



NEWS RELEASE – Area Agency on Aging, District 7, Inc.

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Contact: Jenni Dovyak, Communications Manager

F-32 PO Box 500

Rio Grande, OH 45674

Phone: 740.245.5306/Toll-Free 1.800.582.7277 Ext. 244

E-Mail: jdovyak@aaa7.org

Don't Let Others Play Games with Your Medicare Coverage

Local Radio Campaign Enlists Consumers to Help Fight Medicare Fraud

RIO GRANDE, Ohio – When you let other people play games with your Medicare coverage, everybody loses. That's the message behind a series of 60-second spots airing on select radio stations in southern and southeastern Ohio in February and March. The Ohio Department of Aging has teamed with the Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. to educate people with Medicare about health care fraud and provide the tools and resources they can use to prevent it.

The radio spots were created by "Voice of Your Consumer" as part of the department's two-year Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Integration grant. They feature a game show style announcer who tells unsuspecting consumers that they've "won" a medical procedure or medical equipment that they do not need and didn't actually receive. When the "winners" question the prize, the announcer reluctantly reveals that the deal is in his best interest, not the consumer's.

"The message is fun, but the problem is very serious," said Barbara E. Riley, director of the department. "Medicare fraud costs American taxpayers an estimated \$60 billion each year."

"Every dollar lost to fraud could have been used to provide medical care, support home care services, and help people avoid unnecessary nursing home placements," added Pamela K. Matura, Executive Director of the Area Agency on Aging, District 7, Inc. "Working with state and local partners, we want to help the people in our communities learn to recognize, report, and ultimately stop this and other types of health care fraud."

Fraud includes billing for services that were not provided or equipment that wasn't received, over-billing, "unbundling" hospital charges so you are billed separately, and more. Older Ohioans can help fight fraud by carefully reading their quarterly Medicare Summary Notices and noting any charges they do not recognize or providers they have not used. If possible, consumers should address issues first with their providers, but can also call the state SMP hotline at 1.800.488.6070 for assistance.

Other ways to prevent fraud include protecting your Medicare card much like you would your Social Security card, and not providing your Medicare number in exchange for free meals or prizes. For more information, contact the Regional Long Term Care Ombudsman Program Director Kaye Inoshita toll-free at 1.800.582.7277.

Ohio seniors who wish to help spread the word about Medicare fraud to other seniors can call the SMP hotline number above to volunteer.

The Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. serves the following counties in Ohio: Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton. Services are rendered on a non-discriminatory basis. The Agency's Mission is, "Assisting individuals to maintain independence and personal choice by providing resource options and services."

The Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. has several Ohio Senior Health Insurance Information Program (OSHIIP) volunteers who are available to counsel Medicare recipients about their Medicare issues, including the Part D Prescription Drug Plan and the “Extra Help” program that assists income-eligible participants with paying premiums, keeping them from entering the “doughnut hole” of coverage. If Medicare recipients receive phone calls or mail solicitations they are unsure of, they can call an Agency volunteer toll-free at 1.800.582.7277. Those interested in learning more about the services provided through the Area Agency on Aging District 7, can also call toll-free at 1.800.582.7277.

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