



EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON AGING

News Release

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**STATE CAUTIONS MEDICARE MEMBERS
ABOUT FRAUDULENT PHONE CALLS**

HONOLULU -- SMP Hawai'i, a Medicare fraud prevention program in the State Executive Office on Aging, is warning Medicare members about telephone calls from individuals who claim they represent Medicare and ask for personal information.

"We've been hearing about a number of fraudulent calls and claims being made to Hawai'i seniors over the phone," said Noemi Pendleton, director of the Executive Office on Aging. "Our kupuna need to protect their personal information and avoid becoming a victim of fraud."

In one type of contact, the caller says he needs information from the Medicare member in order to mail a new Medicare card. The caller knows the name and address of the Medicare member and sometimes gives the names of the member's neighbors in order to appear legitimate. When the Medicare member questions the caller about his identity or refuses to give the caller the information he wants, the caller becomes annoyed and tries to force the Medicare member into providing information by threatening to cancel Medicare benefits. SMP Hawai'i and The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) assure Medicare members that Medicare is not issuing new Medicare cards unless the person with Medicare requests a replacement.

In another kind of call, the caller tells the Medicare member if he or she makes a one-time, lump-sum payment, Medicare premium deductions from the member's Social Security benefits check will cease forever. To accept this offer, all the member has to do is provide a bank account number. This is false, according to SMP Hawai'i and CMS.

(more)

Medicare members need to know when they should and should not provide personal information. When a Medicare member calls Medicare or the Social Security Administration (SSA), information must be given so that Medicare and SSA can verify identity. But in the reverse situation, when someone calls the Medicare member and asks for personal information, the Medicare member should not volunteer information.

SMP Hawai'i also reminds Medicare members that Medicare does not sell products or services. Medicare members need to carefully scrutinize any telephone call, home visit, or offer on the internet or through the mail that claims Medicare will pay for a healthcare product or service. If Medicare members suspect that an individual asked for their Medicare number in order to make false claims to Medicare, they should report the call to SMP Hawai'i at (808) 586-7281 or 1-800-296-9422. Medicare members who think they may have given their bank account number to a scam artist, should call their bank immediately. For information about what Medicare covers, call the Sage PLUS Program, Hawai'i's SHIP (State Health Insurance Assistance Program), at (808) 586-7299 or 1-888-875-9229.

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