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West Virginia Bureau of Senior Services and WV Senior Medicare Patrol announce 2nd Annual Medicare Fraud Prevention Week

CHARLESTON, WV – Medicare fraud is a significant national issue, costing an estimated \$60 billion annually, and placing unwanted stress on beneficiaries and their families. To highlight the statewide efforts to prevent Medicare fraud, Gov. Jim Justice has **proclaimed** June 5-11, 2023, as Medicare Fraud Prevention Week in West Virginia.

The West Virginia Bureau of Senior Services wants all West Virginians to know that everyone can help prevent fraud. So, in conjunction with the WV Senior Medicare Patrol, the Bureau is offering helpful information, video guides, and tips to keep you safe from Medicare fraud.

"Medicare fraud has a devastating impact on both beneficiaries and the Medicare program," West Virginia Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) State Director Rebecca Gouty said. "The WV SMP helps people recognize signs of and avoid potential Medicare fraud. By preventing fraud from happening, this program helps individuals and protects the Medicare program for generations to come. However, if you have been a victim of Medicare fraud, do not be embarrassed but report the suspected fraud to WV SMP so it can be reported to try and stop these bad actors."

Join the WV SMP and their partners for [Medicare Fraud Prevention Week](#) from June 5 to 11, 2023, and learn how to protect yourself and your loved ones. We will begin this observance on June 5, also known as "6-5," as it signifies the age when most people become eligible for Medicare, which is 65 years old.

"There are Senior Medicare Patrol team members located within most County Aging Providers and our Aging and Disability Resource Centers ready to assist Medicare beneficiaries with questions they may have related to Medicare fraud. They provide outreach and education within local communities to help protect our beneficiaries and to allow them to continue to age well in West Virginia." Commissioner of the WV Bureau of Senior Services Denise Worley said.

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

- **Medicare beneficiaries** can ensure the accuracy of their insurance statements by

comparing the received products and services with the information provided on the statements. They can also obtain free My Health Care Trackers from their local SMP.

- **Caregivers** can assist by keeping an eye out for items like durable medical equipment (e.g., boxes of knee braces) that may be present in the beneficiary's home without their or their doctor's approval. In addition, they can remind their clients or loved ones never to disclose their Medicare number or personal information over the phone.
- **Families** can play a role by discussing the importance of safeguarding the Medicare number and treating it with the same care as a credit card number. They can help their loved ones create a Medicare.gov account to access statements online or remind them to review paper statements upon receipt. Registering phone numbers on "do not call" lists and opting out of mailings through optoutprescreen.com are additional measures that can be taken.
- **Partners and professionals** can contribute by sharing SMP information on social media, referring clients and consumers to the SMP, and arranging for SMP representatives to speak during joint events.
- **Healthcare providers** can help by educating patients about scams related to durable medical equipment and genetic testing schemes. In addition, they should emphasize that healthcare products and services should only be ordered through the regular physicians they see and caution against ordering from television advertisements or unsolicited calls.
- **Community members** can assist by keeping an eye on older neighbors, particularly when they are purchasing gift cards in large amounts. Encouraging them to consult a trusted source for Medicare-related inquiries and informing neighbors about the latest Medicare scams are helpful actions to take. Volunteering with the local SMP is also an option worth considering.

The Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) is here to assist you in safeguarding yourself against Medicare fraud, errors, and abuse. SMPs are vital in educating and empowering Medicare beneficiaries to identify and report potential fraud, errors, and abuse. Your local SMP is available to support you if you have any questions, concerns, or complaints regarding these issues. They offer information, educational presentations, and answers to your questions. To learn more, call our toll-free number at 1-855-254-1720 or visit www.wvship.org for additional information.

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