



Hospice Care and Medicare Fraud: *Tips for Protecting Yourself and Medicare*

By SMP Resource Center



Hospice is an important benefit for the Medicare population. Hospice fraud threatens this benefit for all beneficiaries. Scammers are getting beneficiaries to agree to hospice care even though they do not qualify for the benefit.

What Is Medicare hospice fraud?

Hospice fraud occurs when Medicare Part A is falsely billed for any level of hospice care or service.

What are examples of hospice fraud?

- Falsely certifying and providing services to beneficiaries who are not terminally ill – that is, with a life expectancy of six months or less if the disease runs its normal course
- Enrolling in hospice without the knowledge or permission of the patient or family
- Falsely certifying or failing to obtain physician certification on plans of care
- Paying gifts or incentives to referral sources (such as physicians and nursing homes)
- Billing for a higher level of care than was needed or provided or for services not received
- Targeting assisted living facility and/or nursing home residents whose life expectancy exceeds six months
- Using high-pressure and unsolicited marketing tactics of hospice services

- Providing inadequate or incomplete services, including, for example, no skilled visits in the last week of life
- Providing/offering gifts or incentives, including noncovered benefits such as homemaker, housekeeping, or delivery services to encourage beneficiaries to elect hospice even though they may not be terminally ill
- Embezzling, abusing, or neglecting beneficiaries or medication theft by a hospice worker
- Keeping a beneficiary on hospice care for long periods of time without medical justification
- Providing less care on the weekends and disregarding a beneficiary's care plan

What can you do to stop hospice fraud?

- Be sure *your doctor* has assessed your condition
- Be sure *your doctor* has certified that you are *terminally ill* and expected to live six months or less if the disease runs its normal course
- Never accept gifts (such as money, gift cards, or groceries) in return for hospice services and be wary of "too-good-to-be-true" offers
- Report quality-of-care complaints to your local SMP and the Beneficiary and Family Centered Quality Improvement Organization (BFCC-QIO)

How are fraudsters benefiting from hospice fraud?

General inpatient care and continuous home care pay significantly more than routine home care. Falsely signing someone up for hospice and then providing routine home care at a continuous home care rate could be very lucrative for a fraudster.

continued on page 13



Thank You Volunteers!

By Molly Kelly, SMP Volunteer Coordinator



As we approach National Volunteer Month in April and Older Americans Month in May, Ingrid and I would like to express our

sincere gratitude to the volunteer team that supports the work we do around the state of Wisconsin. Throughout its history, SMP programs across the nation have benefited from the countless contributions that volunteers like you have made and continue to make. You are making a difference throughout our country. Our program depends on volunteers to help preserve the integrity of Medicare.

The Wisconsin SMP program has been affiliated with Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources (GWAAR) since June 2018. In this short period, people like you from around Wisconsin have stepped forward to help combat the fraud and abuse that surrounds Medicare. You are our front-line workers in dealing with the fraudsters who shamelessly try to take advantage of Medicare and its participants. Your selfless generosity in delivering the message to protect, detect, and report fraud and abuse has a significant and positive impact on the lives of older adults.

We appreciate and celebrate your commitment, support, and immense contributions to this program. We are fortunate to have you on the team!

Hospice Care and Medicare Fraud continued from page 12

What Medicare Paid for Hospice Care In 2019

Routine Home Care	General Inpatient care	Continuous Home Care
\$195.40 per day for days 1-60 \$151.41 per day for days 61+	\$758.07 per day	\$997.77 per day

How Your Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Can Help

Your local SMP is ready to provide you with the information you need to PROTECT yourself from Medicare fraud, errors, and abuse; DETECT potential fraud, errors, and abuse; and REPORT your concerns. SMPs and their trained volunteers help educate and empower Medicare beneficiaries in the fight against health care fraud. Your SMP can help you with your questions, concerns, or complaints about potential fraud and abuse issues. It also can provide information and educational presentations.

Call: (888) 818-2611 E-mail: smp-wi@gwaar.org Website: <https://gwaar.org/senior-medicare-patrol>