

January 2021

Township Newsletter Features SMP Fraud Prevention Message

After inviting Jesus Armando Enriquez, AgeOptions Outreach and Information specialist, to speak at a Seniors and Law Enforcement Together (SALT) Council meeting, the Milton Township organization featured him and his message about preventing fraud in its quarterly newsletter.

Jesus frequently takes the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) message on preventing, detecting and reporting Medicare fraud to both English- and Spanish-speaking groups. He is one of several AgeOptions staff members who speak to groups throughout the area on topics important to older adults, such as fraud, benefits and more.



Jesus Armando Enriquez

The SALT Council newsletter story reported that Jesus explained what Medicare fraud is and why older adults should be aware of it. He told the group that the U.S. government loses more than \$60 billion a year to Medicare fraud and abuse, and that fraud can also affect Medicare beneficiaries personally by using up their benefits.

Steps to prevent Medicare fraud

The newsletter listed some steps Jesus told the group individuals can take to protect themselves and their Medicare benefits:

- Learn about Medicare fraud.
- Protect Social Security and Medicare cards and share only with your own medical providers.
- Use a calendar or journal to record all doctor visits and services.

- Read your quarterly Medicare Summary Notice or insurance Explanation of Benefits and report services or equipment not ordered by your doctor and items ordered but not received.
- Report suspicious activity to Illinois SMP at (800)699-9043.

COVID-19-related scams

Jesus told SALT Council members that older adults should also be alert for scams related to COVID-19. He said scammers target individuals with long-term health conditions and attempt to bill Medicare for sham tests or treatments related to the coronavirus. They may target victims through unsolicited phone calls, emails, home visits, text messages and social media ads.

Protecting against COVID-19 scams is similar to protecting against Medicare fraud:

- Give Medicare numbers only to your doctor or other health care provider.
- Protect your Medicare card as you would a credit card.
- Never give your Medicare number to someone who contacts you via phone, text or email.
- Beware of anyone coming to your door offering free coronavirus testing, treatment or supplies.
- Ignore promotions for prevention products or cures for COVID-19.
- Be cautious when purchasing medical supplies from unverified sources, including online ads and email or phone solicitations.