



## NEWS COLUMN – Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

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Contact: Jenni Lewis, Community Outreach  
1 Acy Avenue, Jackson, OH 45640  
Phone: 1.800.582.7277, ext. 22224  
E-Mail: [jlewis@aaa7.org](mailto:jlewis@aaa7.org)  
Website: [www.aaa7.org](http://www.aaa7.org)

### **How to Prevent Medicare Fraud**

**by Debbie Gulley, AAA7 Interim Executive Director**  
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Medicare fraud is a serious problem. Medicare loses an estimated \$60 billion each year to fraud, errors, and abuse. Every day, these issues affect people across the country and can lead to identity theft and cost you money. The good news? Some simple tips can help you protect yourself. The Area Agency on Aging District 7 (AAA7) partners with the Ohio Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) to help share information and education about Medicare fraud and how best to protect yourself from being the victim of a scam. The week of June 3<sup>rd</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> is Medicare Fraud Prevention Week.



#### **Watch for warning signs of a scam.**

- Unsolicited calls, emails, or visits – someone contacting you out of the blue, claiming to be from Medicare and offering free services.
- Requests for personal information – a demand for your Medicare number, Social Security number, or other personal information.
- Pressure to act quickly – any threat that you'll lose benefits or face other consequences if you don't comply with a deadline, often by paying or providing personal information.
- Billings with errors – charges for services or supplies that weren't ordered, were never received, or that Medicare already covered.
- Suspicious websites or mailings – fake websites created to look like official ones but that have inconsistencies, errors, or other odd elements.

#### **Reduce your risk.**

- Only share your Medicare and Social Security numbers with people you trust.
- Carry your Medicare card only when you need it.
- Keep a record of all your medical visits and procedures.
- Carefully review Medicare statements for mistakes and charges you don't recognize.
- Trust your instincts and report any suspected fraud.

#### **Ask for help.**

If you have questions about how to protect yourself, need to report fraud, or want help determining whether you've been a victim, the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) can help.

SMP provides free, unbiased, one-on-one assistance to Medicare beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers. In Ohio, the SMP can be reached at 1-800-488-6070, extension 4.

If you have questions about long-term care resources in your community, call the Area Agency on Aging District 7 (AAA7) at 1-800-582-7277 or email [info@aaa7.org](mailto:info@aaa7.org)