



Maine Senior Medicare Patrol

What is the Maine SMP?

The Maine Senior Medicare Patrol program, or SMP, is one of 54 programs nationally that help Medicare and Medicaid (MaineCare) beneficiaries prevent, detect and report health care fraud. They not only protect older persons, they also help preserve the integrity of the Medicare and Medicaid programs. Because this work often requires face-to-face contact to be most effective, the Maine SMP relies on volunteers who are active with outreach and education efforts and complaint case work. The program works in conjunction with the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP).

Tell me about Maine SMP volunteers.

Protecting older persons from criminals and saving precious health care dollars at the same time is a mission that attracts many civic-minded Americans. Most Maine SMP volunteers are both retired and on Medicare, so they are well-positioned to assist their peers. The Maine SMP currently has 85 volunteers statewide working with an SMP Volunteer Coordinator at each of the Area Agencies on Aging. Other staff include the Statewide Coordinator, the Volunteer, Fraud and Outreach Specialist and the Medicare Rights Advocate, located at Legal Services for the Elderly in Augusta.

How, exactly, does the Maine SMP fight fraud?

Maine SMP staff and volunteers work with individual beneficiaries to review Medicare Summary Notices for accuracy, make presentations to

groups about how to avoid getting taken by scam artists, exhibit at community health fairs and partner with a variety of agencies and organizations that serve Medicare and MaineCare beneficiaries.

The primary goal is to teach beneficiaries how to protect their personal identity, identify and report errors on their health care bills and identify deceptive health care practices, such as illegal marketing, providing unnecessary or inappropriate services and charging for services that were never provided.

In some cases, the Maine SMP does more than educate: When Medicare and MaineCare beneficiaries are unable to act on their own behalf to address these problems, the Maine SMP works to address the problems, making referrals to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and their anti-fraud contractors; the Office of Inspector General (OIG); the Maine Attorney General's Office; local law enforcement; State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIP); Maine Bureau of Insurance and other outside organizations that are able to intervene.

What is the background of the program?

In 1995, the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA) became a partner in a government-led effort to fight fraud, error and abuse in the Medicare and Medicaid programs through the implementation of a ground-breaking demonstration project called Operation Restore Trust (ORT). ORT's purpose was to coordinate and target federal, state, local and private resources on those areas most plagued by abuse. Operation Restore Trust

continued



Refer consumers to the Maine SMP at their local Area Agency on Aging at 1-877-353-3771

was announced at the 1995 White House Conference on Aging.

It created a partnership in the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) between CMS, the OIG and the AoA, which continue to work as a team in a coordinated anti-health care fraud effort at the local, state and national levels.

In 1997, because of the Omnibus Consolidated Appropriation Act of 1997 (Public Law 104-208), AoA established 12 local demonstration projects designed to recruit and train retired professionals such as doctors, nurses, teachers, lawyers, accountants and others to identify and report error, fraud and abuse. Senate Report 104-368 noted that "senior citizens are our best front line defense against these losses." The Maine SMP has been in existence since 1999.

Tell me about the scope of the SMP program today.

Based on the success of these demonstration projects, the SMP program is now in every state, as well as the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Virgin Islands. Under Title IV of the Older Americans Act, approximately \$9.3 million in grants are provided annually. Beginning in FY2010, CMS provided additional funds to double SMP program efforts. To implement this expansion, the AoA has awarded \$9 million in additional annual funds to the nationwide network of SMPs to enhance their volunteer programs and outreach efforts.

What has the Maine SMP achieved over the years?

Since 1999 nearly 41,000 Mainers have been reached during community education events, over 37,500 beneficiaries have been educated in group sessions or one-on-one meetings and 255 volunteers have been active.

What are examples of fraud and waste seen by the Maine SMP?

- Medicare Summary Notices showing billing for services or supplies that were never provided.
- Durable Medical Equipment Suppliers providing diabetic supplies and/or back braces not prescribed or needed.
- Phone calls about a new Medicare card where the caller attempts to obtain Medicare numbers and bank account information.
- Inappropriate sales practices by Medicare Advantage sales agents.

Where can I learn more?

Go to www.smpresource.org for detailed information about fraud and abuse as well as the SMP program. To contact the Maine SMP with referrals, complaints or to schedule a presentation, contact your local Area Agency on Aging at 1-877-353-3771.