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Your Update from AgeOptions

October 2018

## AgeOptions Receives Grant to Continue Statewide Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Program Aimed at Preventing Health Care Fraud

Health care fraud doesn't just cost taxpayers money. It can result in Medicare beneficiaries being denied services or equipment they need. Since 1997, Illinois Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) has worked to educate and empower consumers throughout the state to prevent, detect and report health care fraud.



AgeOptions recently received a five-year grant from the Administration for Community Living, a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to continue leading Illinois SMP. The Administration for Community Living funds SMP programs in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Virgin Islands.

Illinois SMP program staff and volunteers provide education to help people who have Medicare and Medicaid protect themselves and detect and report fraud, waste and abuse. Illinois SMP works with partner agencies: Illinois Area Agencies on Aging, Catholic Charities, White Crane Wellness Center and the Coalition of Limited English Speaking Elderly.

"This is a competitive grant and we are very grateful to be chosen," says Jason Echols, AgeOptions manager of Health Care Access. "SMPs work in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Justice to fight Medicare fraud, but it is really up to consumers to take the steps to prevent and stop fraud." The U.S. Office of Inspector General recently informed AgeOptions that \$37,928,590 in Medicare recoveries are partially attributable to cases that Illinois SMP submitted.

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"We're very pleased that cases we supported over a number of years have led to court cases and sentencing," Jason says. "But what is even more impactful is prevention – which is the people who are sharing the message and taking steps to prevent fraud, waste and abuse and who are calling us when they suspect fraud."

For more information on health care fraud and Illinois SMP, call AgeOptions at (708)383-0258 or go to [http://www.ageoptions.org/services-and-programs\\_seniormedicarepatrol.html](http://www.ageoptions.org/services-and-programs_seniormedicarepatrol.html).

Jason Echols was recognized with The Barbara McGinity SMP Award from the U.S. Administration for Community Living at a recent national meeting held in Chicago.

This award is a tribute to the beloved Oklahoma SMP director who died several years ago. Recipients are selected by SMP directors from across the country each year.

This is a real honor for AgeOptions and the Illinois SMP.

**The following information is from the national SMP site, [smpresource.org](http://smpresource.org):**

Senior Medicare Patrols (SMPs) empower and assist Medicare beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers to prevent, detect, and report health care fraud, errors, and abuse through outreach, counseling, and education. SMPs are grant-funded projects of the federal U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), U.S. Administration for Community Living (ACL). Their work is in three main areas:

**Conduct Outreach and Education.** SMPs give presentations to groups, exhibit at events, and work one-on-one with Medicare beneficiaries.

**Engage Volunteers.** Protecting older persons' health, finances, and medical identity while saving precious Medicare dollars is a cause that attracts civic-minded Americans.

**Receive Beneficiary Complaints.** When Medicare beneficiaries, caregivers, and family members bring their complaints to the SMP, the SMP makes a determination about whether or not fraud, errors, or abuse is suspected. When fraud or abuse is suspected, they make referrals to the appropriate state and federal agencies for further investigation.