



**NEWS RELEASE – Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.**

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## **Ohio Senior Medicare Patrol and AAA7 Partner to Help Protect Older Adults from Medical Identity Theft**

The Ohio Senior Medicare Patrol, part of the non-profit Pro Seniors organization, recently announced its partnership with multiple Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) across Ohio, including the Area Agency on Aging District 7 (AAA7), to drive awareness of medical identity theft and stop scammers in their tracks. The AAA7 serves ten counties in Southern Ohio including: Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton.

Medical identity theft occurs when someone uses personal information – such as your name and Medicare number – to bill for services or supplies you did not approve. Fraudsters may send you unwanted COVID test kits, call you to claim you qualify for free genetic testing, tell you Medicare is issuing new cards, or they may bill Medicare for a knee brace in your name, unbeknownst to you.

“Medical identity theft is a billion dollar industry, and scammers are good at their jobs,” said Lisa Dalga, Project Manager for the Ohio Senior Medicare Patrol. “People are often embarrassed after succumbing to a scam and reluctant to report it or get help. Our new partnership with district AAAs, a trusted resource for older adults, will enable us to educate people across Ohio how to identify medical identity theft scams, how to keep themselves protected, and how to report when they suspect fraudulent activity on their Medicare account. Fraud happens to everyone and it is nothing to be ashamed about.”

“The safety and well-being of seniors in our network is our number one priority. We are proud to partner with the Ohio Senior Medicare Patrol and believe we share like-minded goals of empowering older adults,” said Jennifer Lewis, Director of Communications, Area Agency on Aging District 7. “We are eager to start spreading the word to help people detect, prevent and report Medicare fraud.”

Representatives from the AAAs across many Ohio counties will soon begin efforts to teaching people about this type of fraud. Information to be shared includes:

- Clues that your medical identity may be compromised including receiving boxes of braces, testing kits, or other medical supplies in the mail that you did not request;
- Being contacted by a debt collection company for a provider bill that you do not owe;
- Giving out your Medicare number after receiving calls about “free” services or products.

Ways to prevent medical identity theft:

- Never give out your Medicare number to anyone other than your doctor, health care provider, or other trusted representative.
- Understand that Medicare and Social Security already have your Medicare and Social Security numbers and will not initiate a call to you.
- Be cautious of anyone who comes to your door offering “free” testing, treatments, or supplies for genetic diseases, cancer, or the coronavirus.
- Be cautious when purchasing medical supplies from unverified or unknown sources, including online advertisements and email/phone solicitations.

What to do if you suspect fraud:

- Check your medical summary notices for visits, equipment or services you did not approve.
- If you gave out your Medicare number, it is now considered ‘compromised’. Call the Ohio Senior Medicare Patrol at 800-488-6070 and they can help you identify suspected fraud on your account, as well as help you request a new Medicare number.

The Ohio Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) is part of the non-profit group Pro Seniors, Inc and is funded through a grant from the Administration for Community Living. The SMP are fraud fighters helping to protect Medicare beneficiaries from medical identity fraud and stay safe from scammers. You can contact the SMP in Ohio at 800-488-6070 opt 4 or [www.proseniors.org/ohio-smp](http://www.proseniors.org/ohio-smp).

Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. provides services on a non-discriminatory basis. These services are available to help older adults and those with disabilities live safely and independently in their residence of choice through services paid for by Medicare, Medicaid, other federal and state resources, as well as private pay. The AAA7’s Resource Center is also available to anyone in the community looking for information or assistance with long-term care options. Available Monday through Friday from 8:00 am until 4:30 pm, the Resource Center is a valuable contact for learning more about options and what programs and services are available for assistance.

Those interested in learning more can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277 (TTY: 711). Here, individuals can speak directly with a specially-trained Resource Specialist who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs. The Agency also offers an assessment at no cost for those who are interested in learning more. Information is also available on [www.aaa7.org](http://www.aaa7.org), or the Agency can be contacted through e-mail at [info@aaa7.org](mailto:info@aaa7.org).

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