

Dutchess County Office for the Aging's

AGING NEWS

For the week of June 3rd

MEDICARE FRAUD PREVENTION WEEK

During our OFA Scam Prevention presentations, we ask our guests to put themselves in the shoes of someone who commits fraud for a living, to better understand how scams work on us. We ask them this question: *What's the most successful kind of scam?*

It's a bit of a trick question because the answer isn't any one method of scam.

The most successful kind of scam is the kind that goes undetected and can thus be repeated indefinitely. Fraud can be perpetrated by unethical providers, organized crime, and individual thieves.

Which brings us to this week's Medicare Fraud Prevention Week.

With an annual budget well over \$1 trillion, Medicare is a big target for scammers, along with state Medicaid programs and the health insurance industry. Officially, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) reports \$60

billion in Medicare losses due to fraud and other improper payments, but the National Health Care Anti-Fraud Association estimated last year's fraud losses at \$100 billion and likely much higher. Remember: successful scams go undetected, and therefore unmeasured.

With billions of individual claims to process for a staggering variety of procedures and medications, Medicare and insurers rely on algorithms to flag potentially fraudulent patterns of claims. Scammers succeed by going undetected by the algorithms. They file fraudulent claims that appear to be identical to legitimate claims.

When we see a news story about a Medicare scammer being caught and prosecuted, chances are the scammer got greedy or lazy. By the time authorities detect a pattern of sketchy claims, a smart fraudster is long gone, having pulled up roots and moved on to another scam in another part of the country.

Staying a step ahead of scammers is key for both Medicare and the insurance industry, involving advanced mathematics, computer science and artificial intelligence (AI); but you're just one beneficiary reading this article. What can you do to spot warning signs of a scam?

- **Unsolicited calls, emails, or visits** – someone contacting you out of the blue,

claiming to be from Medicare and offering free services;

- **Requests for personal information** – a demand for your Medicare number, Social Security number, or other personal information;
- **Pressure to act quickly** – any threat that you'll face consequences if you don't comply with a deadline, often by paying or providing personal information;
- **Billings with errors** – charges for services or supplies that weren't ordered, were never received, or that Medicare already covered. Read your Medicare Summary Notice statements, and report anything that looks “off” to tips.oig.hhs.gov or 1-800-MEDICARE (633-4227).
- **Suspicious websites or mailings** – fake websites created to look like official ones but that have inconsistencies, errors, or other odd elements.

Medicare's annual Open Enrollment season (October 15-December 7) will be here before long. It's a great time to head off Medicare and insurance scams before they can get at your personal information. A meeting with a trained OFA counselor from our Health Insurance Information, Counseling and Assistance Program (HIICAP) could help. Contact OFA to find out more.

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

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ofa@dutchessny.gov website: www.dutchessny.gov/aging

VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES RESOURCE FAIR AT DCC (Saturday 6/1)

The Office for the Aging and Dutchess County Veterans Services will be among the local services providers at Rep. Pat Ryan's Veterans and Military Families Resource Fair on Saturday, June 1st at Dutchess Community College's Falcon Hall in Poughkeepsie, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Veterans and their caregivers can learn about the many services and programs available to Dutchess County veterans and their families and get assistance to receive the benefits earned through their service to our nation.

Can't make it Saturday? Dutchess County Veterans Services is located at Mental Health America (MHA) of Dutchess County's Veterans One Stop campus (1335 Route 44 in Pleasant Valley). There's more information online at www.dutchessny.gov/veterans.

Watch next week's newsletter for more information of interest to Dutchess County veterans.

OFA “FRIENDLY CALLS” ORIENTATIONS

“Friendly Calls” is the OFA volunteering program that’s made for busy schedules. Participants and volunteers alike have found it most rewarding, and we’d love to have you join us. Start by scheduling your space at a “Friendly Calls” orientation. These usually take place at OFA unless otherwise indicated below. Orientations typically last 40-60 minutes. Pick one from the list below, and contact OFA at 845-486-2555 or email Friendly Calls program manager Linda Edgar at ledgar@dutchessny.gov to set up your orientation:

- **Monday, June 3rd, 10 am**
- **Monday, June 10th, 3 pm**
- **Thursday, June 20th, 10 am**
- **Monday, June 24th, 3 pm**

We add orientation dates continually. Check dutchessny.gov/calendar for the latest list, and see dutchessny.gov/friendlycalls for details on the program.

For other OFA volunteering options, visit dutchessny.gov/ofavolunteer.

OFA “SAIL” CLASSES RESUME IN JUNE

The instructor for OFA’s “Stay Active and Independent for Life” remote exercise class for older adults is wrapping up a brief break on Friday, May 31st, with SAIL classes resuming in June on most Wednesday mornings and Friday afternoons. See www.dutchessny.gov/calendar for class schedules and information on how to participate.

“KNOW YOUR HOUSING AND EVICTION RIGHTS” EVENT IN DOVER PLAINS

(NOTE: RSVP REQUIRED)

Whether you’re a housing provider, a tenant, or an interested member of the community, it’s essential to know the workings of federal, New York State and local regulations on housing and eviction.

Join Legal Services of the Hudson Valley (www.lshv.org) on Wednesday, June 26th from 2:00-3:30 pm for an educational event covering housing and eviction rights. RSVP is required by June 15th, to Yolanda Ramos at yramos@lshv.org or 845-471-0058.

Other news:

More on this week's [Medicare Fraud Protection Week](#).

[Key nutrients](#) have been linked with slower brain aging.

[Heart healthy behaviors](#) may help reverse rapid cell aging.

And what about [aging in cats and dogs](#)?

“If you live to 100, [you might as well be happy](#).”

This week's birthdays:

5/31: Actor/director/producer [Clint Eastwood](#) (94)

6/1: Actor/narrator [Morgan Freeman](#) (87)

6/2: Actor [Jerry Mathers](#) (76)

6/3: Musician/actress [Suzi Quatro](#) (74)

6/4: Therapist/author [Dr. Ruth Westheimer](#) (96)

6/5: Artist/songwriter/filmmaker [Laurie Anderson](#) (77)

6/6: Astronaut [David Scott](#) (Apollo 9 and 16) (92)

And the Bad Joke!

Someone just accused me of plagiarism. Their words, not mine.