



2011 APRIL SMP NEWSLETTER

Why Fighting Medicare Fraud is Important

The federal debt now stands at a record of nearly \$14 trillion. Congress is currently debating what budget cuts to make. Tough decisions will be made and the cuts will impact many of us. Medicare and Medicaid spending is one of the largest expenditures in our budget. Every dollar lost to fraud short changes taxpayers and beneficiaries who rely on the health care programs.

The best estimate is that around 35.4 billion dollars were lost to fraud in 2010.

There are several tools in place now to detect and to prevent Medicare Fraud. We have the whistle blower provision which allows a citizen who learns about fraud to report it and file suit to recover tax dollars that have been lost to fraud. This program has recovered approximately \$2.5 billion from health care fraud cases.

We also have HEAT (Health Care Fraud Prevention & Enforcement Action Team). A program that was established in 2009 it is comprised of members of the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services working together to assist in the crackdown on Medicare Fraud and bring criminals to justice. The Medicare Fraud Strike Force is part of this program and on 2-17-11 they charged 111 healthcare company owners, executives and others for their alleged participation in Medicare Fraud schemes involving more that \$225 million in false billing.

AND we have Senior Medicare Patrol which is a grassroots organization whose cause is empowering Medicare Beneficiaries to prevent healthcare fraud. In Iowa in 2010 we had 513,929 people enrolled in Medicare. We can fight Medicare fraud by taking time to record our medical information, dates of appointments and what services we received or were ordered. Then when you receive your Medicare Summary Notice:

- Check – Were you charged for any medical services or equipment that you did not receive?**
- Check - Do the dates of services and charges look familiar?**
- Check - Were you billed for the same thing twice?**

If you find any information that looks out of line and you cannot resolve it with your provider then call SMP 1-800-423-2449 and someone will assist you.

Together we can fight Medicare Fraud and not lose precious dollars that should be spent on our health care.

Nancy G. Anderson, SMP Coordinator, Aging Resources of Central Iowa, 515-255-6142, Ext. 312