



# SMP Briefs

The SMP (Senior Medicare Patrol) Program educates and empowers people with Medicare to identify and report health care fraud and resolve errors.

There is a SMP Program in every state, the District of Columbia, Guam, U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. Nebraska's SMP Program serves the entire state through a network of eight local coordinators and over 100 volunteers. Visit [www.dhhs.ne.gov/smp](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/smp) or call 1-800-942-7830

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**SCAM ALERT!** Some latest scams you should be aware of are listed below. Scams often cross state lines and quickly proliferate throughout the nation.

Funeral scams have been happening with an official-looking form being mailed to seniors asking for personal information. The return postcard goes to an address in Rockwell, Tennessee.

Seniors should be aware of scams telling beneficiaries they have to re-register for Medicare in order to be qualified for healthcare reform and asking for debit card number to make new changes.

There have been reports of insurance agents making cold calls saying the beneficiaries need to change benefit plans, supplemental insurance due to health care reform.

Seniors should inform their SMP Program about such calls.

SMPs will then report it to insurance regulators or the Attorney General's Office.

Phone calls soliciting information for DME supplies have been on the rise in recent months. DME sellers are offering seniors who are unable to pay their 20% co-pay, a hardship application that requests a lot of personal information. DME suppliers have been making demonstrations on Arthritis equipment in long term care facilities to sell equipment. Due to the enormity of the problem, Program Safeguard Contractors may be alerted.

Scammers posing as FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) officials and offering repairs have been reported in some states.

Spanish speaking seniors have been targeted with improper marketing tactics in recent months.

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In some states, seniors in low-income housing are getting something in the mail from a “secret society” that will mentor them and help them improve their lives.

The following lottery scams and scooter scams are still out there as are various email scams:

- Posing as Western Union and saying that they have money to send you.
- Contribute to Nelson Mandela fund
- For a fee they will protect you from getting scammed.
- Nigerian scam letters.
- Many SMPs in government agencies are receiving email scams on their work email addresses.
- Be on the alert for scams related to the oil spill, i.e., employment related, save the animals, etc.



In Nebraska, a caller from Romania used bank receptionist’s name asking for personal information from customers. Several customers lost large amounts of money before the scam was discovered.

A construction firm in Denton, Nebraska avoided a \$34,000 scam with the help of its bank. An employee with the firm received a letter that appeared to be from the U.S. Department of Transportation. The letter requested the company provide financial information to be eligible for procurement. The employee faxed the firm’s bank account number to what she thought was the transportation department. But the letter was sent by scammers. The bank employee called the company to see if anyone had authorized a money order to Sonora, Mexico for over \$34,000. The money order was canceled and fortunately no loss was reported.

In Nebraska, there have been reports of scammers sending out bogus IRS and U.S. Census mailings to people according to the Sheriff’s Department in Lincoln, Nebraska.

An Omaha dentist was sentenced to three months federal imprisonment and three years of probation after being convicted on health care fraud. In 2005 he was barred for five years from billing the federal government or Medicaid for health services. He had been convicted of stealing dental drill bits from a Veterans Affairs hospital in Virginia. But in 2007 he started working in an Omaha dental clinic that eventually billed Medicaid nearly \$26,000 for services he performed.

## OIG Report

Nebraska SMP had several notable accomplishments in the 2009 SMP Performance Data as reported in the official OIG Report released in May. Nebraska SMP placed in the top five (5), if not the top in several performance measures including: 1) Referring highest total dollar amount for further action (Item 13B), 2) Highest actual Medicare funds recovered (Item 17A), 3) Highest actual Medicaid funds recovered (Item 17B), 4) Highest Other savings to beneficiaries (Item 17D), 5) Placed #4 in Cost avoidance on behalf of Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries (Item 16), 6) Placed 5th in the nation in Actual savings to beneficiaries (Item 17C) and, 7) Highest Total savings to the project (Item 17A – 17D).

In his summary, David Rudich of the Office of Inspector General noted that "...the total savings to Medicare, Medicaid, beneficiaries and, others were over three times higher in 2009, compared to totals in 2008." We believe Nebraska SMP has been a major contributor to this accomplishment. The help provided by Ginny Paulson, SMP Resource Center Director, in securing appropriate documentation for the OIG report on a major case is greatly appreciated. Nebraska SMP local coordinators are commended for all their efforts in recruiting volunteers, conducting training, outreach, education, and research and reporting during 2009.



## Volunteer Foundations Training



Local SMP coordinators conducted the Volunteer Foundation Training (VFT) for their current and several new volunteers. The training was well received by participants. The trainees found the exercises to be very helpful. The Jeopardy game was a great review for many before the assessment test. Some found the assessment test to be a little difficult and time-consuming. Several suggestions have been made to make it easier for future training sessions. Some coordinators supplemented the training with the "Good Guys, Bad Guys" DVD and/or a PowerPoint presentation on the SMP Program. Congratulations to all our newly trained volunteers!

## Annual Nebraska SMP/Ombudsman Volunteer Conference

The annual volunteer conference scheduled for August 26 at the Holiday Inn Downtown in Lincoln is shaping up well. There is no cost for volunteers to attend the conference. Volunteers will be reimbursed for their travel and per diem expenses. The registration deadline is July 23. The conference agenda includes:

### *Executive Dysfunction in Alzheimer's Disease*

- Steven Wengel, M.D., UNMC

### *Medicare in Long-Term Care Facilities*

- Alicia Stark, SHIP Training Manager

### *Volunteer Recognition Luncheon*

### *Age Sensitivity: Understanding Sensory Changes*

- Madhavi Bhadbhade, SMP Project Director
- Patty Pierson, State LTC Ombudsman

### *Panel Presentation: Consumer Fraud Protection*

- Mark Moraczewski, MFCU Investigator, Attorney General's Office
- Mark Collins, MFCU Attorney – AG's Office
- Jim Hegarty, President & CEO, Better Business Bureau
- Josie Rodriguez, Coordinator, SAFE Program (Senior Antifraud Education Program)

### *Rehabilitation 101 -*

- Samantha Hoffman, Director of Rehabilitation, Tabitha Nursing and Rehabilitation Center

For a conference brochure, call 1-800-942-7830

## Regional SMP Meeting – Kansas City

SMP meeting for Regions V, VI and VII will be held in Kansas City, August 3 – 5. Volunteerism—Vision—Vigilance is the theme for the meeting. The meeting will highlight visionary SMP outreach practices, explore volunteer risk and program management issues, and provide tools to remain vigilant against fraud.

The agenda features SMP topics on Day 1: Current health care fraud trends and initiatives, SMP referrals, SMP program management, and a round table for sharing successful outreach and education strategies. Day 2 will be about volunteer risk and program management presented by Linda Graff & Associates and Day 3 will feature session related to volunteer programs and a session by the National Hispanic SMP on outreach strategies for reaching Hispanic elders. The Nebraska SMP Director and several local coordinators are planning on attending this informative meeting that will also provide a great networking opportunity with other SMP staff.

## Meet our Partners

The SMP Steering Committee meets on a quarterly basis. This provides an opportunity to share information between partners, discuss latest scams and disseminate information. It also serves as a forum to gather important fraud information and to refer complex issues between entities. Two new partners were added recently: Better Business Bureau and the Consortium for Dementia Alternatives.

The SMP Director participates in the national mentor calls held monthly and communicates the discussions on latest scams, successes and Center updates with the Steering Committee. SMP Steering Committee meetings have been productive with open discussion and referrals on latest fraud cases and scams as well as some guest speakers on topics of interest.

### Here is a complete list of the active SMP partners:

*Nebraska AARP, Nebraska SHIIP, Nebraska Area Agencies on Aging, Nebraska Long-term Care Ombudsman Program, Nebraska Medicaid Office, Nebraska Attorney General's Office - Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU), IntegriGuard (Program Safety Contractor), CIMRO Nebraska (Quality Improvement Organization), TRIAD, Nebraska Medical Society, Better Business Bureau and the Consortium for Dementia Alternatives.*

Nebraska has received the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) grant and the State Unit on Aging is hiring a full-time ADRC Coordinator who will soon be another new SMP partner.

SMP Briefs features a column written by one of these SMP partners. In this issue the featured article is by AARP.

*AARP*

*- Bob Courtney, AARP State Coordinator for Advocacy*

AARP concentrates on the issues of interest to our members as they age: economic security; health care; access to affordable quality long-term care; creating and maintaining livable communities; and insuring that our democracy works better for us all.

To accomplish our goals we work together with many aging networks; Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP), Area Agencies on Aging, Nebraska Association of Retired School Personnel (NARSP), the Alzheimer's Association and many other organizations both large and small.

We work with both Federal and State Legislators on public policy issues. We work to protect the rights of the elderly, assure that they have access to benefits that current laws allow and to work for change in laws that assist the elderly to live safely in their homes with dignity and grace. We provide the elderly with voter guides that informs them with the candidate's positions on prime issues so that they may vote with confidence.

We use AARP publications that allow us to promptly inform our members throughout the state of issues that are relevant. We have an e-mail network for statewide advocates that allow us to immediately address issues such as scams and changes to policy that affects our manner of living. When issues require detailed explanations we hold forums through the State to clarify confusing changes to either State or Federal law.

We have been able to help recruit volunteers for the Ombudsman and SHIP programs.

I have appreciated the opportunity to participate in the SMP program and look forward to continuing to serve on the panel.

## **Health Care Reform Web Chats**

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services hosted a series of web chats on the health care reform. Presenters were HHS Secretary, Department of Labor Secretary, Department of Justice officials, Assistant Secretary of the Administration on Aging and Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) officials.

The first of the three video chats covered the new rules of the Affordable Care Act which include new consumer protections such as prohibitions on insurance companies from putting lifetime limits on coverage or canceling coverage when someone gets sick and allowing grandfathering plans to protect consumers. They discussed the pathways to a consumer friendly marketplace.

In the second web chat Secretary Sebelius along with officials from the Department of Justice and CMS staff talked about the \$250 rebates to individuals reaching the donut hole and increase and flexibility in funding for



the Money Follows the Person Program for 2011 – 2014. They also answered several questions submitted by individuals in advance related to waiting period for those on disability, Medicare Advantage Plans and cautioned about fraud related to health care. A brochure explaining the Health Care Reform measure was highlighted. This brochure is included in this newsletter and is also available at [www.healthreform.gov](http://www.healthreform.gov).



The third web chat was of particular interest to the SMP network as it was dedicated to prevention of health care fraud. Secretary Sebelius and Assistant Secretary of Administration on Aging, Kathy Greenlee talked up SMP highlighting its merits. Secretary Sebelius highlighted the new tools in the Act which include more investigators and mobilizing SMP volunteers to educate more seniors about protecting their personal information and reporting fraud. The Secretary talked about recent scams such as the ObamaCare and said they want SMPs to become the eyes and ears to prevent fraud. She stated that FBI has a healthcare coordinator who will work with SMP and other programs to investigate fraud. She asked viewers to do what credit card companies do when a suspicious purchase is made outside our country, they call the customer. The federal government will work with private insurance companies to learn about sophisticated tools on how to detect fraud. One SMP staff asked what return address would be listed on the rebate checks so that SMPs can let seniors know about the legitimacy of the mailing. Great question! SMPs will be provided this information soon.

These web chats can be viewed at [www.healthreform.gov](http://www.healthreform.gov).

## **Semi-Annual Performance Report**

The Semi-annual Performance Report to the Administration on Aging for the period, December 1, 2009 – May 31, 2010 was submitted to AoA at the end of June. The report highlighted new SMP partner activity, results of the 2009 OIG report, Volunteer Foundations Training and the flood of media activity that occurred following the Associated Press newspaper article. The local SMP coordinators are commended for the tremendous progress in performance made during the second half of Fiscal Year 2010.

## **HHS Announces Plans to Double the Size of SMP**

Secretary Kathleen Sebelius in a News Release on June 8 announced that HHS plans to double the size of the Senior Medicare Patrol and put more boots on the ground in the fight against Medicare fraud. The current SMP grantees are expected to receive increased funds. In addition, Secretary Sebelius and Attorney General, Eric Holder sent a letter to state attorneys general urging them to work with HHS and federal, state and local law enforcement officials to conduct a substantial outreach campaign to educate seniors and other Medicare beneficiaries about how to prevent scams and fraud beginning this summer. The two agencies will convene a series of regional fraud prevention summits in the next few months in Miami on July 16 followed by Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Detroit, Boston, New York and Philadelphia.

## In Other National News.....

The interagency team called Health Care Fraud Prevention and Enforcement Action Team or HEAT has made substantial progress in fighting waste, fraud and abuse in Medicare and Medicaid. According to an article in the Federal Times dated June 17, 2010, after just over a year, prosecutors have filed more than 120 cases in the strike team locations which include South Florida, Los Angeles, Detroit, Houston, Brooklyn, NY, Baton Rouge, LA and Tampa, FL. More than 290 defendants with Medicare-related crimes negotiated about 130 guilty pleas and obtained convictions of 16 defendants from 12 jury trials. Since 1997 when Congress established the Health Care Fraud and Abuse Control Program, \$15.6 billion has been recovered and returned to Medicare Trust Fund. It is estimated that every dollar invested in the program has returned \$4 to the trust fund. The Obama administration is seeking an additional \$250 million in discretionary funding for HEAT program in the fiscal year 2011 budget. This will allow HEAT to expand to 20 teams by the end of 2012.

## New Medicare Publication

The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has mailed a new brochure “Medicare and the New Health Law – What it Means for You” to all Medicare beneficiaries. The brochure outlines key provisions of the Affordable Care Act for people with Medicare. The brochure is available in both English and Spanish at <http://www.medicare.gov/Publications/Pubs/pdf/11467.pdf>

*(Sample of brochure cover shown below, to access entire brochure click on the site listed above).*

CENTERS FOR MEDICARE & MEDICAID SERVICES



MAY 2010

### Medicare and the New Health Care Law — What it Means for You

**A Message from Kathleen Sebelius,  
Secretary of Health & Human Services**

The Affordable Care Act passed by Congress and signed by President Obama this year will provide you and your family greater savings and increased quality health care. It will also ensure accountability throughout the health care system so that you, your family, and your doctor—not insurance companies—have greater control over your care.



These are needed improvements that will keep Medicare strong and solvent. Your guaranteed Medicare benefits won't change—whether you get them through Original Medicare or a Medicare Advantage plan. Instead, you will see new benefits and cost savings, and an increased focus on quality to ensure that you get the care you need.

This brochure provides you with accurate information about the new services and benefits to help you and your family now and in the future.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (the federal agency that runs the Medicare, Medicaid, and Children's Health Insurance Program) will continue to provide you with up-to-date information about these new benefits and will ensure that your personal information is safe.

Remember—rely on your trusted sources of information when it comes to accurate information about Medicare, and don't hesitate to call 1-800-MEDICARE or go on-line at Medicare.gov if you have questions or concerns. **Don't give your personal Medicare information to anyone who isn't a trusted source.**



