giving context to their intended use and importance to helping prevent Medicare fraud.

## During the Interview

* Be friendly and professional. The reporter wants a good story – your story – and can reach many readers and viewers.
* Talk slow enough for the reporter to take notes. While it’s normal to talk fast when you’re excited, remember that the reporter is trying to digest a lot of information at once.
* It’s okay to not know the answer to every question. Don’t guess. Tell the reporter that you don’t know, and you can follow up later.
* Know your boundaries and what you can and cannot say. A tip sheet found in the SMP Resource Library entry [Media Communications Training: Handling Media Like a Pro](https://www.smpresource.org/ResourceLibrary/Resources/EA874A69-684B-46AF-B270-88A7F13EFD89/Media-Communications-Training-Handling-Media-Like-a-Pro.aspx) encourages you to prepare in advance for the one question you dread answering.

## Before the Interview Ends

* Give the reporter other places to go for more information – such as websites, social media pages, or other contacts.
  + Encourage the reporter to visit the SMP Resource Center’s Medicare Fraud Prevention Week [webpage](https://www.smpresource.org/Medicare-Fraud-Prevention-Week.aspx) for more information.
  + Encourage the reporter to visit your organization or programmatic website.
* Provide the reporter with a way to contact you outside of normal business hours. This may be necessary if the reporter is under deadline.
* The reporter’s last question may be something like, “Is there anything else I should know?” Take this opportunity to reinforce your main messages.

## In-person Interview Tips

Television, radio, and other multimedia journalists prefer to conduct face-to-face interviews so they can record the interviewee and capture images/sounds of the location. Here are some tips to ensure that media interviews are impactful:

* Conduct the interview in a place that shows the SMP mission in action. For example, if the reporter is covering a Medicare Fraud Prevention Week event, conduct the interview before or after the event in the same location.
* If the reporter is, instead, covering a general topic, such as writing about Medicare fraud in general, conduct the interview outside or in a well-ventilated, spacious office.
* Be prepared to have your picture taken, so be sure to dress professionally.
* Be prepared to have photos of objects taken. For example, the reporter may want to take a picture of a My Health Care Tracker. It may also be helpful to set up an SMP table/booth with all the materials that you would show at a health fair.

## Virtual On-camera Interview Tips

* An ideal interview background is your office with an SMP banner or other materials showing.
* As with an in-person interview, dress professionally.
* Ensure that there is good lighting and a clear picture. Natural lighting is preferable and should also be in front of you, never behind.
* Minimize outside movement and noises. Even if you are working from home, convey a professional setting to reinforce the professionalism of you and your organization.
* The reporter may want to photograph brochures, flyers, or My Health Care Trackers. Prepare a packet of materials to be virtually or physically delivered before the interview.

## Phone Interview Tips

* Test the phone you’ll use for good connection prior to the interview. If the phone you normally use does not sound clear, find an alternative phone to use. Consider using Zoom or another on-camera technology to ensure your interview sounds clear. Prepare for a variety of options before the interview.
* Because visual cues and body language are lost on a phone call, make an intentional effort to have good rapport with the reporter. Be friendly, helpful, and professional.

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# Sample Pitch Letter

Dear [REPORTER]:

Medicare fraud, errors, and abuse cost people money, time, and well-being. The Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) is empowering everyone to learn how they can prevent Medicare fraud from happening. Beginning the week of June 5, the SMP is kicking off Medicare Fraud Prevention Week.

An estimated $60 billion is lost in Medicare fraud, errors, and abuse every year. On [DATE], we will be hosting [DESCRIBE EVENT]. Our goal is to show how Medicare beneficiaries, families, caregivers, health care providers, partners, and the entire community can play a part in preventing this type of health care waste from occurring.

We invite you to see our staff in action and meet older residents who are learning how they can prevent Medicare fraud. Please help us tell this story that will surely be of interest to your audience.

You can reach me at [PHONE] or [EMAIL].

Sincerely,

[NAME]

[ORGANIZATION]

# Sample Calendar Announcement

Contact Information

[INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME. INCLUDE SENIOR MEDICARE PATROL.]

[INSERT CONTACT NAME]

[INSERT PHONE NUMBER]

[INSERT EMAIL ADDRESS]

[INSERT WEB ADDRESS]

[NAME & DATE OF EVENT]

Medicare loses an estimated $60 billion each year due to fraud, errors, and abuse. Every day, issues related to these concerning matters affect people across the country, often costing them money, time, and well-being.

Medicare Fraud Prevention Week, which runs the week of 6/5, focuses on the actions everyone can take to prevent Medicare fraud, errors, and abuse. [YOUR ORGANIZATION] is hosting a series of free educational events. Here is the schedule:

* [EVENT 1, name, where, how to attend]
* [EVENT 2, name, where, how to attend]
* [ETC.]

The Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) is ready to provide you with the information you need to PROTECT yourself from Medicare fraud, errors, and abuse; DETECT potential fraud, errors, and abuse; and REPORT your concerns. SMPs help educate and empower Medicare beneficiaries in the fight against health care fraud. Your SMP can help you with your questions, concerns, or complaints about potential fraud and abuse issues. It also provides information and educational presentations.

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# Sample Press Release #1

[USE THE SMP LOGO]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact Information

[INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME. INCLUDE SENIOR MEDICARE PATROL.]  
[INSERT CONTACT NAME]  
[INSERT PHONE NUMBER]  
[INSERT EMAIL ADDRESS]  
[INSERT WEB ADDRESS]

**Medicare Fraud Prevention Week Teaches Everyone How to Prevent Fraud**

(City, State) – Fraud costs Medicare an estimated $60 billion per year. It costs Medicare beneficiaries in time, stress, their medical identities, and potentially their health. It costs families, friends, and caregivers in worry and lost work when helping their loved ones recover from falling victim to Medicare fraud.

“Medicare fraud has a devastating impact on both beneficiaries and the Medicare program,” said [INSERT SMP CONTACT NAME AND TITLE HERE. Be sure to also include “Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP)”]. “We teach people how to avoid experiencing Medicare fraud. By preventing fraud from happening, this program helps individuals and protects the Medicare program for generations to come.”

Learn how to protect yourself and your loved ones by joining the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) and their partners for Medicare Fraud Prevention Week, which runs the week of June 5, or 6/5, because most people become eligible for Medicare when they turn 65.

“We’re excited to teach people both about how to protect themselves from Medicare fraud and about the services that the Senior Medicare Patrol program offers. We hope that people will remember the numbers ‘6-5’ to help us celebrate Medicare Fraud Prevention Week,” said [INSERT CONTACT NAME].

Everyone plays a part in the fight against fraud. During Medicare Fraud Prevention Week:

* **Medicare beneficiaries** can monitor their insurance statements to make sure products and services received match what is on the statements. They can request free My Health Care Trackers from their local SMP.
* **Caregivers** can help by being on the lookout for items such as durable medical equipment (like boxes of knee braces) lying around the house 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** can help by talking to their loved ones about protecting their Medicare number just as they would a credit card number. They can help their loved ones create a Medicare.gov account to access their Medicare statements online or remind them to open and review them when they come in the mail. They can also register their phone number on “do not call” lists and go to optoutprescreen.com to opt out of mailings.
* **Partners and professionals** can help by sharing SMP information on social media, referring clients and consumers to the SMP, and inviting the SMP to speak during a shared event.
* **Health care providers** can help by talking to patients about health care-related scams such as those related to durable medical equipment and genetic testing schemes. They can remind them that products and services should only be ordered by physicians they regularly see. Needed medical items should never be ordered through TV ads or unsolicited calls.
* **Community members** can help by looking out for older neighbors. When in public, they can be aware of older individuals purchasing gift cards in large amounts. They can encourage those they know to talk to a trusted source about their Medicare questions and tell neighbors about the most recent Medicare scams. They can even consider volunteering with the local SMP!

The Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) is ready to provide you with the information you need to PROTECT yourself from Medicare fraud, errors, and abuse; DETECT potential fraud, errors, and abuse; and REPORT your concerns. SMPs help educate and empower Medicare beneficiaries in the fight against health care fraud. Your SMP can help you with your questions, concerns, or complaints about potential fraud and abuse issues. It also provides information and educational presentations.

# Sample Press Release #2

[USE THE SMP LOGO]

**Contact Information**

[INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME. INCLUDE SENIOR MEDICARE PATROL.]  
[INSERT CONTACT NAME]  
[INSERT PHONE NUMBER]  
[INSERT EMAIL ADDRESS]  
[INSERT WEB ADDRESS]

**For Immediate Release:**

(Date)

**Medicare Fraud Prevention Week Runs the Week of 6/5***Everyone Can Prevent Medicare Fraud*

(City, State) – 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 in worry and lost work when helping their loved ones recover from falling victim to Medicare fraud.

“Medicare fraud has a devastating impact on both beneficiaries and the Medicare program,” said [INSERT SMP CONTACT NAME AND TITLE HERE. Be sure to also include “Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP)”].

“We teach people how to avoid experiencing Medicare fraud. By preventing fraud from happening, this program helps individuals and protects the Medicare program for generations to come.”

Learn how to protect yourself and your loved ones by joining the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) and their partners for Medicare Fraud Prevention Week which runs the week of June 5, or 6/5, because most people become eligible for Medicare when they turn 65. Learn more about Medicare Fraud Prevention Week at www.smpresource.org.

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SMPs help educate and empower Medicare beneficiaries in the fight against health care fraud. Your SMP can help you with your questions, concerns, or complaints about potential fraud and abuse issues. It also provides information and educational presentations.

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# Radio Script Templates

**15 Seconds**

* Learn how to protect yourself and your loved ones by joining the Senior Medicare Patrol, or SMP, for Medicare Fraud Prevention Week, held June 3-9. Learn more at [smpresource.org](http://www.smpresource.org).

**30 Seconds**

* Medicare Fraud Prevention Week focuses on the actions ***everyone*** can take to prevent Medicare fraud, errors, and abuse. Learn how to protect yourself and your loved ones by joining the Senior Medicare Patrol, or SMP, for Medicare Fraud Prevention Week June 3-9. Learn more at [smpresource.org](http://www.smpresource.org) or by calling 1-877-808-2468.