

FraudAlert!

Helping keep the promise.



**The Medicare Integrity Project:
Wisconsin's SMP**

April 2007 • Volume 10, No. 9

ELDER LAW CENTER • Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups

From the Project Director Elizabeth Conrad

Scam Alert:

A Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) coordinator in another state contacted other SMPs to let us know she had received a phone call about a licensed insurance agent who attends various community events that attract seniors and individuals with developmental disabilities.

Scenario: After introducing himself, the insurance agent gets an invitation to visit a person's home, then signs him up for an insurance product he and his wife either don't need or really want.

If this scam happened to you, would you know what to do?

Jury Duty Scam:

This has been verified by the FBI and has been reported in 11 states.

Scenario: A caller claims to be a jury coordinator and is wondering why you didn't reply to a summons for jury duty. You explain you never received the summons. However, the scammer claims he needs your date of birth and Social Security number so he can verify the information and cancel your arrest warrant.

What do you do if you receive a call like this?

The FBI and the federal court system have issued nationwide alerts on their web sites, warning consumers about this scam.

Check it out here:

<http://www.snopes.com/crime/fraud/juryduty.asp>

http://www.fbi.gov/pressrel/pressrel_05/092805.htm

**The Medicare Integrity Project:
Wisconsin's SMP**

**Email Address To Report Medicare
Part D Scams**
medfraud@cwag.org

Website Helps With Part D
www.WisMedRx.org

CWAG's Website
www.cwag.org

**Important Information About
SeniorCare**
See page 2

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR SENIORCARE PARTICIPANTS

April 11, 2007

In early April the federal government announced that it would not continue to provide its share of funding for the SeniorCare program beyond June 30, 2007. The funding shortfall will mean that significant changes will be in store for SeniorCare participants in 2007.

What You Need to Know Now

- SeniorCare participants may have their prescriptions filled as they normally would until further notice.
- SeniorCare is still accepting applications and renewals.
- SeniorCare is reviewing all available options with the goal of securing affordable prescription drug coverage for Wisconsin seniors.
- SeniorCare participants will be given notice before benefits are terminated or reduced, and will have an opportunity to find other coverage without a gap in benefits.

What You Should do Now

- Most SeniorCare participants will find Medicare's "Part D" drug benefit to be a viable alternative to SeniorCare. There are approximately 50 Medicare Part D plans available in Wisconsin. In order to select a Medicare Part D plan that fits your needs you will need to assemble a list of the drugs you take, including dosages and generic alternatives.
- Explore your Part D options. There are several resources available to help you explore your Medicare Part D options.
- An official plan has not been developed for current SeniorCare participants yet, do not make any final decisions about your drug coverage until all the details are available.
- Keep all letters you receive from SeniorCare, Medicare, and the Social Security Administration.
- Keep yourself informed.

Where to Go for Help

Medicare: Speak with a Medicare customer service representative at 1-800-MEDICARE about general Medicare Part D Questions.

Visit www.medicare.gov to access a tool that will help you compare your Medicare Part D options.

SeniorCare: Speak with a SeniorCare customer service representative at 1-800-657-2038 about general SeniorCare questions.

CWAG: Speak with a trained counselor at 1-866-456-8211 about all of your prescription drug coverage options.

Ten Tips for Wise Volunteering

1. Research the causes or issues important to you.

Look for a group which deals with issues about which you feel strongly. You might already be giving money to one of these organizations, and that might be a good place to begin your volunteer experience. If you can't find such an organization, here's a challenging and intriguing thought: why not start one yourself? You can rally your neighbors to clean up that vacant lot on the corner, patrol the neighborhood, paint an elderly neighbor's house, take turns keeping an eye on the ailing person down the street, or form a group to advocate for a remedy to that dangerous intersection in your neighborhood. There is no end to the creative avenues for volunteering, just as there is no end to the need for volunteers.

2. Consider the skills you have to offer.

If you enjoy outdoor work, have a knack for teaching, or just enjoy interacting with people, you may want to look for volunteer work which would incorporate these aspects of your personality. Many positions require a volunteer who has previous familiarity with certain equipment, such as computers, or who possesses certain skills, such as ability in athletics or communications. For one of these positions you might decide to do something comparable to what you do on the job during your work day, or something which you already enjoy as a hobby. This sort of position allows you to jump right into the work without having to take training to prepare for the assignment.

3. Consider volunteering as a family.

Think about looking for a volunteer opportunity which would be suitable for parents and children to do together, or for husband and wife to take on as a team. When a family volunteers to work together at a nonprofit organization, the experience can bring them closer together, teach young children the value of giving their time and effort, introduce everyone in the family to skills and experiences never before encountered, and give the entire family a shared experience as a wonderful family memory.

4. Would you like to learn something new?

Perhaps you would like to move into areas which will provide you with novelty or change. Then seek a volunteer opportunity involving training in an unfamiliar skill. Many nonprofits seek out people who are willing to learn, especially if the needs they serve are specialized or unique. Many nonprofits have a demonstrated need, but few volunteers skilled in what it takes to fill that need. Realize beforehand, however, that such work might require much more of an effort or a time commitment for training before the actual volunteer assignment begins. Make sure you are willing to commit to the necessary responsibilities.

5. Don't over-commit your schedule.

Make sure the volunteer hours you want to give fit into your hectic life, so that you don't frustrate your family, exhaust yourself, shortchange the organization you're trying to help or neglect your day job. Do you want a long-term assignment or something temporary? If you are unsure about your availability, or want to see how the work suits you before making an extensive commitment, see if the organization will start you out on a limited number of hours until you get the feel of things. Better to start out slowly than to commit yourself to a schedule you can't-or don't want to-fulfill.

6. Nonprofits may have questions, too.

While most nonprofits are eager to find volunteer help, they have to be careful when accepting the services you offer. If you contact an organization with an offer to donate your time, you may be asked to come in for an interview, fill out a volunteer application, describe your qualifications and your background-just as you would at an interview for a paying job. It is in the organization's interest to make certain you have the skills they need, that you are truly committed to doing the work, and that your interests match those of the nonprofit. Furthermore, in volunteer work involving children or other at-risk populations, there are legal ramifications for the organization to consider.

7. I never thought of that?

Many community groups which are looking for volunteers may not have occurred to you. Most of us know that hospitals, libraries, and churches use volunteers for a great deal of their work, but here are some volunteer opportunities which may not have crossed your mind:

- day care centers
- Neighborhood Watch
- public schools and colleges
- halfway houses
- community theatres
- drug rehabilitation centers
- fraternal organizations, such as Elks, Moose, Knights of Columbus or Rotary Clubs
- retirement centers and homes for the elderly
- Meals on Wheels
- church or community-sponsored soup kitchens or food pantries
- museums, art galleries, and monuments
- community choirs, bands and orchestras
- prisons
- neighborhood parks
- youth organizations, sports teams, and after-school programs
- shelters for battered women and children
- historical restorations, battlefields and national parks

8. Give voice to your heart through your giving and volunteering!

Bring your heart and your sense of humor to your volunteer service, along with the enthusiastic spirit which is, in itself, a priceless gift. What you'll get back will be immeasurable!

9. Virtual volunteering?

Yes, there is such a thing! If you have computer access and the necessary skills, some organizations now offer the opportunity to do volunteer work over the computer. This might take the form of giving free legal advice, typing a college term paper for a person with a disability, or simply keeping in contact with a shut-in who has e-mail. This sort of volunteering might be well-suited to you if you have limited time, no transportation, or a physical disability which precludes you from getting about freely. Virtual volunteering can also be a way for you to give time if you simply enjoy computers and want to employ your computer skills in your volunteer work.

10. Be a year-round volunteer!

We all tend to think more of those in need during the holidays; but volunteering is welcome and necessary all year. The need for compassion doesn't stop with the New Year, and warm spring weather doesn't fill empty stomachs or decrease the litter in the public parks. We all need to be aware that making our communities, our nation and our world better is a 365-day-a-year responsibility-and there is always something we could be doing to help!

How to find volunteer opportunities

Online Resources:

Action Without Borders Youth Service America
www.idealists.org www.servenet.org

Toll-free Service:

Points of Light Foundation
800-59-LIGHT (800-595-4448)

Please feel free to reprint this information. Source: Independent Sector, *Give Five* brochure

Independent Sector Nonprofit Information Center

1200 Eighteenth Street, NW, Suite 200, Washington, D.C. 20036
202-467-6100 ■ 202-467-6106 fax ■ 888-860-8118 *publications*

Visit our web site: www.IndependentSector.org or e-mail: info@IndependentSector.org

Medicare Integrity Under Scrutiny

Medicare Fraud Costs Taxpayers Billions Each Year House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee Hears Testimony From Federal Officials

On Wednesday, April 18, 2007 a hearing was held by the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health regarding the integrity of the Medicare program, including Medicare fraud.

Congressman John D. Dingell, Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce testified. "In this fiscal year alone, Medicare will spend more than \$425 billion on health care goods and services for its 44 million beneficiaries," he said. "Unfortunately, in a program of this size, overpayments are inevitable. Overpayments, or misaligned payments, can have a direct effect on beneficiary out-of-pocket costs, as well."

"Misaligned payments can also cause beneficiaries to pay more than necessary in coinsurance," he added. "And in the overall context of the Federal budget, inappropriately spent funding reduces funds available for other priorities. Similarly, providers who knowingly defraud the program should be identified and the Federal Government should work to recover overpayments from those providers and seek criminal charges if the case warrants."

Acting Administrator for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Leslie Norwalk also testified. "The fraudulent business practices of unscrupulous durable medical equipment, orthotics, prosthetics, and supplies Durable Medical Equipment suppliers continue to cost the Medicare program billions of dollars," said Norwalk. "CMS has seen a marked increase in fraud and abuse activities over the past few years that can be directly tied to provider enrollment issues and has undertaken numerous aggressive actions to tighten the provider enrollment process, provide more rigorous oversight and monitoring once a provider/supplier enrolls in the program, and strengthen the provider revocation process."

Norwalk explained that beginning in fiscal year 2003, with the assistance of the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General (OIG), CMS began implementing the Comprehensive Error Rate Testing (CERT) program in order to measure and assess improper payments made in the Medicare fee-for-service program. "The CERT program not only produces a national paid claims error rate, but also very specific improper payment rates, contractor-specific, provider-type specific and other management-related information," added Norwalk. "This offers insight into payment errors by type and region."

Medicare Fee-For-Service Error Rates

Norwalk went on to say, "We believe our efforts in Medicare have been a success. For example, in 2006, the Department of Health and Human Services reported a Medicare fee-for-service error rate of 4.4 percent, an improvement from the 5.2 percent reported in 2005, and even lower than the 10.1 percent rate noted in 2004."

Norwalk feels confident that the continued monitoring and error reducing efforts we aim to achieve our future targets of 4.3 percent in 2007, 4.2 percent in 2008, and 4.1 percent in 2009.”

Deputy Inspector General for Evaluation and Inspections, Stuart Wright, testified that OIG has consistently found the Medicare Durable Medical Equipment Suppliers (DMEPOS) benefit is vulnerable to fraud and abuse. “Specifically, we have identified problems related to a wide range of items and equipment, including orthotic body jackets, wound care supplies, incontinence supplies, lymphadema pumps, therapeutic shoes, enteral nutrition supplies, and, as provided in earlier examples, oxygen and power wheelchairs,” said Wright.

Wright continued by saying the DMEPOS fraud schemes uncovered generally fall into the following categories. Number one: filing claims for equipment that was never delivered. Number two: billing for high cost equipment when lower cost equipment was actually provided (upcoding.) Number three: billing for the component parts of a piece of equipment instead of the entire unit (unbundling.) Number four: delivering medical equipment to beneficiaries who do not need it and number five: paying kickbacks to physicians and other sources in return for referring beneficiaries, access to beneficiaries Medicare numbers and/or signing certificates of medical necessity.

Daniel Fridman, Senior Counsel to the Deputy Attorney General and Special Counsel for Health Care Fraud, added by saying, “Working with our colleagues, since the inception of the Health Care Fraud and Abuse Control (HCFAC) program in 1997, the Department has obtained, according to our preliminary estimates, \$11.87 billion in total recoveries. This includes criminal fines and Federal and State civil settlements in health care fraud matters, predominately involving losses to the Medicare program. Of this total, \$10.4 billion has been transferred or deposited back into the Medicare Trust Fund and \$604 million, representing the federal share of Medicaid fraud recoveries, has been transferred to CMS.”

April Volunteer Activities Around the State

A very special thank you to Attorney Alice Page for creating a PowerPoint presentation entitled, *Becoming Your Own Best Health Care Advocate*. Please let us know if you would like to receive a copy of this to use during your group presentations.

Thanks **Betty Irwin**, District 1 Lead Volunteer, for volunteering your time to work at the Dodgeville Health Fair sponsored and hosted by CrestRidge Assisted Living on April 19th.

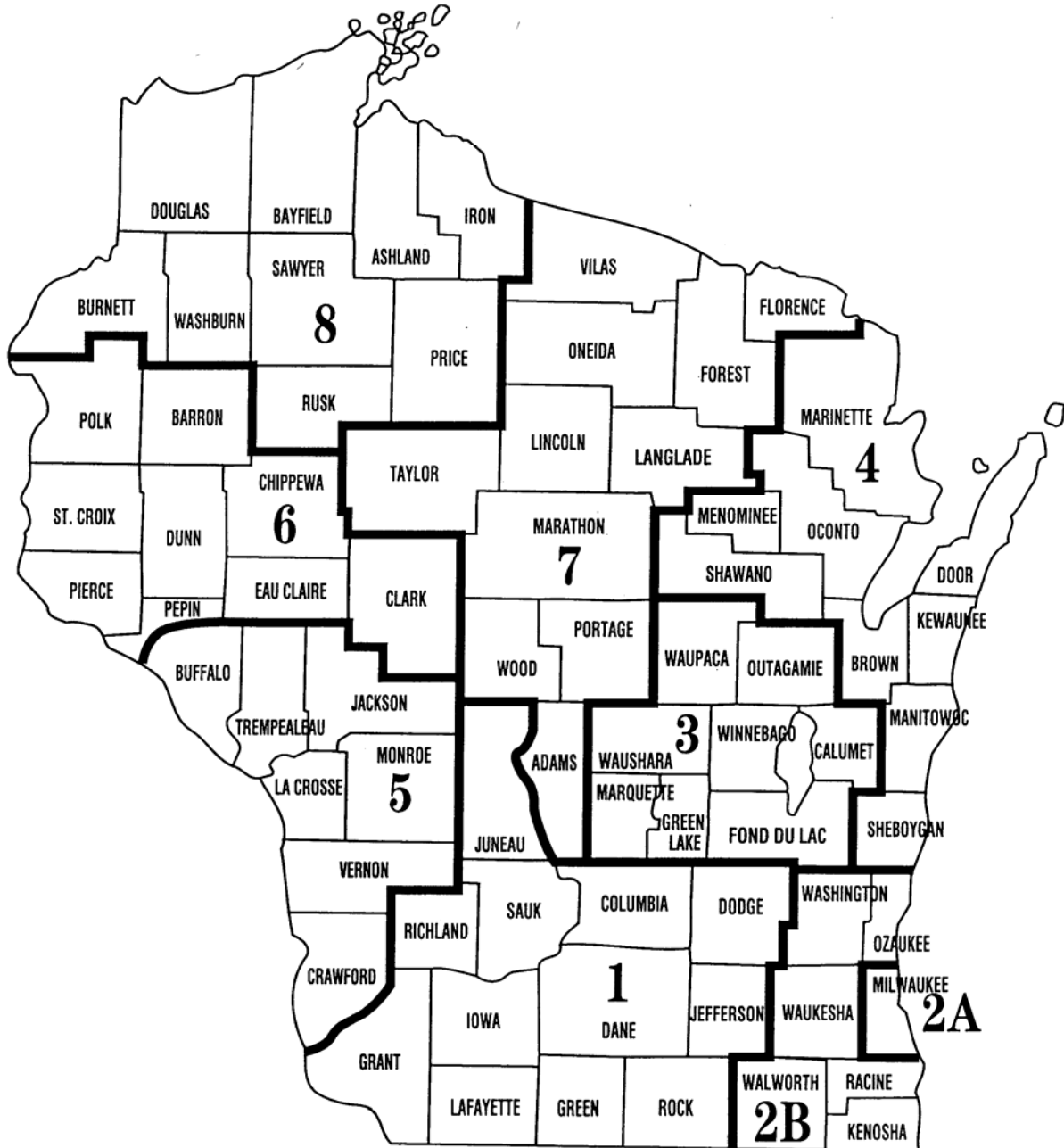
Thank you to **Deputy Steve Herman** for volunteering your time to get the word out about healthcare fraud and consumer protection issues at the Seniors Housing Conference taking place at the Winnebago County Fairgrounds Expo Center on April 21st.

Thanks **Lynn Scheinoha**, Information and Assistance Specialist, Manitowoc County Aging & Disability Resource Center, for presenting *Scams and Schemes* at the Senior Center in Manitowoc on April 30th.

MEDICARE INTEGRITY PROJECT DISTRICT LEAD VOLUNTEERS

District 3 – Floralee Myers
 District 4 – Looking for Volunteer
 District 5 – Looking for Volunteer

District 6 – Looking for Volunteer
 District 7 – Harry Pokorny
 District 8 – Looking for Volunteer



District 1 – Betty Irwin
 District 2A – Dee Sitzberger

District 2B – Position on Hold

December 2006

MEDICARE INTEGRITY PROJECT: WISCONSIN'S SMP MONTHLY REPORT FORM

Time Period of Report _____

Name _____ County _____

(Complete address, e-mail and phone information ONLY if new volunteer)

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

E-Mail _____ Phone _____

DATE	ACTIVITY** **Please Specify	SITE & CITY	NUMBER OF PEOPLE	TIME SPENT***	MILES DRIVEN

RETURN to:
Volunteer Coordinator
CWAG
2850 Dairy Drive, Madison, WI 53718
(608) 224-0606 or (800) 488-2596, Extension 342
Fax: (608) 224-0607

- **Community Education Event (includes meetings)
- **Group Session (includes group presentations)
- **Media Event (print, radio, electronic, television)

Community Education Event (includes meetings) - is any event where general/program information and/or simple printed fact sheets are shared with or distributed to the public. Examples include senior health fairs, expos, and booths in shopping centers and conferences.

Group Session (includes group presentations) - is a **formal gathering** led by trained volunteers to **educate** beneficiaries, family members, caregivers, and others on detecting fraud, waste, error, and abuse in the Medicare program.

Media Event - is any individual airing or publishing of media (e.g., print, radio, television, electronic) to educate beneficiaries and their families about Medicare fraud. Media Events can be opinion pieces, editorials, and stories mentioning this program in regular newspapers and county aging unit newsletters. Media events also include radio shows, TV/Cable shows, press releases, and public service announcements (PSAs).

Volunteer Report Forms help keep the funds coming in and the program going strong. Please submit your report forms each month. Thank you. (Revised 4/07)

***** INCLUDE any materials such as equipment and supplies. Be sure to also include your preparation and travel time.**

FRAUD ALERT – ELECTRONIC VERSION

In previous issues, we told you that the Medicare Integrity Project's *Fraud Alert* will be sent electronically unless we receive a "request for a paper copy" from you.

As a matter of convenience, we included a Mailing List Information Sheet (as an insert in the July issue) so you can return it to us. **There's Still Time to Notify Us!**

So, please . . . return the
Mailing List Information Sheet or
Contact Patti Wiersma at pwiersma@cwag.org,
giving her your e-mail address,
to add to our list.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

You Can also Access Our Publication by Visiting our Website www.cwag.org
scroll down under Elder Law Center
and click on *Fraud Alert*

ATTENTION: All of you with E-mail...

In an effort to save paper, postage and be "volunteer friendly," we will E-mail issues of the *Fraud Alert* to those who have E-mail. Please contact Patti Wiersma at pwiersma@cwag.org, giving her your e-mail address to add to our list. **WE DO SUGGEST THAT YOU PRINT EACH ISSUE AND SAVE IT IN YOUR MEDICARE BINDER FOR FUTURE USE. Thank you!**

For more information, contact:

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