

# MEDICARE NEWS

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**Federal government expands grassroots fraud prevention effort**  
*Medicare awards grants to more than 50 Senior Medicare Patrol programs*

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) today announced the award of \$9 million in grants to help more than 50 Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) programs fight Medicare fraud. This is part of President Obama's mandate to educate seniors and other Medicare beneficiaries about how to prevent fraud in Medicare.

"These grants will put more feet on the ground in the fight against Medicare fraud," said CMS Administrator Donald Berwick, M.D. "We are concerned about Medicare fraud and activity by criminals seeking to defraud seniors – and we want to ramp up our local community resources to educate seniors and people with Medicare about how they can help us stop it."

The announcement to double the funding for SMP activities was made earlier this year in conjunction with the President's appearance at a senior center in Wheaton, Md., along with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. The grants will provide additional funds to increase awareness of Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries of health care fraud prevention, identification and reporting through expansion of SMP program capacity. Increased funding levels for states identified with high-fraud areas will support additional targeted strategies for collaboration, media outreach and referrals. The Administration on Aging will administer these grants in partnership with CMS.

"Unfortunately, scam artists are using the new health care provisions of the Affordable Care Act as an opportunity to scare and steal from seniors," said Assistant Secretary for Aging Kathy Greenlee. "Additional funding for the Senior Medicare Patrol grantees will help us significantly increase our outreach and education to people with Medicare. We applaud CMS for its commitment to fighting Medicare fraud."

The SMP volunteers work in their communities to educate Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries, family members, and caregivers about the importance of reviewing their Medicare notices to identify billing errors and potentially fraudulent activity. Program volunteers also encourage seniors to make inquiries to the SMP Program when such issues are identified, so that the project may ensure appropriate resolution or referral.

Since 1997, HHS and its Administration on Aging have funded Senior Medicare Patrol projects to recruit and train retired professionals and other senior volunteers about how to recognize and report instances or patterns of health care fraud. Close to 3 million Medicare beneficiaries have been educated since the start of the program, and more than 1 million one-on-one counseling sessions have taken place with seniors or their caregivers. In 2009, more than 3,000 beneficiary complaints involving potential fraud were handled by the SMPs. The SMP program funds projects in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

A list of the grants awarded to each SMP may be found at:

[http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/AoA\\_Programs/Elder\\_Rights/SMP/doc/SMP Grants Awards.pdf](http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/AoA_Programs/Elder_Rights/SMP/doc/SMP_Grants_Awards.pdf)

For more information on fraud prevention efforts, visit:

<http://www.stopmedicarefraud.gov/> or <http://www.cms.gov/FraudAbuseforConsumers/>