

Dutchess County Office for the Aging's

## **AGING NEWS**

For the week of May 9<sup>th</sup>

By most estimates, Medicare, Medicaid and private health insurers each lose tens of billions of dollars each year due to errors, abuse, and fraud. Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP, [smpresource.org](http://smpresource.org)) estimates taxpayer losses at over \$60 billion just for Medicare fraud – and that's likely a low-end number, because successful fraud goes undetected and thus uncounted.

Those who commit health care fraud fit no one profile. The Justice Department has prosecuted criminals who work alone, institutions that submit unnecessary "padded" claims, and international organized crime operations posing as legitimate providers and suppliers.

Complicating matters is that criminals' methods need not be sophisticated. The key for a criminal, according to Harvard professor and insurance fraud expert Malcolm Sparrow, is to make fake claims look just like legitimate claims so that payment algorithms are unlikely to flag anything amiss. "Bill your lies correctly" is how he puts it.

The key to stopping this kind of fraud starts with you. Criminals need stolen or fraudulent credentials from patients and providers alike to get their schemes rolling. Protect your personal Medicare and insurance information, and there's one less option for criminals.

**Protect yourself from fraud:**

- **Guard your card.** Never give your Medicare or Medicaid cards or number to strangers.
- Do not feel pressured into purchasing medical equipment, supplies or health insurance. The Office for the Aging has volunteer counselors in our HIICAP program (Health Insurance Information, Counseling and Assistance Program) who provide unbiased counseling on health insurance issues. Contact OFA to find out more.
- Any questions about medical equipment marketing can be answered by your health care provider; they'll tell you whether it's necessary.
- Never give your Medicare or Medicaid number to anyone for a "free" service or piece of equipment. If the service or equipment really is free, they would not need your Medicare or Medicaid number.

- Never accept medical supplies or equipment from a door-to-door salesperson.
- Never let anyone look at your medical records or prescription medications unless you have contacted your physician or pharmacist and received their approval.

**Common fraudulent practices:**

- Billing for goods and services not provided.
- Billing for old items as new items.
- Billing for patient visits that did not take place.
- Billing for more hours than there are in a day.
- Concealing ownership of related companies.
- Falsifying credentials and double-billing.

**More tips on fighting fraud:**

- Keep track of your appointments and medical services, supplies and equipment.
- Check you Medicare Summary Notices (MSN) to be sure your Medicare number is correct.

- If your name or address are incorrect, contact both your Medicare carrier and Social Security.
- Check that the “Services Provided” description matches your record of appointments and services. Watch for claims made by facilities you’ve never been to – and which may not even exist.

**Call New York’s Senior Medicare Patrol Fraud Hot Line at 1-877-678-4697** if you suspect fraudulent practices. Additionally, you can find a printable Scam Prevention Resources sheet at [dutchessny.gov/aging](http://dutchessny.gov/aging).

*Golden Living is prepared by the Dutchess County Office for the Aging, 114*

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## **COUNTY GOVERNMENT ON THE ROAD / TOWN HALL (Tue 5/10, Red Hook)**

County Executive Marc Molinaro began his 2022 State of the County Town Hall Forum series on Tuesday, May 3rd at the Tri-Town Senior Center in Pleasant Valley as he discussed current and plans for Dutchess County Government.

Following his presentation, attendees asked questions and provided feedback in an open discussion.

If you missed that one, there are two others coming, including a County Government on the Road event:

- Tuesday, May 10th, 4:30p.m. - County Government on the Road information fair

Town Hall: 5:30 p.m.

Both at Red Hook Community Center, [59 Fisk Street, Red Hook](#)

- Tuesday, May 17th, 5:30 p.m. – Town Hall - American Legion Post 427, [7 Spring Street, Wappingers Falls](#)

## **HEAP COOLING ASSISTANCE SEASON NOW OPEN**

The 2021-2022 [cooling assistance season for New York's Home Energy Assistance Program \(HEAP\)](#) is now open for qualifying individuals and households.

According to a press release from the governor's office, applicants must meet HEAP eligibility criteria and income thresholds, which vary by household size. For instance, a family of four may have a maximum gross monthly income of \$5,249 or an annual gross income of \$62,983. Prior to this year, the cooling component of HEAP was only available to income-eligible households with an individual suffering from a documented medical condition exacerbated by extreme heat.

For more information on all the required qualifications for HEAP cooling assistance, call 845-486-2553 or email [zserrano@dutchessny.gov](mailto:zserrano@dutchessny.gov).

### **SAVE THE DATE - DUTCHESS COUNTY HEALTH FAIR (Saturday, June 11<sup>th</sup>)**

Join the Office for the Aging and several Dutchess County Government departments, at the former JC Penney site at the Poughkeepsie Galleria (2001 South Rd a/k/a Route 9) for a Health Fair, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

It's a day of health-related fun for all ages, with performances and exhibitions, along with a chance to win prizes!

More details coming soon!

**Other aging news online:**

A consistent seven hours of sleep a night is optimal for aging humans, [according to this recent study](#).

Summer's coming – [are you prepared for the sun?](#)

Researchers in Alzheimer's research have long been frustrated by findings that haven't led to realistic treatments for the disease [but they're still trying](#).

Losing hearing due to age or too much loud music or equipment? A new tool may make it possible [to recover lost ear hair cells](#).

Many "recovered" COVID patients have been left with cognitive decline, especially in more severe cases, [according to this study](#)

Oh, those aches and pains. Won't they ever go away? [Maybe](#).

### **This week in birthdays:**

5/8: Singer/songwriter [Philip Bailey](#) (Earth, Wind & Fire) (71)

5/9: Actress [Glenda Jackson](#) (86)

5/10: Singer/songwriter [Donovan](#) (76)

5/11: Singer/songwriter/actor [Eric Burdon](#) (The Animals/War) (81)

5/12: Singer/songwriter/guitarist [Steve Winwood](#) (74)

5/13: Singer/songwriter/pianist/drummer/producer [Stevie Wonder](#) (72)

5/14: Baseball Hall-of-Famer [Tony Pérez](#) (80)

**And a Bad Joke:**

What kind of bird can lift a car?

A crane.