

MEDICARE ID SCAMS

Medicare's open enrollment period kicked off on October 17th, and thieves hope to use this time to take advantage of you. Circumstances surrounding the pandemic, senior advocates say, make the environment for fraud even more ripe.

Typically, many conversations and decisions surrounding Medicare coverage are made face-to-face, but because of the pandemic, more of these conversations will be made on the phone or online.

Amy Hagel, of Senior Connections, Shine program, warns that thieves are after your Medicare identification number, and once they get it, you could be targeted for an array of scams.

Here are some things to watch out for: Unsuspecting individuals will call you, or even **knock on your door**, pretending to represent Medicare, or try to sell you something.

They may offer fake rebates, threaten a loss of coverage, and/or provide bogus sales materials.

One big scam is genetic testing or Covid-19 testing. Hagel says walk away from both. They just want your Medicare number to bill Medicare thousands of dollars for results you either won't get, or can't trust. If you want a genetic test, consult your own doctor.

Also, beware of giveaways. Thieves are offering things like masks and hand sanitizer, but they want your Medicare number in return.

"If you hear something that's for free, that should be a big **red flag** right there," Hagel said. "People should not be asking for our Medicare number just to give you hand sanitizer."

Florida's SHINE program is under the state Department of Elder Affairs and the local Area Agency on Aging. Volunteers who are experts in Medicare can help find the plan that is best for you, and can help you figure out the difference between legitimate information and scams.

A Shine representative can be reached at 1-800-963-5337 or visit floridashine.org.

You can also call Medicare by at 1-800-633-4227.

The information provided above was taken from WFLA (online) on October 17th.

NOTE: The above information mirrors an attempt by thieves, who were recently soliciting in our neighborhood, to offer assistance with Medicare/Medicaid. The above article confirms what they were actually up to . . . trying to steal our Medicare number!

Submitted by Barb Kanehl, Chair, Neighborhood Watch